

NEWS RELEASE

August 20, 2007
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RUTGERS FOOD INNOVATION CENTER ANNOUNCES SERIES OF SEMINARS TO ASSIST FARMER ENTREPRENEURS IN MARKETING VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS

Bridgeton, N.J. – The Rutgers Food Innovation Center is offering a series of five workshops designed to inform farmer entrepreneurs about the opportunities, resource requirements and steps to expand into value-added food production and sales. Entitled “Growing Your Business: Farmers’ Marketing and Business Planning for Value-Added Agriculture”, these workshops will be held on five afternoon sessions between the dates of September 19, and November 14, 2007.

The customized training seminars are an interagency initiative, supported by the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Department of Labor. The sessions will assist producers with assessing the market potential of new crops, new products, and new business models. Each seminar will be led by experts from the food industry that will provide participants with valuable insights and an interactive discussion. The seminars also offer food entrepreneurs and farmers the opportunity for professional networking. Participants who complete the entire entrepreneurial training program will receive a Certificate of Farmer Entrepreneurship.

“The Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, in conjunction with the New Jersey Departments of Agriculture and Labor, is responding to input from the agricultural community and is supporting entrepreneurs in this industry with the type of education and training that is most needed for success,” said Robert M. Goodman, executive dean of agriculture and natural resources at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. “New Jersey has some of the most innovative and entrepreneurial farmers in the country. Our farmers continually deal with issues such as industry consolidation and competition; pressures from developers; higher labor, energy

--more--

and regulatory costs; and of course the variability of weather. These constraints can be overcome by innovation and entrepreneurship, and the development of value-added products to meet the needs of the tremendous consumer base we have here in the Northeast”, said Goodman. “Farmers who are well informed about potential markets and new ways of doing business are of utmost importance to increasing the competitiveness of New Jersey agriculture,” he added.

New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles M. Kuperus said the training fills a need identified in the state's Agricultural Development Initiative, which was established to help New Jersey producers be more competitive. Secretary Kuperus indicates that "From the start of our Agricultural Development Initiative two years ago, we identified training as a high priority, not only for farm workers and managers, but also at a level for farm owners and operators to advance their skills as entrepreneurs. This series of training seminars really fills that need. New Jersey farmers already are known as innovators, and this training series will further enhance that ability. We appreciate the Food Innovation Center taking the lead on securing this kind of advanced education".

All five seminars will be held at the Rutgers EcoComplex facility in Bordentown, NJ and occur between the hours of 1-4PM on the dates noted.

Session one, *Trends in the Marketplace*, will be held on September 19. Ron Tanner, vice president of communication and education for the National Association of Specialty Food Trade (NASFT) will be the featured speaker. The NASFT is a trade organization that manages three Fancy Food Show events each year, which connect over 50,000 industry buyers with 180,000 specialty food products, which mostly originate from small entrepreneurial food companies.

Session two, *Competitors and Competition*, will be held on October 2. The session will feature Jim Prevor, founder and editor-in-chief of *Produce Business* and *Deli Business* magazines. Prevor is an internationally known expert in the produce industry and also authors a daily newsletter, widely-read by the produce industry, called the *Perishable Pundit*.

The third session, *Distributors and Distribution*, will take place on October 17. Bob Burke, founder of Natural Products Consulting, and formerly vice president of sales and corporate development for Stonyfield Farm Yogurt, will be the featured speaker.

Session four, *Product Development Process*, will be held on October 30. The featured speaker will be Allen Samson, President of ESCA Enterprises and an expert in the product development requirements of successful innovative food products.

The fifth and final session, *Business and Marketing Plans*, will be held on November 14. There will be three featured speakers in this interactive seminar: Joe Molineaux, director of the Small Business Development Center; Adam Borden, general manager of Bradmer Foods LLC; and Steve Marakevich, vice president and farm business consultant of First Pioneer Farm Credit.

The Food Innovation Center seminar series is funded in-part from a grant it received from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education (NECRME). NECRME is one of four regional risk management education centers throughout the country, which is funded through the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service agency, with a mission to improve the risk management decision-making processes of agricultural producers in the Northeast Region through a comprehensive educational program.

The cost to attend each session is just \$45, or a reduced fee of \$195 to attend all five sessions. Scholarships of \$150 are available, on a first-come, first-served basis, for qualifying New Jersey farmers and food entrepreneurs who register for all five sessions, which will result in a net cost of only \$45 to attend each of these outstanding events. The scholarships have been provided through funding received by the NJAES Office of Continuing Professional Education from the New Jersey Department of Labor.

The Food Innovation Center is an economic development program and business incubator of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. The Rutgers Food Innovation Center focuses on the specific needs of the food industry entrepreneur, and provides a broad array of resources and programs to meet their needs. It recently received worldwide recognition, as the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) named the Rutgers Food Innovation Center as the Incubator of the Year, in its Manufacturing and Services Category. The NBIA estimates that over 5,000 business incubators exist worldwide, with over 1,400 in North America.

For further information about this seminar series, or to learn about the Rutgers Food Innovation Center, call (856) 459-1125 or visit the Center's website at www.foodinnovation.rutgers.edu