
- Advertisement -

New Jersey Department of Agriculture champions Jersey Fresh

By

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The New Jersey Department of Agriculture promotes the many varieties of fruits and vegetables grown in New Jersey and encourages consumers to look for Jersey Fresh, bringing awareness to real, locally grown products consumers are seeking.



Secretary Douglas Fisher at

Happy Day Farm in
Manalapan, NJ.

Any produce farmer in New Jersey may apply to be a part of the Jersey Fresh program and label their products with the iconic logo that was established in 1984 and has millions of dollars of promotion over the years behind it.

“By being flexible with consumer-facing advertising, we are able to adjust our messaging throughout the growing season to highlight specific products as they become ready for store shelves,” said Joe Atchison III, NJDA’s director of marketing and development division. “In these times, shoppers want fresher, locally-harvested products. When seeing Jersey Fresh, they know exactly what they are getting and where it comes from.”

New Jersey remains a strong grower of fall favorites such as broccoli, cabbages, cauliflower, cranberries, kale, lettuce, potatoes, along with spinach and other greens and a number of hard squashes like butternut, acorn and spaghetti.

Though 2021 has been a good year, the state’s growers are not without their challenges.

“Supply chain issues have been a primary concern, that includes ensuring their product can be delivered in a timely fashion,” Atchison said. “New Jersey is within five hours of major metropolitan areas such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington, DC, making it an ideal location where food buyers can source their produce.”

The NJDA is in constant communication with various produce councils to help its growers with any questions that arise.

“Between our marketing efforts to promote different crops, along with aiding growers with any issues they may face from the environment, we do everything we can to help them become successful,” Atchison said. “Additionally, we communicate with commodity councils and cooperative organizations

to make them aware of when grant funding becomes available for research, education or marketing efforts that can assist in improving their segment of agriculture in New Jersey.”

Two initiatives that found success this year were commodity promotions for blueberries and peaches on three different New Jersey boardwalks during the summer season. It included a giveaway of Jersey Fresh blueberries on National Blueberry Day, and Jersey Fresh peaches on National Eat a Peach Day. These promotions were done with the cooperation of the New Jersey Blueberry Council and the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council and were very popular in each location.

Over the next year, the NJDA plans to begin growing its “Made With Jersey Fresh” value-added products program. Processors who use a Jersey Fresh agricultural ingredient in their product can enroll in the program. This allows New Jersey farmers to extend their season and offer Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables year-round.

“Overall, fall crops are looking outstanding as farms that feature pick-your-own options for produce such as apples and pumpkins are expecting large turnouts this fall,” Atchison said. “Our greens have been faring well also, such as spinach, lettuce, broccoli, and kale, among others. As nights begin to cool, we are seeing more vibrant coloring on the apples and cranberries.”

To better assist retailers, NJDA offers Jersey Fresh point-of-purchase materials such as banners, price cards and aprons and hopes to see an increase in the number of stores taking advantage of these complimentary promotional items. Additionally, the NJDA would prefer the Jersey Fresh brand used in advertising both in-store and on ad rather than generic local promotions.

“New Jersey has a very diverse growing area in terms of its temperatures and soil types,” Atchison said. “Some regions of the state are excellent for various fruits, and while other parts of the state have ideal growing conditions and soils for vegetables. These various microclimates allow New Jersey farmers to provide over 100 different varieties of fruits and vegetables throughout the growing season.”

He added that the state also has farmers who grow crops to meet the demand for residents originally from other areas of the world who are accustomed to having produce not widely grown in the U.S.

That adds to the appeal of Jersey-grown produce.

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