Welcome to the very first issue of Somerset County’s agricultural newsletter - a joint publication of the Somerset County Board of Agriculture and Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension. We have a great deal to talk about and be proud of in the agricultural community, and we want to “show off” a bit to you all. In this issue we highlight two recently honored members of the farm community, the late Stanley Kanach, and George Rude - both of whom have made, and are making huge contributions to your county and community. Published quarterly, we hope this newsletter will introduce you to area farm operations, issues effecting agriculture and land use, and to events of interest to you and your family. Check in to see how we are working at keeping Somerset County Green and Growing!

Joanne Powell, President
Somerset County Board of Agriculture

Nick Polanin
Somerset County Agriculture and Resource Management Agent

Green and Growing
Agricultural News and Issues for Somerset County

Stanley Kanach
2006 Distinguished Service to NJ Agriculture Citation

The late Stanley Kanach was a dedicated farmer and owner of River Lea Farm, a beautiful, meticulously cared for dairy, forage and grain operation covering 875 acres nestled in Somerset County. Mr. Kanach was always very proud of the farm he built and wanted to share his business by assisting others with learning about New Jersey's agricultural industry.

River Lea Farm held several Somerset County Dairy Open Houses with gatherings of as many as 3,000 people at a time. The New Jersey Agricultural Society's Teachers Tour came through for an up-close and personal look at Kanach's dairy operation. Governor Christie Whitman utilized his farm to promote a ballot question, which created a long term funding source for the Farmland Preservation Program. The Governor also used Stanley's farm as a backdrop for signing a USDA requested drought declaration when Somerset County was hit by the worst drought damage in the state.

He had a passion for the land and never tired of trying to help others understand the importance of farming. He was an active member of the New Jersey Farm Bureau, Somerset County Board of Agriculture, Belle Mead Farmers Co-Op and Consumers-Farmer Milk Co-Op. He received a number of awards for his work, including the Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District Cooperator in 1983 and 1992. He was the first in the state to receive the Dairy of Distinction Award, which he received twice.

Stanley and Mary Ann Kanach were married and business partners for 62 years. Stanley kept himself busy and sought knowledge to make his farm and agriculture better in New Jersey. Stanley Kanach died August 26, 2004, at the golden age of 86.

Presented February 7, 2006 at the State Agricultural Convention, Tropicana Casino and Resort, Atlantic City, NJ, in public recognition of contributions to the betterment of our agricultural industry and rural life.
FSA Announces Emergency Loan Program
Termination Date of Program: 09/11/2006

All qualified farm operators in both the primary (designated) counties and contiguous counties, are eligible for low-interest emergency (EM) loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have until the termination date of the designation to apply for the loans to help cover part of their actual losses. The termination date is eight months from the date of the designation by the Secretary, excluding weekends and Federal holidays. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of programs available, in addition to the emergency loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

NJ NURSERY & GREENHOUSE FILM COLLECTION SITES FOR 2006
Year Round Collection Sites

Cumberland County Solid Waste Complex, 169 Jesse Bridge Road, Deerfield, New Jersey. Located off Route 55, Exit 29 (Sherman Avenue-Route 552). ACCEPTS ONLY FILM FROM NJ. Contact: Dennis DeMatte, Jr. (856) 825-3700. Prior to delivery, all growers must call the Cumberland County Improvement Authority to establish an account. Growers using a licensed solid waste hauler must inform the Authority prior to delivery, Monday-Friday 7:30 - 3:30, Saturday by appointment.

Drop-off Requirements:
- Film must be rolled into manageable bundles
- If grower chooses to tie the bundle (not required), the tie must be made of greenhouse or nursery film.
- Material must be free from all debris including wood, shrink wrap, mulch film, drip tape, nails and any other material foreign to said film.

Burlington County Occupational Training Center, 130 Hancock Lane, Mt. Holly, New Jersey. Located off NJ Turnpike Exit 5 or Rte. 295 Exit 47A. ACCEPTS FILM FROM NJ AND OUT-OF-STATE. Contact: Kevin Carducci (609) 267-6889 ext. 160, Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday 8 am – 4 pm.

Drop-off requirements:
- Film must be bundled and tied (the tie must be made of greenhouse or nursery film).
- Material must be free of any debris.
- Film that contains any material other than nursery or greenhouse film will be rejected by the collection site.

Call Karen Kritz, Agricultural Economic Development, NJ Department of Agriculture (609) 984-2506, for further details or clarifications.

Raritan Watershed Farmers Can Apply for Benefits through the Conservation Security Program

Tony Kramer, New Jersey State Conservationist for USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced that farmers in the Raritan may apply for benefits through the Conservation Security Program (CSP) between February 13 and March 31, 2006.

“Last year NRCS initiated CSP in New Jersey in the Cohansey-Maurice Watershed,” Kramer said. “We are pleased to offer this program to conservation-minded farmers in New Jersey’s Raritan Watershed this year.”

The Raritan Basin Watershed, selected for CSP program funding in 2006, covers approximately 1,100 square miles and includes parts of seven counties. Almost 19% of the Watershed is in agricultural land use, mostly along the North Branch and South Branch of the Raritan River.
Conservation Security Program (continued)

FARMERS CAN QUALIFY FOR CSP BENEFITS BY APPLYING AND DOCUMENTING HIGH LEVELS OF ON-FARM CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT WITH THE ABILITY TO EARN INCREASED PAYMENTS BY ADDING AND/OR EXPANDING CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES. MINIMUM SOIL AND WATER RESOURCE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA APPLY.

CSP PARTICIPANTS MAY RECEIVE AS MUCH AS $45,000 ANNUALLY FOR A PERIOD OF TEN YEARS. INTERESTED PRODUCERS MUST BRING A COMPLETED CSP SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKBOOK TO THEIR LOCAL NRCS OFFICE IN ORDER TO SIGN UP FOR THE PROGRAM. THE SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKBOOK IS AVAILABLE AT ANY USDA SERVICE CENTER OR ONLINE: WWW.NJ.NRCS.USDA.GOV/PROGRAMS/CSP

NRCS HAS OTHER TOOLS TO ASSIST PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS, SUCH AS APPLICATION FORMS, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, AND PAYMENTS SCHEDULES, AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AND DOWNLOAD ON THEIR WEBSITE. AFTER THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED, AN ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW WILL BE SCHEDULED. AT THE INTERVIEW, PRODUCERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO HAVE RECORDS DEMONSTRATING THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR THE PROGRAM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT JANICE REID, ASSISTANT STATE CONSERVATIONIST FOR PROGRAMS AT (732) 537-6042 OR THE FRENCHTOWN DISTRICT OFFICE AT (908) 782-4614 EXT. 3.
“Bee-ginner’s Beekeeping Program” (continued)
in mentoring Bee-Ginner participants and providing technical assistance
throughout the following year, to ensure that the new beekeepers get a
successful start. The Department of Agriculture will provide financial
assistance to the New Jersey Beekeepers Association in their mentoring
effort.

“Because of this program, several students who attend the Rutgers
beekeeping short course will be able to get their start in keeping bees,”
said Bob Hughes, President of the New Jersey Beekeepers Association.
“Also, with more new beekeepers, there is a chance that some of them
will become interested enough to become what we call ‘Commercial
Beekeepers,’ who make a living renting bees to crop farmers who
require bees for good crop production.”

There has been a drop in beekeepers in New Jersey in the last several
years from an estimated four to five thousand to a present estimate of
about 2,500. The New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service reports that
in 2004 there were 12,000 honey-producing bee colonies in the state,
which yielded 324,000 pounds of honey. The value of production was
$447,000.

The 2006 “Bee-ginning Beekeepers” course will be held April 7 to 9 on
Cook College Campus in New Brunswick. To register online, visit
http://cookce.rutgers.edu/courses/current/ae0401ca06.html.

For more information, contact Paul Raybold, State Apiarist for the New
Jersey Department of Agriculture at (609) 292-5440 or visit the
Department’s website at www.state.nj.us/agriculture/plant/bee.htm.

Tree Seedlings for Reforestation

The New Jersey Forest Service announced their
annual tree seedling sale for reforestation projects
throughout the state. Reforestation is an important
part of the conservation and stewardship of the
natural resources of New Jersey. Orders are accepted
through March 31, 2006 and delivery or pickup is
available up to April 30.

Seedlings are available in both conifers and hardwoods, with no
minimum acreage required to be eligible for seedling purchase.
Minimum order is 100 seedlings per species, or one packet. Conditions
of sale include seedlings solely for legitimate reforestation projects and
not for ornamental plantings or Christmas tree production. Also
seedlings may not be resold or removed from the planted property except
for thinning. Conifers available include Norway spruce, Japanese larch,
and White, Pitch, Shortleaf and Japanese black pines. Available
hardwoods include Oaks (Northern red, Chestnut, Pin and Willow) and
Green ash, Tulip poplar, Sweetgum, and Persimmon. Shrubs and other
selections may be available. Please contact the NJ Forest Service at 732-
928-0029 for an up to date listing of available seedlings.

Agricultural Safety Awareness Program Week
March 5-11, 2006

The Farm Bureau Safety and Health Network has designated
March 5-11 as Agricultural Safety Awareness Program Week. The
2006 theme, “Step Up to the Plate for Farm Safety”, celebrates the
many positive steps the agricultural community is making in creating
safer farms and ranches for farmers, their family members and
employees. Like spring training in baseball though, preparation prior
to the season and practice are essential in creating a more
successful year. Nolan Ryan, Hall of Fame pitcher, rancher and Farm
Bureau member joins the effort nationally by asking everyone to
make safety a part of their spring training. This effort will focus
attention on agricultural safety issues prior to planting, and
provide reminders that, in the rush of completing tasks on farms and
ranches, producers need to take
time to act safely and to repair or
replace safety devices that protect
them, their family members, and
employees from injuries and
fatalities.

The American Farm Bureau
Foundation for Agriculture serves
as a facilitator of state Farm
Bureau farm safety and education
programs. For information on farm
safety programs and available
training resources, please visit the
website:
NRCS Offers $250,000 for 2006 New Jersey Conservation Innovation Grants Competition

Projects that address natural resource concerns or technology transfer with innovative techniques or approaches may be eligible for funding through the Conservation Innovation Grant program administered by USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). State Conservationist Tony Kramer announced that up to $250,000 is available for the 2006 New Jersey competition. The application period for the statewide competition will close on March 27. Selected projects may receive up to 50 percent of the total project cost with a maximum award of $75,000 for each project.

“This is an excellent opportunity for state and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and individuals to help develop, implement and transfer innovative environmental solutions to natural resource problems,” Kramer said. Projects may be from one to three years in length. Grants will fund projects that focus on water resources, soil resources, atmospheric resources, grazing land and forest health through on-the-ground conservation or the implementation of innovative technologies related to on-farm energy efficiency, market-based resources management, and improved forage production. “What we are looking for is innovation. We want projects that bring new technologies directly to Garden State farmers.”

More information can be found online on the federal eGrants website (http://www.grants.gov/), on the NJ NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants web site (www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig), or by contacting Janice Reid, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs (janice.reid@nj.usda.gov or (732) 537-6042).
SOMERSET COUNTY FAMILY NAMED “HORSEPERSON” OF THE YEAR

(TRENTON) – The New Jersey Equine Advisory Board has named the Chapot Family of Neshanic Station 2005 Horseperson of the Year. Frank and Mary Chapot and their two daughters were awarded the Governor’s Trophy by state Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus at a dinner on Saturday, January 28, at the Freehold Gardens Hotel in Freehold.

“The Chapots are nationally and internationally respected for their accomplishments in show jumping and their leadership in the sport,” said Secretary Kuperus. “We honor them for their constant support of the equine industry in New Jersey and admire them for their incredible list of achievements.”

Frank Chapot is a two-time Olympic Silver Medal winner and Captain of the United States Equestrian Team, of which he has been a member since 1956. He coached medal-winning teams all over the world, designed courses for all major shows and judged most of the major horse shows in the U.S. and Canada. He was inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame and received the USA Equestrian Lifetime Achievement Award.

Frank’s wife, Mary, rode for the U.S. Equestrian Team in show jumping for a decade, competing in two Olympic Games and two Pan American Games, where she was an individual and team gold medalist. She is a senior rated national judge in three disciplines and an international judge for show jumping. She was inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 1992.

Together, Frank and Mary Chapot own and operate Chado Farms, a breeding and training farm with approximately 40 horses in residence.

Their daughter, Laura Chapot, was named American Grand Prix Association Rookie of the Year in 1995. She has gone on to score many Grand Prix victories over the years. She was a member of the U.S. Equestrian Team’s successful 1997 European Show Jumping Tour, winning classes at each show, and the Nations’ Cup at Rotterdam, The Netherlands. She enjoys training riders at all levels. She and her students have won Circuit Championships each year on the major winter and summer tours.

Wendy Chapot Nunn, a licensed Certified Public Accountant and Senior Manager at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, was named Junior Horseperson of the Year in the late 80’s and was an individual and team silver medalist in the Junior Championships from 1984 to 1988. She has been a Hunter, Hunt Seat Equitation and Jumper Judge since 1988 and a licensed course designer since 2002.

The Governor’s Trophy for Horseperson of the Year was established by the New Jersey Equine Advisory Board 49 years ago.

RCRE and ARMA Announce Newest Hire

Mr. Jhilson Ortiz is the newest hire in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Management Agents of RCRE.

Mr. Ortiz earned B.S. degrees in agribusiness from Louisiana State University, and in agriculture from the Pan American School of Agriculture, El Zamorano in Honduras. He is a volunteer member of the USAID John A. Ogonowski Farmer to Farmer program and has served overseas as a technical assistant for food product development under the sponsorship of Winrock International and World Vision. He has several years of experience working with food manufacturing companies in the tri-state area, and served as an adviser to local and international agribusiness enterprises.

In his capacity with RCRE, Mr. Ortiz will assist agricultural producers, wholesalers and retailers, marketers and processors in various aspects of traditional, alternative and value-added markets, product development and market expansion. In addition, he will work with growers to improve farm business and financial management skills, and will develop educational materials, curricula and educational programs to provide current and innovative marketing and business management information.

Jhilson Ortiz can be reached in Mercer County at 609-989-6830 or by ortiz@rcre.rutgers.edu.
AGRICULTURE IN SOMERSET COUNTY: A Brief Overview

Over the years, agriculture in Somerset County has changed from what was traditional in rural areas of the county to an industry that serves the needs of its suburban, affluent, and highly educated population.

The area of Somerset County was carved out of Middlesex County in 1688. Early immigrants to the area were Dutch, English, Scottish, French Huguenots and Palatine German ancestry. They came to the rich fertile lands along the Millstone and Raritan rivers, which were very conducive to farming.

Agriculture in the county began to change after World War II, when the development of suburbs became more prevalent, shrinking available farmland. Today, agriculture in Somerset County is highly diversified, from vintners to ornamentals and bedding plants to field crops. With the tremendous growth of residential and commercial development, traditional agricultural land use has given rise to an ever-increasing nursery and floriculture industry. This consumer driven market has altered the agribusiness in Somerset County to now include strong market growth of producers growing fruits and vegetables, christmas trees and other nursery and ornamental stock, and the operating of roadside farm stands, to name a few.

Integrated Crop Management principles, including water quality and conservation, erosion control, crop rotation, nutrient management, and habitat management all remain an integral part of sustainable agriculture here in Somerset County.

Farmland Preservation - The Osterman Nursery

Ken and Al Osterman are the third generation of nurserymen in their family. The nursery began in 1914 in Middlesex County. Ken and Al started planting nursery stock at the farm in Neshanic in the early '60s, while they were still operating out of the Middlesex County property. The farm now consists of 250 acres. The nursery offers 165 varieties used in their own landscape design and construction jobs and also sold wholesale from Connecticut to Virginia.

Osterman Nursery has a reputation for quality and service. They have been selling such trees for 27 years and have customers who have 24 trees in their landscapes that were once Christmas trees purchased at Osterman's Nursery. Deer damage is a serious and persistent problem at the nursery and in all of agriculture. Rows of the most severely damaged plants, usually representing an investment of four to five years, are annually disposed. The pond, two acres plus, was constructed in 1961, with engineering assistance by the Soil Conservation Service, to provide irrigation water for the nursery crops.

The sloping land has a great potential for erosion, and this is one reason the Ostermans do not grow their crops in fields where the soil is exposed. Although the grass cover competes with the nursery stock for water and nutrients, it holds the soil in place and makes expensive herbicides largely unnecessary. Mowing regularly between the rows can reduce weed competition. Trees are dug by hand or by machine at the nursery. The Ostermans believe that hand digging, although more time consuming, is essential for coarse rooted trees such as Gingko and Catalpa. If the soil is very wet, machine digging is easier. Since this is often true in the spring, machine digging allows them to start work earlier in the growing season.

The Ostermans sold their development rights in 1994. Osterman Nursery can be sold to new owners one day, but only as a working farm. The land will be in agriculture forever, returning tax dollars to the community, requiring very little in the way of services, and adding to the high quality of life here in Somerset County.
George Rude and The Griggstown Quail Farm Recognized for Outstanding Marketing

The 2006 Tony Russo Farmers Marketing Award

George Rude of Griggstown Quail Farm in Griggstown, Somerset County was recently awarded the 2006 Tony Russo Farmers Marketing Award at the New Jersey Agricultural Society's Delegates Luncheon during the State Agricultural Convention in Atlantic City. Ryck Suydam of Suydam Farms in Franklin, Somerset County nominated George for his persistence, dedication and innovative marketing techniques in a growing population area of Central Jersey. Presented by NJ Agricultural Society President Dave Kanach, The Tony Russo Farmers Marketing Award is annually presented to those who have creatively marketed and promoted New Jersey's agricultural products.

The Griggstown Quail Farm started in 1975 with twelve Bobwhite quail breeders on 2 acres. Today, farming on 85 acres plus space on an adjacent farm in Hillsborough, they not only do business with many New York City restaurants, but also sell to D'Artagnan, Inc., a food distributor, and O. Ottomanelli and Sons, a meat market corporation. You will see their quail in many quality food markets in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New England.

Based on the growing demand for their quail, they expanded and began raising ringneck pheasants, chukar partridge, mallard ducks, and poussin. Their first incubator held 209 eggs, while today’s incubators have a capacity of 42,000 eggs each. Growth over the years has also resulted in capacity of over 100,000 sq feet of barn space, over ten acres of outside ranges and seven full-time employees.

Today, they deliver into New York City three times a week and frequently ship birds across the United States. They also raise and sell farm fresh turkeys for Thanksgiving, so mark your calendars and call to make your reservation for the 2006 holidays.

You can learn more about Griggstown Quail Farm by visiting their Griggstown Farm Market on Bunkerhill Road (Rt.632, 1/10 mile Southeast of Canal Road intersection), calling them at 908-359-9414, or visiting their web site: www.griggstownquailfarm.com/