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NJDA has a strong relationship with Philadelphia

By

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While the [New Jersey Department of Agriculture](#) works for the best interests of New Jersey growers, it's also heavily invested in its close neighbor, Philadelphia.

“New Jersey and Philadelphia’s fruit and vegetable inspectors work in conjunction,” said Joe Atchison, NJDA’s director of marketing and development division. “Philadelphia inspectors inspect produce in New Jersey as needed and produce is sent to the state to be re-inspected and repacked.”

New Jersey is also working with Food Export Northeast in Philadelphia on opportunities for multi-state cooperation agreements. NJDA Secretary Douglas Fisher is a member of the Philadelphia Society for Promotion of Agriculture and participates in their meetings.

“With several of our southern counties adjacent to Philadelphia, we provide the opportunity for those residents to visit our farms, whether it be to purchase Jersey Fresh produce, or to participate in agritourism, and other events,” Atchison said. “Much of our Jersey Fresh produce is within a short drive of the Philadelphia market where we can supply restaurants and other food outlets. We also have good amounts of New Jersey produce that is sold to the Produce Terminal Market in Philadelphia.”

In New Jersey, the Jersey Fresh season is underway with asparagus and early crops, such as lettuce, kale, spinach and other leafy greens becoming available.

“We will also have strawberries for much of the state starting in early to mid-May, before blueberries are ready in early June,” Atchison said. “Growers have reported drastic increases in the prices for fertilizers and fuel, which will add to production costs.”

Overall, the crop outlook has been good, even though shifts in temperatures have caused some natural thinning on some fruit trees in certain areas. At this point, the NJDA expects to have a full crop and are anticipating its growers producing high quality fruits and vegetables as always.

The department has several Jersey Fresh marketing initiatives planned for the season that include advertising on digital billboards across many of the state’s heavily traveled roads, including the bridges that connect Philadelphia and New Jersey, as well as several other promotions to highlight various produce as it comes into season.

“We have many growers that are proud to be continuing multi-generational farming operations along with our many new and beginning farmers,” Atchison said.

Members of the NJDA attend various meetings and events, such as the Vegetable Growers Association of New Jersey’s Annual Convention, along with county board of agriculture, and crop

specific council meetings, to learn about what their concerns are, and offer support. Additionally, the NJDA provides training and educational visits to address food safety on the farm as part of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

In January Governor Murphy signed into a law a bill where supermarkets in New Jersey can only use the “local” label for produce grown in the state, a big plus for New Jersey growers.

“By and large, New Jersey farmers are innovative and forwarding thinking and do an outstanding job at anticipating market trends and adjusting accordingly with what and how much of a crop they grow,” Atchison said. “They also do an outstanding job of reacting to different challenges quickly in the marketplace.”

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About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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