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NJ Agriculture rolls into Atlantic City

February 13, 2020



The 105th New Jersey State Agricultural Convention and Trade Show was held Feb. 4-6 at the Harrah's Resort and Waterfront Conference Center in Atlantic City. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture hosted the convention in cooperation with the Vegetable Growers Association of New Jersey and Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

On Tuesday, Feb. 4, the VGANJ opening night cocktail hour featured its auction to raise money for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. The auction raised \$8,580.

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In NJDA Secretary Douglas H. Fisher's state of the state address on Wednesday morning, he touted the value of the fruits and vegetables New Jersey grows and the distribution of nationwide subsidies.

"I sometimes marvel at how just five commodities — corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton and rice — receive the lion's share of agricultural subsidies. Seven states in the middle of the country get 45 percent of all those subsidies nationwide," said Fisher. Yes, we in New Jersey do grow some of these crops, and they are important to our agricultural production as a whole. But what about fruits and vegetables that we and nutritionists and the USDA tout as so vitally important to good nutrition and health?"

He also railed about how nationally, Jersey blueberries and Jersey peppers — along with California navels, Idaho potatoes, cranberries, peaches, apples, asparagus and so on — are considered specialty crops.

“They are mainstream crops that have somehow become marginalized by row crops,” said Fisher.

Later in the day, The Patrick J. Mullen Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Award was present to Donaldson Farms.

At the dinner banquet that evening, long-time farmers Jane Brodhecker, of Sussex County, and James Etsch, of Middlesex County, were honored with Distinguished Service to Agriculture Citations by the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture.

“Jane Brodhecker and James Etsch have each made themselves an integral part of New Jersey agriculture with their decades of service to our farmers and their dedication and standard of excellence they each bring to their own farms,” said Fisher. “Jane’s expertise and experience on the State Agricultural Development Committee provided much needed insight to our farmland preservation efforts. James has served on several boards and agriculture-related associations for the last 30 years while continuing to grow his own operation.”

In keeping with tradition, the New Jersey Agricultural Society presented the Tony Russo Farmers Market Award and the Philip Alampi Industry Award at its luncheon on Wednesday.

In addition to the awards presented, distinguished speakers included former Maine commissioner of Agriculture Walter Whitcomb and New Jersey State Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling.

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