NEWS RELEASE

April Forums on Community Farmers Markets Will Highlight New Opportunities for New Jersey Farmers and Communities

Programs in Bordentown, Paterson and Bridgeton to Focus on Community Sponsored Outlets for Jersey Fresh Produce and on Locally Operated Specialty Food Marketing Events

New Brunswick, NJ--The Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) Food Innovation Center and Cooperative Extension will host a series of three forums this April to highlight the findings of the center’s research into farm earning opportunities and community farmers markets in New Jersey. The forums will report on extensive research conducted by the Rutgers NJAES Food Innovation Center in collaboration with the Food Policy Institute and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

Growers and community market sponsors will have the opportunity to learn about earning opportunities and operating practices identified through surveys and other research activities. The forums are also intended to provide growers and market sponsors with an opportunity to discuss how they might collaborate on improving and advancing the roles that community farmers markets play throughout the state.

With help from the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Office and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the Food Innovation Center has been studying the experiences of farmers and community farmers market managers. Through a series of surveys, focus groups sessions and one on one interviews, Food Innovation Center staff and researchers at the Food Policy Institute examined the economic impact that direct marketing through community farmers market is having on the state’s farms.
As a result of conversations with market managers and farmer vendors around the state and on
the basis of a careful analysis of a statewide survey of farmers that participate in community
farmers markets, the Food Innovation Center will focus attention on how to use community
farmers markets to make money, promote local agriculture and support community improvement
programs that either serve local populations or support the state’s extensive tourism industry as
agritourism destinations.

“One of the most remarkable aspects of community-based and sponsored farmers markets is their
ability to sustain their operations on their own from year to year,” said Food Innovation Center
director, Lou Cooperhouse. “They share common concerns regarding state health regulations,
risk management practices, marketing and advertising initiatives, road signage, and promotional
efforts. All want to provide growers with access to hungry customers who are eager to buy foods
freshly picked from fields, and all are providing a means for innovative new food items and
prepared food concepts to reach consumers.”

The three Farmers Market Forums are scheduled as follows:

- April 1, from 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Rutgers EcoComplex, located at 1200
  Florence-Columbus Road, Bordentown, NJ, 08505-4200. Contact: (609) 499-
  3600. Directions: [http://ecocomplex.rutgers.edu/about_us_directions.php](http://ecocomplex.rutgers.edu/about_us_directions.php)

- April 2, from 2:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Freeholder’s Meeting Room on the 1st floor
  of the Passaic County Administration Building Annex, 317 Pennsylvania Avenue,
  Paterson, NJ 07503, For further details, please call the Food Innovation Center at (856)
  459-1125.

- April 3, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Food Innovation Center, 87 East Commerce
  Street, Bridgeton, NJ 08302. For further details, please call the Food Innovation Center at
  (856) 459-1125.

Each forum will offer participants a chance to hear from representatives of the New Jersey
Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services,
marketing and community organizing experts and market managers. The forums will also offer
growers and potential farmers market organizers technical and business development assistance
that can help them improve their businesses.

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Program presentations at the forums will be full of practical, advice for farmers thinking about participating in a farmers market. They will also illustrate the service and neighborhood development roles that community farmers markets are playing in New Jersey and in other settings. They will highlight how community farmers markets are helping to sustain small scale and family owned agriculture enterprises and how they fit into a number of farm direct marketing models being used throughout New Jersey.

These forums are free of charge. Registration forms are available at:

http://www.foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/FarmersMarketRegistration.pdf