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NJDA is getting the word out about Jersey Produce

By

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New Jersey is home to a thriving farming community, producing more than 100 different types of crops and feeding consumers not only in the Northeast but around the country.

It is the job of the state's Department of Agriculture to serve those interests and do all it can to not only help farmers in the state succeed but get the word out to the rest of the country about New Jersey produce, its broad variety and its excellent quality.

"Each of our divisions works with farmers to assist with any number of issues that may arise," said Joe Atchison III, NJDA marketing and development division director. "This includes performing such duties as preparing, protecting, providing, promoting, preventing and preserving the many agricultural resources and interests in the state. One of our primary goals as a department is to serve our constituents and facilitate the long-term success of the industry in New Jersey."

Atchison added that the department's Food and Nutrition Division is charged with overseeing the school, summer, and child and adult care feeding programs, while also working with the six emergency feeding organizations throughout the state. In one capacity or another, the NJDA interacts with every New Jersey family on a daily basis, he said.

He added that the department also works with farmers on an individual basis to take care of their specific needs. "New Jersey farmers are highly adaptable to various situations and market fluctuations, as well as innovative in finding ways to continually develop and/or restructure their business models," Atchison said. "Some growers have contracts with companies before their season begins; some are more involved in direct marketing efforts, such as community farmers markets, their own on-farm stands, and community supported agriculture; and with co-ops that allow a ready-made market for their product; and more fruits and vegetable growers are partnering with supermarkets so that their produce can become more widely available when in-season."

The "Jersey Fresh" brand might be one of the most recognizable agricultural promotional efforts in the country. Started in 1984, the brand is now the longest running state agricultural brand in the U.S., Atchison noted. Along with in-store point of purchase materials, the department also markets various produce as it comes into season with digital billboards across the state's busy highways, targeted online advertising, social media campaigns, radio spots and transit advertisements. To get attention during the summer months, the department flies banners across the Jersey Shore and holds special promotional days at three boardwalks on the shore during three separate occasions in the summer as well.

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