

## What the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act means for New Jersey

In 2010, New Jersey had 10,300 farms producing \$1.2 billion for the state's economy.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 2010, New Jersey's agricultural exports were valued at \$228 million.

	<b>Value of receipts thousand \$</b>	<b>Percent of state total farm receipts</b>	<b>Percent of US value</b>
1. Greenhouse/nursery	451,135	43.3	2.9
2. Blueberries	62,510	6.0	9.7
3. Horses/mules	59,000	5.7	7.8
4. Tomatoes	32,386	3.1	1.4
5. Peaches	31,280	3.0	5.1

### **Maintains Strong Food Assistance Programs**

- **Strengthens SNAP Integrity:** The bill prevents lottery and gambling winners from participating in SNAP. It gives USDA additional tools to detect, investigate, and punish food stamp traffickers. It prevents college students who do not need assistance from misusing benefits. Additionally, it gives USDA additional authority to prevent the purposeful loss of food assistance EBT cards.
- **Commodity and Supplemental Food Program:** The bill reauthorizes this program at current funding levels and transitions it to seniors (phases women and children into WIC services) in order to better address that need.
- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program:** The bill provides an additional \$150 million to TEFAP in addition to current funding levels. New Jersey receives approximately 12 million pounds of commodities that are distributed to more than 400,000 needy individuals in the Garden State.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Promotes Healthy Choices in SNAP**

*In 2011, the average number of monthly participants using SNAP in New Jersey was 759,136.*

- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program:** This program provides coupons to eligible low-income seniors to be used at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and other community supported agriculture programs. It will be continued at \$103 million over the life of the Farm Bill.

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<sup>[1]</sup> <http://ers.usda.gov/StateFacts/NJ.htm#TCEC>

<sup>[2]</sup> <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/fn/fooddistrib/tefap.html>

- **Hunger-Free Communities Incentive Grants:** There will be new funding of \$100 million over five years for a national pilot to incentivize the purchase of fruits and vegetables at farmers markets by SNAP participants. It will be similar to the “Double-Up Food Bucks” program in Michigan.
- **SNAP Benefits in Community Supported Agricultures:** The bill includes a provision to clarify the ability of SNAP recipients to use benefits to purchase a share in a CSA.
- **Improves the Quality of Retail Stores Offering SNAP:** The bill requires that participating retailers stock more staple foods. Previously a qualified SNAP retailer had to carry two of the four staple food categories (dairy products, meat poultry or fish, fruits or vegetables, bread or cereals). The bill now requires that they carry food from three of the four categories. Additionally, the bill bans stores from participating in SNAP if more than 45 percent of their sales are attributable to liquor and tobacco products.

### Improved Access to Healthy Foods

- **Healthy Food Financing Initiative:** The bill authorizes funding of \$125 million to community development financial institutions to create revolving loan programs that will provide loans and grants to fresh healthy food retailers in order to overcome high costs of entry into underserved urban, suburban, and rural communities.
- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program:** This program gives selected schools a reimbursement for the cost of providing free fresh fruits and vegetables outside of breakfast and lunch to students during the day. The bill continues this program at the current funding level of \$150million per year.
- **Community Food Projects:** This program provides grants to eligible nonprofit organizations to improve community access to food through the development of innovative projects such as school-to-garden programs, low income cooking classes, agricultural entrepreneurship training, and urban greenhouse initiatives. Funding for this program was increased from \$5 million per year to \$10 million per year.

### Increased Support for Organics and Specialty Crops

Four of New Jersey’s top five agricultural commodities are specialty crops. New Jersey produces more than 9 percent of the nation’s blueberries and nearly 8 percent of green peppers. Greenhouse and nursery products make up over 40 percent of the state’s total agricultural receipts.

- **Specialty Crop Block Grants:** Funding for Block Grants is increased to \$70 million/year from \$55 million/year. This program provides funding to states to benefit producers and consumers of specialty crops through projects including food safety, nutrition, trade enhancement, education, research, promotion, marketing, and plant health programs.
- **Pest and Disease:** Funding for pest and disease mitigation efforts is increased. The bill consolidates the National Clean Plant Network, which produces clean pathogen free plant material for producers, into a larger program focused on plant pest and disease management, early detection and surveillance, and disaster prevention projects.

- **Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI):** Dedicates resources for organic research and extension activities that range from improving weed management and developing organic seed to disseminating best practice information and combatting pests and diseases. Funded at \$80 million mandatory.
- **Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI):** Dedicates resources for specialty crops in the areas of pest and disease management, efficiency, productivity, new technology and food safety. Funded at \$400 million mandatory.
- **National Organic Certification Cost Share Program:** This program helps organic farmers and handlers offset the costs of organic certification by providing a small reimbursement of no more than \$750 per year, capped at 75% of total certification costs. This program will now be funded through AMA at NRCS. Funding for this program was increased from \$22 million over 5 years to \$57.5 million over 5 years.
- **Organic Research and Extension Initiative:** This program funds research projects on organic agricultural systems, ranging from improving weed management and developing organic seed to enhancing environmental sustainability and carbon sequestration on organic farms. The bill increases funding for this program to \$80 million over 5 years from \$78 million over 5 years.
- **Organic Data Collection:** This program funds basic USDA data collection on the organic sector, which is important for organic market stabilization and for the development of appropriate crop insurance options. Funding for this program is continued at \$5 million until expended.
- **National Organic Program:** The National Organic Program ensures the integrity of the organic seal by enforcing standards and accrediting certifiers so that consumers are getting what they pay for when they choose the organic label. The bill includes \$5 million to upgrade NOP database technology. NOP is also given additional investigation and enforcement tools to ensure that certified organic producers and handlers are adhering to organic regulations.
- **Feasibility Study on an Organic Promotion Program:** The bill requires the Secretary to conduct a study on the feasibility of an organic promotion program.

### **Local Foods**

There are many roadside markets, farmers markets, and pick-your-own farms in the Garden State that benefit from the Farm Bill's focus on fresh, local foods.

- **The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program:** This program provides competitive grants to improve and expand farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. There will be additional funding within the program to help develop local food system infrastructure, like food hubs, targeted at serving low-income populations. In 2011, New Jersey received two grants from this program.

- **Local Food Data Initiative:** The bill directs USDA to collect data on the production and marketing of locally or regionally produced agricultural food products, facilitate interagency collaboration and data sharing on programs related to local and regional food systems, and monitor the effectiveness of programs designed to expand or facilitate local food systems.

## **Rural Development**

- The bill simplifies the definition of rural. Rural areas are now defined as communities and areas with a population of less than 50,000 and not contiguous or adjacent to an urbanized area. However, recognizing the uniqueness of our nation’s rural communities, the bill provides USDA with the flexibility to grant eligibility for rural development funding to communities that are contiguous and adjacent to urbanized areas if those communities are “rural in character.” Communities that are currently eligible for rural development funding shall maintain that eligibility for three years as the new definition is implemented.
- The bill gives USDA the authority to prioritize grant and loan applications that support regional approaches to community and economic development.
- The bill makes technical assistance an eligible project expense under the Community Facilities Loan and Grant Program.
- The bill authorizes a grant component for the Rural Broadband Program.

## **Streamlined Conservation Programs to Rebuild Wildlife Habitats**

Healthy habitats and clean, fishable waters are not only good for our environment, but they also support hunting, fishing, and bird watching that benefit rural economies and creates jobs.

- **Public Access to Private Land:** The bill continues to encourage private landowners to allow public access to their land for recreational uses such as hunting, fishing and bird watching. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentives Program receives \$40 million in mandatory funding in the bill.
- **Regional Conservation Partnerships Program:** The bill significantly expands opportunities for conservation organizations and local communities to partner with farmers to maintain watersheds and wildlife habitats.
- **Easement Program Protects Wetlands and Valuable Grasslands:** The bill streamlines and consolidates programs to create an easement program with mandatory funding to protect wetlands as well as farmland or grassland that is threatened by suburban sprawl. The bill protects access to wetland easements for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities.
- **Greater Focus on Wildlife Habitats:** The bill strengthens the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to increase support for wildlife habitats on working lands. At least five percent of the program funding is directed to projects that support wildlife habitats, and wildlife considerations can be included in the application selection process.

- **Conservation Reserve Program Continues to Support Habitat:** The Conservation Reserve Program is designed to prevent soil erosion and improve water quality. The bill establishes a new, 1.5-million acre grasslands enrollment option to encourage farmers to conserve critical grasslands. It also protects options for farmers and foresters to develop wildlife habitats on their land.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program and Locally Identified Resource Concerns:** The bill increases flexibility for wildlife habitat priorities to be included in the Conservation Stewardship Program, creating additional opportunities for conservation activities that benefit wildlife species.
- **Nationwide Sodsaver Provision to Preserve Critical Grassland Habitats:** The bill includes a nationwide provision to encourage farmers to protect critical grassland and prairie habitats and not convert that land to agricultural production. Grasslands are prime wildlife habitats that support healthier wildlife populations.

## Real Reform

- **Eliminates Direct Payments:** Direct Payments and two other farm programs are repealed, creating \$15 billion in savings for deficit reduction. Direct Payments are made to farmers regardless of losses or even if a crop is planted.
- **Ends Payments Made on Base Acres:** Farmers will no longer be paid for acres that are not actually planted. Historical base acres, many of which were determined in the 1980's, have long been the basis for determining farm program payments. Under the Committee-passed bill, farm program support will only be provided on acres that are actually planted to a crop and only when they suffer a price or yield loss.
- **Ends Farm Payments to Non-Farmers:** This bill closes the “management loophole” and ensures that benefits only go to actual farmers by tightening USDA’s definition of an actively engaged farmer.
- **Tightens Payment Limits & Ends Farm Payments to Millionaires:** No individual person can receive more than \$50,000 in farm program payments in any given year. This represents a decrease of over 50% from the 2008 Farm Bill. Any person with an adjusted gross income (AGI) of more than \$750,000 will be ineligible for farm program payments, which is a decrease from the total AGI limit of \$1.25 million in the 2008 Farm Bill.
- **Conservation Compliance:** Expands existing conservation compliance to cover the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and marketing loan programs. Additionally, a new requirement reduces the crop insurance premium subsidy for producers who plant crops on native sod.

## Support for New Jersey's Forests

- **Promotes Conservation for Private Forestland Owners:** Nonindustrial private forest owners have access to the full range of conservation programs in the Farm Bill, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. This bill also removes a cap on the number of forested acres allowed to be enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program at any one time. The program, already popular with forest owners, provides access to high levels of resource-benefitting conservation practices.
- The bill also reauthorizes the **Healthy Forest Reserve Program**, a voluntary program that enhances forest ecosystems to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, improve biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.
- **Protects Forests from Development:** Forest lands are facing developmental pressures from both residential growth and agriculture. The bill reauthorizes the Forest Legacy Program as well as the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program, which protect forests threatened by conversion to non-forest use.
- **Supports Forest Restoration and Rural Development:** Stewardship End-Result Contracting is given permanent authority in this bill. Previously authorized by an Appropriations bill and set to expire in 2013, this successful tool for accomplishing forest restoration work while providing value for local communities now has a place in the Farm Bill.
- **Addresses Forest Health Concerns:** Many of our national forest acres are threatened by insect infestation and disease. To address these risks to forest health, the bill requires the Secretary to designate treatment areas based on declining forest health due to insect and disease infestation. Where appropriate, the Secretary may treat acres to improve stand health and lower the potential of forest fires.

## Energy from Rural America

With new opportunities in bio-based manufacturing, advanced biofuels, and renewable energy, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 continues programs that are helping to create jobs while simultaneously reducing our nation's dependence on foreign oil.

- **Rural Energy for America Program:** The popular Rural Energy for America (REAP) program has helped nearly 4,000 farmers, ranchers and rural business owners lower their energy bills by installing renewable and energy efficient systems. The bill will provide a streamlined application process for farmers and rural businesses applying for small and medium sized projects.
- **Supports the Growing Bio-Based Economy:** The bill will reauthorize and modify USDA's BioPreferred Program and the Federal Government Procurement Preference Program. Many of the modifications are adopted from the "Make it Here, Grow it Here" initiative which includes reporting of biobased purchases by the federal agencies, auditing and enforcement of the biobased and education/outreach activities.

- **Promotes Advanced Bioenergy Production:** The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) program provides support for farmers and ranchers who wish to plant energy crops to produce and use biomass crops for conversion to advanced biofuels or bioenergy. Agricultural producers in BCAP project areas may contract with the Department of Agriculture to receive biomass crop establishment payments up to 75 percent of costs, plus annual payments in amounts determined by the Secretary in subsequent years to help to compensate for lost opportunity costs until crops are established.
- **Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels:** This program provides production payments for advanced bioenergy sources such as methane digesters, advanced biofuels and biopower.
- **Biodiesel Fuel Education Program:** The Biodiesel Fuel Education Program provides competitive grants to non-profit entities to provide information about the benefits of biodiesel fuel use to government and private organizations.

### **Support for Beginning Farmers**

- **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program:** Dedicates resources for training military veterans wishing to start farming. Continues the popular program which provides resources and training for individuals who want to start a career in farming. Funded at \$50 million mandatory.
- **Crop Insurance Assistance:** The bill provides nearly \$200 million in new funding for expanded access for crop insurance for beginning farmers. These improvements will lower the cost of crop insurance for beginning farmers, allowing the Risk Management Agency to consider a beginning farmer's previous experience in calculating their production history, and it will provide additional assistance when beginning farmers face natural disasters.