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Officers

Neil Robson
President

Tannwen Mount
Vice-President

Bob Phillips
Treasurer

Jackie Bricker
Secretary



This and that:

- The next Director's mtg is Jan 11, 2006 at 4:30. It will be held at the VGANJ Convention in Atlantic City at the Borgata Hotel Casino.
- MADMC 2006 to be held in Reading, PA, Feb 22-26, at the Sheraton Hotel. More info at www.madmc.com
- Be sure to send in your membership forms for 2006.
- For questions, feedback, or suggestions regarding this newsletter contact editor Pegi Ballister-Howells at 609-426-1690 or Pegi@comcast.net
- We are seeking recipes for the recipe page on the website. Send recipes you are willing to share to Pegi.

New Jersey Farmer's Direct Marketing Association

Direct News.....

December 2005

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From the President: Working Together

The onset of a new calendar year brings in turn the beginning of a new growing season. Marketing is always a key component to a successful farming operation. The rapid advance of development in the State brings the one major advantage of a larger target audience for those of us that direct market. As development pushes further south, these opportunities and challenges present themselves to farmers that had, until recently, been too isolated to make this type of produce marketing seem attractive. This is changing rapidly.

Some of these growers may have had a taste of the benefits of marketing directly to the consumer by participating in any of the many tailgate markets that have become established throughout the State. Most are located in the more heavily populated areas, but a map of the 79 markets shows the entire State dotted with market locations.

Virtually all direct marketers grow some produce for their markets, making them potential or actual members of the Vegetable Growers Association of New Jersey. In addition, the same farmers are on

the cutting edge of the emerging and thriving agri-tourism aspect of the farming industry. Many direct marketers depend on festivals and seasonal activities to draw in a major part of their customer base and income.

As a result of this overlap of goals and challenges, it would be mutually beneficial to work together whenever possible. As a united voice, farmers facing similar challenges have a stronger platform from which to speak and a better chance of being heard. Together we can plan, build and continue to develop our marketing opportunities to help our industry stay strong. Our membership forms are included with this mailing. We invite all County Boards of Ag, all tailgate markets and councils, all farmers considering a new path in marketing directly to consumers, all related businesses, and most importantly, all Direct Marketers, to join. Together we will be stronger and better able to develop to our full potential. Our potential.....is enormous.

Neil Robson, President

January Director's Meeting to Discuss General Session to be Held in March

During the November Board of Director's Meeting, the topic of holding a meeting for the entire membership was introduced. This would be an opportunity for all member to voice their concerns and to network among their peers. At this early planning phase, this is expected to be a dinner meeting with a guest speaker as well as time some for feedback from the attendees. NJFDMA wants to meet the needs of this expanding aspect of our industry. There have been successes and failures. We sometimes face issues with local officials that want to regulate emerging marketing practices. As an organization, the only way to address emerging issues is to hear from the members.

The organizing meeting will be held at the Annual Convention of the VGANJ held in Atlantic City. We ask that all Directors and/or their alternates meet us at the **Borgata Hotel Casino on January 11 at 4:30**. Give some thought to what you would like to see as the focus of a General Session. Suggestions for outstanding marketers that would be willing to speak would be welcome. Names of vendors that supply particularly useful or unusual products would also be appreciated. Also, suggestions for next summer's twilight meeting would allow for early planning.

We look forward to seeing you there. *The Officers and Directors NJFDMA*



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Be Direct!

New NJFDMA Website! www.njfdma.org

The new NJFDMA website is almost ready to go. You can visit the site and look around. We are awaiting a update on the history page, and at the moment very few markets are listed. As soon as we get your 2006 membership information, Jackie Bricker, NJFDMA Secretary, will be able to put the data into the site. Please note that Christmas trees have been added to the list of products available so be sure to add that info to your forms when appropriate.

The site is cheerful and user friendly. There are lots of marketing images that change with each click of the mouse. The recipe page will need to be updated on occasion, so please send any recipes you think may be appropriate to Jackie. Newsletters will be archived for future reference



Sign Stickers Will Be Mailed Out

Metal signs indicating membership in the NJFDMA were mailed to members in 2005. In the lower corner there is a space for the year. 2006 stickers will be sent to all members that renew their membership. New members will receive a sign and a sticker. These are used to indicate current status in the organization. Remember to replace the stickers so the public is aware of your current status and reminded that your market is part of a larger industry.

Agri-tourism AMP Prepared by SADC

An AMP is an Agricultural Management Practice. The "A" is sometimes applied as "Accepted" or "Approved", but either way, once an AMP is approved by the SADC it becomes the standard by which farmers can draw protection.

There are two sides to having established AMPs. Once a standard rule of operation is delineated, it has the potential of being abused in the pursuit of local diligence and permitting. On the other hand, in the absence of AMPs, it falls under the jurisdiction of County Ag Development Boards to determine if a farmer's operation is a reasonable approach to handling whatever practice has been questioned. While CADB's provide a critical service, the process can result in delays that cost the farmer significantly in lost opportunity. While neither the decision of a CADB or adhering to an established AMP is law, these protections are strong support and in most cases hold if the issue con-

tinues to be questioned in court.

The proposed Agri-tourism AMP received mixed reviews. An earlier version was prepared by Rutgers Extension. The SADC added what has been called more "bureaucracy" and hence the opportunity for permit requirements and intrusion of other government agencies. Suggestions have been made to "grandfather" in those farms that have been holding agri-tourism type events in the same way over the years. On the other hand, some farms have been oppressed by a constant increase in demands by local agencies. Farms in areas with such enthusiastic local officials would receive immediate protection once the AMP was adopted.

Revisions to the draft are underway. The new version will either be released as a second draft or as a Proposed Rule. If a draft, it will be recirculated for comment. Proposed Rules have a 60 day comment period.



NJ Agri-tourism Industry Advisory Council

is charged with developing and expanding the agri-tourism industry in the state. However, the current scope of the industry is unknown since there has never been any formal evaluation. To determine the impact of agri-tourism on the state's economy, the NJDA authorized RU's Food Policy Institute to conduct a comprehensive one-year study. This study, now in its final stages, should be able to debut its findings at the NJ State Ag Convention in February.

The five objectives are:

- 1) Identify NJ farms that offer any agri-tourism activity.
- 2) Examine perceptions of the opportunities and challenges presented by agri-tourism.
- 3) Document the type and scale of agri-tourism activities.
- 4) Evaluate the characteristics of farms engaging in agri-tourism, including economic and non-economic benefits.
- 5) Conduct a preliminary review of ordinances in a cross-section of municipalities to assess compatibility with agri-tourism industry development.

The Food Policy Institute is also going to help the Department upgrade its "static" agri-tourism website into an interactive, online GIS-based map.