

Sussex County Agriculture Development Board Recommendations:



Photo by Donna Traylor

The SCADB notes the concerns expressed at the Public Meeting held on February 20th about entering the Farmland Preservation Program and urges the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee (NJSADC) to seek ways of :

- expediting the purchase of the development rights process,
- helping the farmer keep the financial benefits associated with the sale of development rights (e.g. by reducing the tax liability),
- ensuring that the rules governing restricted farms have sufficient flexibility to allow creative solutions to the ongoing issue of agriculture viability.

The SCADB urges the Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders to provide sufficient resources to provide for the purchase of development rights as well as the outreach and education that are necessary to accomplish program goals. The SCADB also recommends that sufficient resources be allocated to monitor farmland easements as required by the SADC and to pursue innovative techniques to encourage agricultural viability.

The SCADB recognizes the need and supports efforts to increase the number of high value crops or the addition of value to existing production to insure agricultural viability in the future. The Dairy Project initiative, the Incubator Project initiative and Agritourism are examples of programs or projects which can contribute to an increase in product value. Agritourism and other marketing initiatives (events, activities and services) for Sussex County farm produce, will expand the customer base in the greater metropolitan area. The SCADB supports these initiatives.

Although many municipalities support agriculture, the SCADB believes that the adoption of Right-To Farm ordinances as recommended by the SADC will benefit the agricultural industry in Sussex County.

Effective methods for reducing crop damage resulting from wildlife are needed. The SCADB recommends that effective and economical technologies for controlling wildlife be initiated.

Cost effective housing that blends in with local community aesthetics is needed to house farm workers. The SADC, in cooperation with county and municipal housing and community development organizations, should seek to create housing opportunities that are affordable and can be rented or purchased by families working on Sussex County farms.

The SCADB recommends that the SADC, in conjunction with Rutgers Cook College, develop accepted farmstand and farmstand parking area designs to insure that farmers seeking to install these improvements can address safety issues and yet maintain suitability and rural character.

The Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan Process

In November 2002 Morris Land Conservancy entered into an agreement and began working with the SCADB to develop a Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan for Sussex County.

During this process, the SCADB provided significant assistance in understanding agricultural trends, issues of agricultural viability and program goals. Donna Traylor, Daniel Wunderlich, Timothy Brill, Robert Bruch, and Becky Cross provided assistance in gathering data and in understanding program particulars and the agricultural perspective generally.

A draft of the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan when complete was provided to the Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Sussex County Board of Agriculture and the Sussex County Strategic Growth Committee for comments. A public hearing was held on August 28, 2003.

The Sussex County Agriculture Development Board adopted this Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan on _____.

Andrew Borisuk, Chairman _____

Bibliography

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United States Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, “New Jersey Agricultural Statistics,” 2001.

MAPPING SOURCES:

Morris Land Conservancy
<http://www.morrislandconservancy.org>

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/soils/soil.html>

New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF)
<http://njconservation.org>

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/gis/>

New Jersey Geological Survey (NJGS) <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs/geodata/index.htm>

T&M Associates, Middletown, New Jersey

New Jersey State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC)
<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/index.html>

Sussex County Board of Taxation