9.0 Agricultural & Economic Development

9.0 AGRICULTURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION 9.1

Delicious Orchards, Colts Neck — *Source: Brittany Ashman*

9.1: Continue to support the viability of the local agricultural industry through the development and implementation of an *Agricultural Sustainability Plan (ASP)* for Monmouth County.

Purpose

The *ASP* will analyze current agricultural conditions in the county and make recommendations that support the continuation of agriculture as a long-term economically productive industry in Monmouth County.

Monmouth County Departments & Organizations Involvement

Division of Planning	Project lead; offers in-house expertise; form steering committee; conduct outreach; facilitate working groups; draft *ASP;* develop examples of model ordinances.
Planning Board (MCPB)	Approve the *ASP* for Monmouth County as an adopted component of the Agricultural & Economic Development Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan.*
Division of Economic Development	Primary project partner; work with Division of Planning in coordinating efforts; key member of the steering committee; Grown in Monmouth program coordinators; engage businesses and local economic development committees in the planning process; promote local agriculture industry; assist in locating new agribusiness resources; liaison for local business networking.
Agriculture Development Board (MCADB)	Provide input on plan development; participate in the steering committee.
Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE)	Participate on the steering committee; help identify other stakeholders; assist with outreach; provide expertise in local and statewide agricultural issues and access to research; assist in identifying Best Management Practices (BMPs); provide access to commercial growers and industry leaders.

Other Project Stakeholder Involvement

Municipalities	Participate on the steering committee; provide examples of BMPs in their communities; assist with outreach to businesses and farming community.
NJ Department of Agriculture, SADC	Participate on the steering committee; provide data, resources, and expertise.
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Participation on steering committee by local staff; provide information on technical and financial resources for farmers.
Farmers	Participate on the steering committee; assist in identifying existing strengths and challenges.
Ag. Related Businesses	Participate on the steering committee; assist in identifying business needs.
Ag. Dependent Businesses	Participate on the steering committee; identify ways to strengthen association between local consumers and agricultural products in the county.
Nonprofits	Participate on steering committee; share experience in agricultural economic development and food systems.

Master Plan Goals, Principles, & Objectives (GPOs) Relating to 9.1

	GOAL 1			GOAL 2				GOAL 3						
PRINCIPLES	1.1 Comprehensive Planning	1.2 Coordination	1.3 Planning Approach	2.1 Environmental Resources	2.2 Farmland Preservation	2.3 Arts, Culture, & Historic	2.4 Preservation Investments	3.1 Vibrant & Sustainable Communities	3.2 Community Preservation	3.3 Housing	3.4 Economic Development	3.5 Agricultural Development	3.6 Recovery & Resiliency	3.7 Growth Investments
OBJECTIVES														
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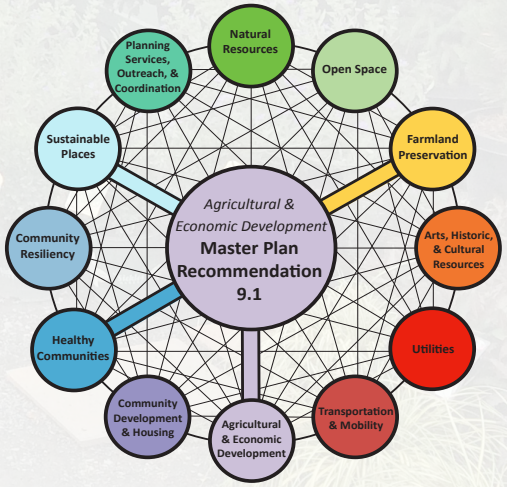
Implementation Strategy

- Form an Agricultural Sustainability Steering Committee from our stakeholders to help guide the planning process.
- Develop a plan outline and work program.
- Convene working groups, conduct analysis and research, and generate case studies.
- Prepare draft plan for consensus and final adoption by the MCPB as an adopted component of the Agricultural & Economic Development Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan*.
- Assist with the development of model ordinances.



Strongest Association to Master Plan Elements

9.0 AGRICULTURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION 9.2

Delicious Orchards, Colts Neck — *Source: Brittany Ashman*

9.2: Incorporate the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* as a component of the Agricultural & Economic Development Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan*; recognizing the *CEDS* as the county's economic development plan.

Purpose

With funding from the U.S. Economic Development Agency (USEDA), the Monmouth County Office of Economic Development completed a *CEDS* report which provides the county with an investment strategy that supports our long-term economic development goals. Upon approval by USEDA, the county will be eligible to pursue grants for the implementation of recommendations in the report.

Monmouth County Departments & Organizations Involvement

Division of Planning	Assist the Division of Economic Development with implementing recommendations outlined in the *CEDS* and generating annual *CEDS* updates.
Planning Board (MCPB)	Incorporate *CEDS* as a component of the Agricultural & Economic Development Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan.*
Division of Economic Development	Provide annual *CEDS* report updates to the USEDA; implement *CEDS* recommendations as funding becomes available.

Other Project Stakeholder Involvement:

USEDA	Review required annual *CEDS* report updates.

Master Plan Goals, Principles, & Objectives (GPOs) Relating to 9.2

	GOAL 1			GOAL 2				GOAL 3						
PRINCIPLES	1.1 Comprehensive Planning	1.2 Coordination	1.3 Planning Approach	2.1 Environmental Resources	2.2 Farmland Preservation	2.3 Arts, Culture, & Historic	2.4 Preservation Investments	3.1 Vibrant & Sustainable Communities	3.2 Community Preservation	3.3 Housing	3.4 Economic Development	3.5 Agricultural Development	3.6 Recovery & Resiliency	3.7 Growth Investments
OBJECTIVES A.	●										●	●		●
B.	●	●												
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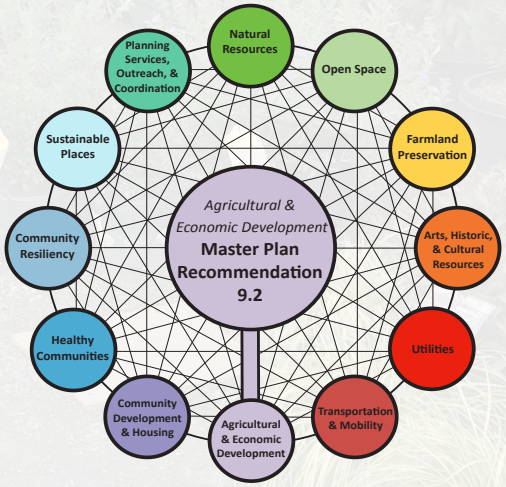
Implementation Strategy

- Assist the Division of Economic Development in the implementation of *CEDS* recommendations and generating annual *CEDS* updates.
- Provide updates to the MCPB relating to the *CEDS*.



Strongest Associated Master Plan Elements

9.0 AGRICULTURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION 9.3

9.3: Provide professional and technical support for the efforts performed by the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development that promote the long-term economic and agricultural viability of the county such as assisting with the implementation of the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* and Grow Monmouth programs.

Purpose

As part of the annual work plan, the Division of Planning produces documents and participates in activities that support general economic development throughout the county. These projects dovetail with the more strategic efforts undertaken by the Division of Economic Development and should be used to advance *CEDS* and Grow Monmouth initiative.

Monmouth County Departments & Organizations Involvement

Division of Planning	Provide professional and technical assistance to the Division of Economic Development with grant applications and the implementation of *CEDS* recommendations if necessary; support advancement of Grown in Monmouth program; reserve Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program; provide demographic and economic information as necessary; conduct required environmental review for proposed projects.
Division of Economic Development	Administer Grow Monmouth programs including the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program; convene and facilitate Grow Monmouth roundtables; pursue grants that support the *CEDS* and other strategic economic development investments in the county; manage U.S. Economic Development Administration (USEDA) associated grants.
Department of Public Works and Engineering	Provide professional and technical assistance and necessary data to the Division of Economic Development to assist with grant applications and the implementation of *CEDS* recommendations.
Brookdale Community College (BCC)	Provide school enrollment information upon request.
Department of Public Information and Tourism	Provide press releases for Grow Monmouth programs and upcoming Grow Monmouth roundtables.
Library System	Possibly host small business meetings and other events.

Other Project Stakeholder Involvement

Municipalities	Host Grow Monmouth events; assist with outreach to local businesses; follow up with roundtable action items.
Monmouth University	Host annual Made in Monmouth Expo.
Local Businesses	Participate in Grow Monmouth events; business owners and managers participate in roundtable discussions; assist with implementing roundtable action items.

Delicious Orchards, Colts Neck — *Source: Brittany Ashman*

Master Plan Goals, Principles, & Objectives (GPOs) Relating to 9.3

PRINCIPLES	GOAL 1			GOAL 2				GOAL 3						
	1.1 Comprehensive Planning	1.2 Coordination	1.3 Planning Approach	2.1 Environmental Resources	2.2 Farmland Preservation	2.3 Arts, Culture, & Historic	2.4 Preservation Investments	3.1 Vibrant & Sustainable Communities	3.2 Community Preservation	3.3 Housing	3.4 Economic Development	3.5 Agricultural Development	3.6 Recovery & Resiliency	3.7 Growth Investments
OBJECTIVES A.	●		●					●		●	●	●	●	●
B.	●	●	●			●			●	●	●	●	●	●
C.	●	●	●			●		●	●		●	●		●
D.	●	●				●		●	●		●	●		●
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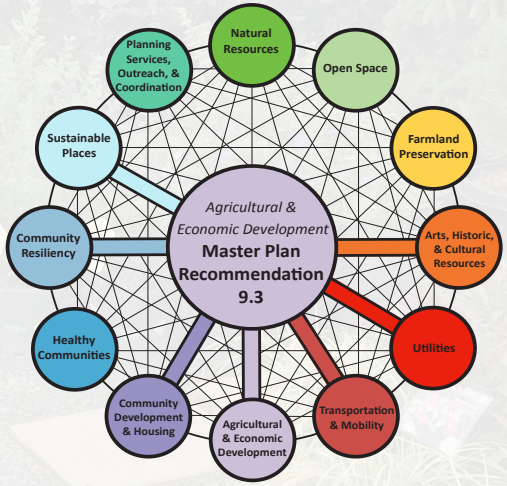
Implementation Strategy

- Provide assistance with the implementation of the *CEDS* by the Division of Economic Development.
- Continue to provide support for Grow Monmouth programs by the Division of Economic Development.
- Assist the Division of Economic Development with implementation of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants in support of Grown in Monmouth.
- The Monmouth County Office of Community Development, housed in the Division of Planning, will continue to set aside CDBG funds for the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program.
- The Monmouth County Office of Community Development will include the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program in their *Five-Year Consolidated Plan* and *Annual Action Plan*, as well as be responsible for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) monitoring of the program.



Strongest Associated Master Plan Elements

9.0 AGRICULTURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION 9.4

9.4: Develop model ordinances for municipalities that will help expand and develop agricultural businesses while decreasing the number of Right to Farm cases brought before the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB).

Purpose

Provide municipalities with viable options based on model land use ordinances to expand agribusiness opportunities throughout Monmouth County while providing adjacent nonagriculture property owners reasonable safeguards from nuisances associated with the expansion of onsite commercial activities.

Monmouth County Departments & Organizations Involvement

Division of Planning	Develop model ordinances as needed; conduct outreach; foster partnerships with farmers and property owners.
Division of Economic Development	Assist in identifying agribusiness development needs and barriers.
MCADB	Provide input on model ordinances.

Other Project Stakeholder Involvement

Municipalities	Review and provide input on model ordinances; implement model ordinances as necessary; support outreach efforts to farmers and property owners.
Agribusinesses and Farmers	Provide input on model ordinances.
Other Counties	Provide sample text and input for model ordinances.
NJ Department of Agriculture and State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC)	Provide feedback on promulgated model ordinances.
NJ Planning Officials	Provide feedback; assist with outreach.

Delicious Orchards, Colts Neck *Source: Brittany Ashman*

Master Plan Goals, Principles, & Objectives (GPOs) Relating to 9.4

PRINCIPLES	GOAL 1			GOAL 2				GOAL 3						
	1.1 Comprehensive Planning	1.2 Coordination	1.3 Planning Approach	2.1 Environmental Resources	2.2 Farmland Preservation	2.3 Arts, Culture, & Historic	2.4 Preservation Investments	3.1 Vibrant & Sustainable Communities	3.2 Community Preservation	3.3 Housing	3.4 Economic Development	3.5 Agricultural Development	3.6 Recovery & Resiliency	3.7 Growth Investments
OBJECTIVES A.	●							●			●	●		
B.												●		
C.	●				●							●		
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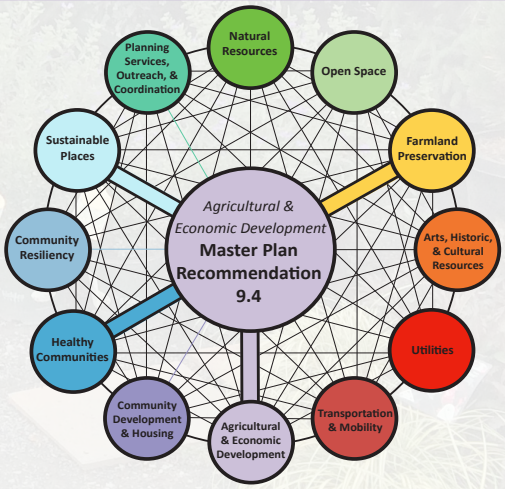
Implementation Strategy

- Work with the MCADB to develop a series of model ordinances for specific agricultural issues based on generally accepted agricultural management practices and examples from around the state and nation.
- Incorporate model ordinances into the *Agricultural Sustainability Plan (ASP)* for Monmouth County.



Strongest Associated Master Plan Elements

9.0 AGRICULTURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION 9.5

9.5: Through coordination between the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB) and the Development Review Section of the Division of Planning, draft and implement a required statement of acknowledgement for site plans and subdivision plats proposed in an Agricultural Development Area (ADA) to help raise awareness of potential neighboring agricultural activities and potentially reduce right-to-farm complaints.

Purpose

The Division of Planning will develop language to be placed on site plans and subdivision plats as a condition of final approval acknowledging that the property is located in an ADA. This advisory is intended to raise awareness for investors that the property may be subject to municipal Right to Farm Act protections due to its proximity with agricultural uses. This proposal should support the intent established by N.J.S.A. 4-1:C-48.

Monmouth County Departments & Organizations Involvement

Division of Planning	Develop appropriate language for ADA notice; amend Monmouth County Development Regulations to include new language for developments in close proximity to an ADA.
MCADB	Assist the Division of Planning with the development of appropriate verbiage for regulations.

Delicious Orchards, Colts Neck *Source: Brittany Ashman*

Master Plan Goals, Principles, & Objectives (GPOs) Relating to 9.5

PRINCIPLES	GOAL 1			GOAL 2				GOAL 3						
	1.1 Comprehensive Planning	1.2 Coordination	1.3 Planning Approach	2.1 Environmental Resources	2.2 Farmland Preservation	2.3 Arts, Culture, & Historic	2.4 Preservation Investments	3.1 Vibrant & Sustainable Communities	3.2 Community Preservation	3.3 Housing	3.4 Economic Development	3.5 Agricultural Development	3.6 Recovery & Resiliency	3.7 Growth Investments
OBJECTIVES A.								●						
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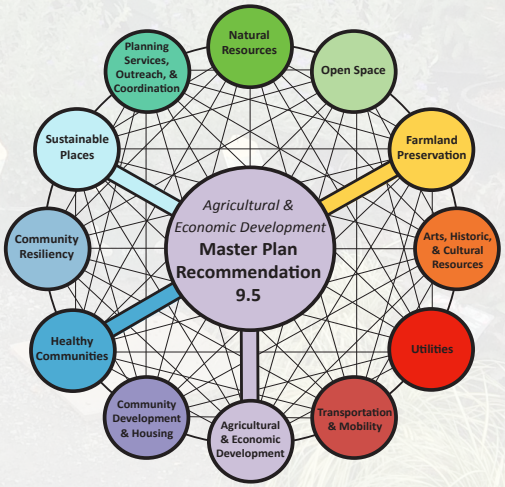
Implementation Strategy

- Develop verbiage with assistance from the MCADB.
- Amend Monmouth County Development Regulations to include new ADA requirements.



Strongest Associated Master Plan Elements

9.0 Agricultural & Economic Development

9.1 Introduction

For many years, conversations about agricultural development and economic development seemed to be at odds with one another. The public investment policies geared towards each had been separate and fairly straightforward; agricultural development meant investing in preserving farms to provide for their perpetual use while economic development was viewed as investment in the expansion of infrastructure into underdeveloped, mostly agricultural locations, to accommodate residential and commercial growth. How could both types of development mutually coexist if advancement of one meant thwarting of the other?

The *Monmouth County Master Plan (2016)* acknowledges the importance of agriculture as a component of the overall economy, and recognizes that sustaining this industry requires specialized policies and investment strategies. The *Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Plan (2008)* began the discussion about agriculture in terms of economic development, agricultural industry sustainability, retention, and promotion. Agriculture should not be viewed as a competing interest against economic development because agriculture is part of our county's diverse economic portfolio. This position is supported through the county's Smart Growth efforts involving *The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) (2001)*, the Cross-Acceptance process, as well as the *Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) for Monmouth County*, which established appropriate locations for growth and for the preservation/ conservation of natural resources such as prime agricultural soils.

At the same time, our approach to beneficial economic development has shifted. Until recently, redevelopment was an economic development tool only viewed beneficially as a means to tackle the problem of urban decay and blight, not as an alternative to construction on greenfields. Today, redevelopment is being used to bring numerous underutilized properties into higher and better uses, increasing property value, and generating positive tax revenue results especially in our suburban communities, without the expense of having to expand infrastructure or deplete our remaining farms and open space. In the broader context, sustainable economic development for the entire county means having a goal-oriented investment and reinvestment strategy that promotes desirous land uses and value-added outcomes. The Land Use Element (2.0) reinforces the importance of agriculture and economic development through the framework for public investment and the concept of community landscapes.

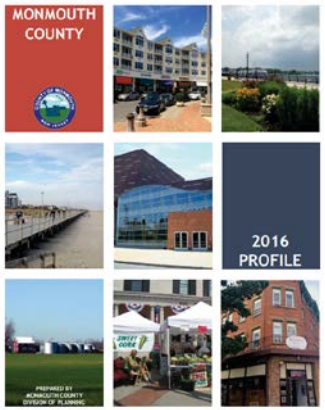
9.2 Existing Conditions

9.2.1 Economic Development Supportive Reports, Guiding Documents, and Existing Conditions

There are two main sources of economic development information and resources within Monmouth County: the annual *Monmouth County Profile Report* and the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)*.

Monmouth County Profile Report: This annual report produced by the Monmouth County Division of Planning provides a comprehensive demographic and economic snapshot of Monmouth County. Preparation involves collection and analysis of data from various sources (e.g. U.S. Census Bureau, NJ Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, etc.). This report seeks to showcase the county's latest demographic trends and economic initiatives involving both the public and private sectors. The report provides an insight into these economic-related topics in Monmouth County:

- Demographics
- Households
- Education and Income
- Ratable Distribution
- Housing
- Nonresidential Construction
- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Economic Outlook including Regional Business Outlook, Major Employers, Major Taxpayers, Redevelopment Initiatives, and County Initiatives



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): In 2012, Monmouth County received a Planning Investment Grant from the U.S. Economic Development Agency (USEDA) to support the process of establishing a CEDS. Participants from the county's public, nonprofit, and private sectors provided information and input throughout the process to develop a comprehensive industry analysis and help establish a solid path for future economic development within the county.

After an analysis of demographics, current market trends, the existing economic base, and an economic competitiveness assessment, the *Monmouth County CEDS (2014)* report identified four focus industries as potential growth markets in both the near and long-term. Some excerpts related to this Element from the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* are:

- **Health Care and Related Industries:** Health-related industries are a growing and important component of Monmouth County's economy. Monmouth County is home to several top-rated hospitals and numerous medical service offices and clinics. The residential population of the county offers a strong pipeline for healthcare services, while the aging of the population and increase in assisted living facilities and age-restricted housing indicate more consumers of healthcare services in the future. Monmouth County provides desirable locations for doctors and other highly paid staff to live, but there is significant competition for employees on the lower end (e.g. technicians, certified nurse assistants, maintenance personnel, etc.) that mostly are commuting in from surrounding counties.
- **IT/Telecommunications:** An assessment of national and global IT markets indicates strong demand nationally and globally in data and network security, software and application development, and cloud based computing services. Monmouth County IT/ Telecommunications industry has a strong history of attracting venture capital. Between 2003 and 2009, the IT/ Telecommunications industries attracted more than $400 million in venture capital, representing nearly 100% of all venture capital investments among all industries in the county. Venture capital investments were strongest from 2003 to 2005 and then declined considerably due to both national trends and the loss of major telecommunication players in the county.
- **Professional/Technical and Business/Finance:** Whereas there was some job loss overall in these two sectors combined (186 jobs lost from 2002 to 2012) the jobs were concentrated in a few subsectors

and were also impacted by losses at Fort Monmouth and within the telecommunications industry. Other subsectors experienced job growth and wages in all the subsectors are very high relative to the county as a whole. Proximity to major markets, including New York City, and high education levels make these sectors poised for future growth.

- **Tourism and Related Industries:** This includes industries and subsectors related to food service, cultural and performing arts, travel, retail, and other services. Together, these industries provide services to Monmouth County's residents, workforce, and visitors.

These four industries are not meant to be the only areas for the county to focus on but, based on current market trends in existing assets, they appear to offer the best opportunities for the county in both the short- and long-term *(Monmouth County CEDS, 2014)*. Details on the four focus industries as well as recommendations for their expansion, specified strategies/action plans, and potential growth challenges are in the 2014 report.

With regard to competitiveness within the greater New Jersey Region, the *Monmouth County CEDS* identified the county's competitive advantages and liabilities. The key competitive assets include:

- County Management and Reputation
- Stable and Moderate Taxes
- Educational Assets
- Diverse Economy
- Cultural and Entertainment Offerings

Conversely, identified liabilities include:

- Concerns about Future Workforce Preparedness
- Lack of a Monmouth County "Brand Awareness"
- Perceived Difficulty in the Development Process (various levels of government)
- Congestion/Infrastructure

With a USEDA approved strategy now in place, the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development is in the process of identifying eligible projects for potential federal investment and funding. *Monmouth County Master Plan (2016)* Recommendation 9.3 supports the Division of Planning in providing assistance with the implementation of the *Monmouth County CEDS (2014).*

The aforementioned tourism industry of Monmouth County plays an important role in economic matters. The miles of waterfront with fine dining, luxury shopping, and beautiful beaches attract visitors from all over the country. Retail trade is continuously attracted to the county due to the generally affluent population and continually expanding tourism industry (*Monmouth County 2016 Profile*). Other main destinations of tourism include boating and parasailing, Freehold Raceway Mall, Jersey Shore Outlets, Fun Time America, iPlay America, Keansburg Amusement Park, and Monmouth Race Track.

The NJ Division of Travel and Tourism provides the annual *Economic Impact of Tourism* study and the *New Jersey Overnight Leisure Visitor Profile* study on their website. Tourism Economics, a global consultant firm that provides economic impact, forecasting, and market assessments, produced the most recent report, *The Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey* (2015). According to the report, Monmouth County generated $2.4 billion in tourism sales in 2015, up 5.3% from 2014. Regarding tourism industry sales, the report explains that "With the memory and impact of Superstorm Sandy fading and another year of construction in the books, Monmouth and Ocean County were the fastest growing shore counties." Another travel and tourism consultant company, D.K. Shifflet and Associates LTD., produced the *2015 New Jersey Overnight Leisure Visitor Profile*. This profile indicates that the top five activities for New Jersey visitors are beach/waterfront, culinary/dining experience, gambling (slots, cards, horses, etc.), visiting

friends and relatives, and shopping. It also reports record state high visitation and spending in 2015.

9.2.2 Agricultural Development Supportive Reports, Guiding Documents, and Existing Conditions

Although the *Monmouth County Profile Report* and *Monmouth County CEDS (2014)* touch on the agricultural economy and related topics, there are several other sources of data and guidance for this key Monmouth County industry.

Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Plan: The latest update to the *Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Plan (2008)* included a chapter focused on economic development topics pertinent to agriculture from marketing, public relations, and education to industry-specific issues. The Farmland Preservation Element (5.0) also provides an overview of existing farmland preservation conditions in the county.

Census of Agriculture: The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years. The census is required by law under the "Census of Agriculture Act of 1997," Public Law 105-113 (Title 7, U.S. Code, Section 2204g). The U.S. Census of Agriculture provides a detailed picture of the country's farms and ranches. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county or county equivalent. Census of Agriculture data is routinely used by farm organizations, businesses, state departments of agriculture, elected representatives, and legislative bodies at all levels of government, public and private sector analysts, the news media, and colleges and universities. The data is frequently used to:

- Show the importance and value of agriculture at the county, state, and national levels
- Compare the income and costs of production
- Provide important data about the demographics and financial well-being of producers
- Evaluate historical agricultural trends to formulate farm and rural policies and develop programs that help agricultural producers
- Create an extensive database of information on uncommon crops and livestock and the value of those commodities for assessing the need to develop policies and programs to support those commodities
- Provide geographic data on production so agribusinesses will locate near major production areas for efficiencies for both producers and agribusinesses
- Measure the usage of modern technologies such as conservation practices, organic production, renewable energy systems, internet access, and specialized marketing strategies
- Develop new and improved methods to increase agricultural production and profitability

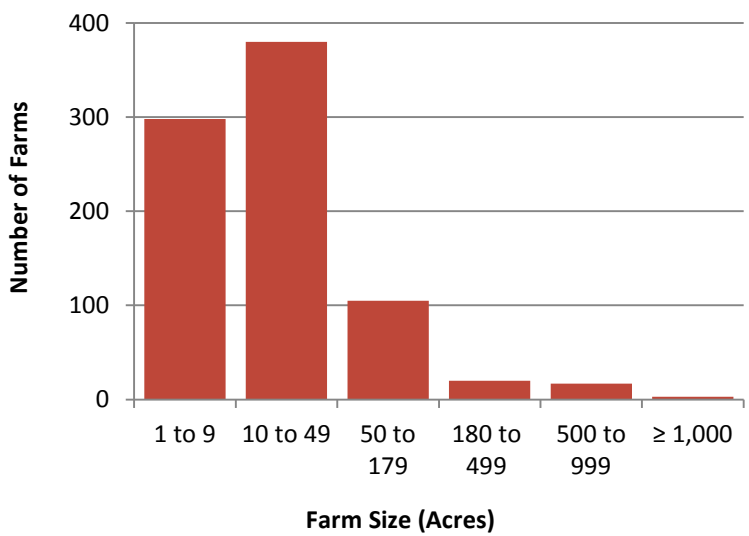
The Census of Agriculture publishes county profiles that provide a concise overview of agricultural statistics for each county in the country. The 2012 Census of Agriculture: County Profile for Monmouth County is the most up-to-date summary available.

Farms: The 2012 Census of Agriculture: County Profile for Monmouth County reports that Monmouth County has 823 farms whose land area totals 38,961 acres. These numbers are down from the 932 farms and 44,130 acres counted in the 2007 Census of Agriculture, representing a 12% decline in both categories. The rate of change in the number of farms is consistent with the state average; however, the acreage decline in New Jersey as a whole was only 3%. Monmouth County's land conversion occurred at a more rapid pace than other portions of the state during this time period. Monmouth County ranks fifth in New Jersey for the number of farms and eighth in total farmland. Monmouth's farms are concentrated in the western and central portions of county. Per Division of Taxation records, Upper Freehold,

Millstone, and Howell hold 60% of Monmouth County's farmland.

Figure 9.1: Monmouth County Farms by Size illustrates the breakdown of farms by size category. In 2012, as well as 2007, the average size of a farm in Monmouth County was 47 acres. The median farm size in 2007 was 11 acres, meaning half the farms were larger than 11 acres, and half the farms were smaller. The median farm size increased slightly in 2012 to 12 acres. This implies that many of our remaining farms are small operations.

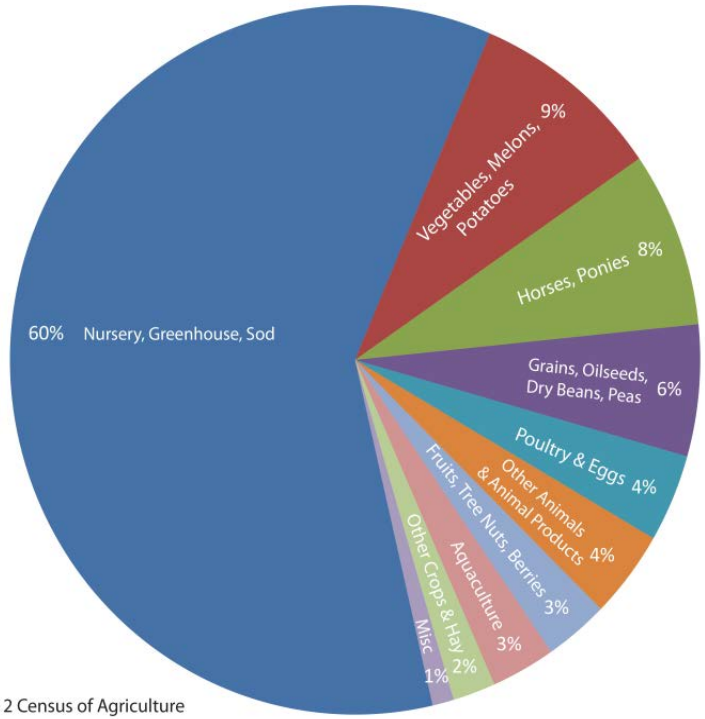
Figure 9.1: Monmouth County Farms by Size



Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

Agricultural Products: Among other things, the Census of Agriculture surveys farms' gross sales of agricultural products prior to taking deductions for taxes and expenses. The 2012 Census of Agriculture found that the market value of all agricultural products sold by every Monmouth County farm surveyed was $84,411,000. Crops made up 80% of the sales and livestock made up 20%. The overall sales value (not adjusted for inflation) decreased 20% since 2007. Most likely, the decline stemmed from a loss of land in farms and decline in high-value sectors such as nursery which mimicked the decline in housing during the recession. Like nursery products, sales of vegetables and melons decreased from 2007 to 2012. However, the value of horses sold increased during this time period, as did the value of grains. Figure 9.2: Percent Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold (2012) shows the percent of market value of agricultural products sold in Monmouth County.

Figure 9.2: Percent Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold



Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

Percent Market Value: According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Monmouth County is the 2nd ranked county in the state, and 11th ranked county in the U.S., in terms of value of sales of nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture. This industry comprises 60%, or $50,556,000, of the total value of goods sold in Monmouth County, and nursery stock crops are planted on a reported 4,111 acres in the county. This represents a yield of $12,298 per acre.

Monmouth County boasts 354 equine farms with 4,950 horses and ponies. It is the first county in the state in terms of the number of horses and ponies as well as the value of sales of horses and ponies. Those sales were $7,365,000 in 2012, ranking Monmouth as the 18th county nationwide, up from 35th in 1997. More than a third of the county's 200+ preserved farms are equine operations. Even more are tied to the industry when one considers hay, straw, and grain operations. These numbers show how important the horse industry is to the long-term agricultural sustainability of Monmouth County.

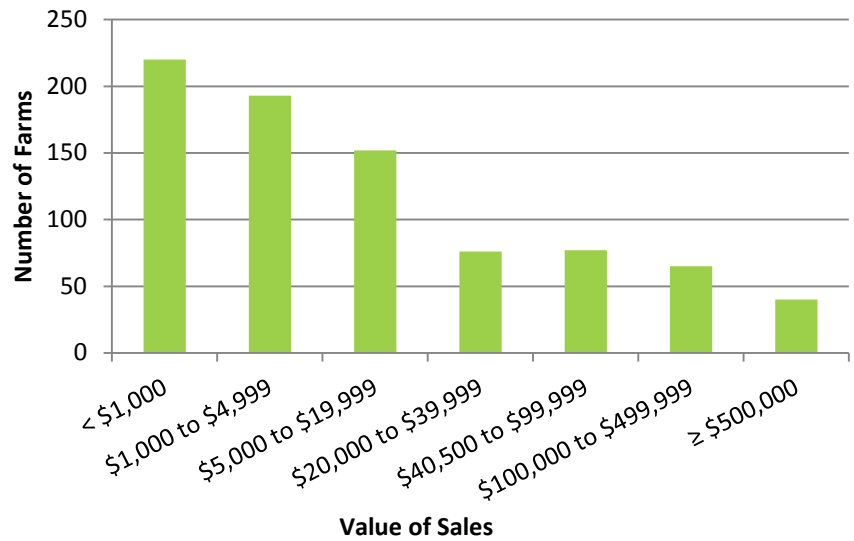
The county supports other livestock besides horses. Monmouth has a notable number of goats and poultry. The 2012 Census of Agriculture withheld the quantity of layers from its published data set since one farm, Puglisi Egg Farm, is the primary contributor. However, *NJ Monthly* noted in a 2014 article that the farm produces 750,000 eggs a week. Monmouth is also the second ranked county in New Jersey for aquaculture. The local clamming industry is centered in Highlands. Additionally, the Port of Belford in Middletown contains one of the few remaining commercial fishing ports in New Jersey.

In the field and forage crop sector, soy, hay, and corn account for significant production acreage. Soy for beans is planted on 5,674 acres. Forage land for hay covers 4,828 acres. Corn for grain occupies 2,263 acres of Monmouth County farmland.

Annual Sales: Figure 9.3: Number of Monmouth County Farms by Value of Sales sorts farms by their gross annual sales. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, 220 out of the 823 Monmouth County farms had less than $1,000 in annual sales. Changes to the state's farmland assessment rules will impact many of these farms which now need to exceed a $1,000 threshold to maintain their preferential tax status. Another 111 farms reported sales between $1,000 and $2,499. That means that off the bat, 40% of county's agricultural properties do not meet the income minimum to qualify as commercial farms under the Right to Farm Act.

The USDA has been paying particular attention to a group of farms it terms "Ag in the Middle" – smaller farms with $100,000 to $250,000 in annual sales. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, there are 42 such farms in Monmouth County. The owners in this category wrestle with where and how to sell their products. Their

Figure 9.3: Number of Monmouth County Farms by Value of Sales



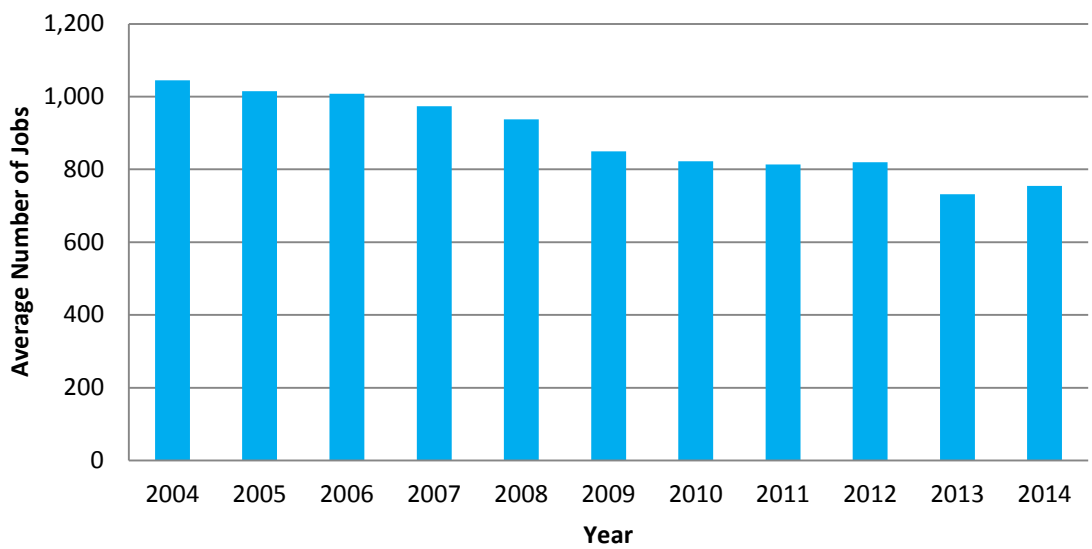
Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

operations are not large enough to sell to commodity markets but intense management demands make it hard to have other off-farm jobs. In addition, land in the region is very expensive, creating additional pressures for farmers. The market value of land and buildings per farm for Monmouth County is $1,021,640, which works out to $21,581 per acre. Monmouth is not the most expensive county in the state but land costs are very high relative to other parts of the country. This creates barriers to entry, fuels pressure to sell, and complicates estate planning.

Primary Occupation: More than half of principal operators surveyed by the 2012 Census of Agriculture listed farming as their primary occupation (471). The other 352 operators are assumed to have other jobs that provide their main source of income. Many more males are designated as their farm's principal operator (649 males compared to 174 females). The 2007 numbers exhibit a similar ratio but the overall number of operators decreased from 2007 to 2012. The average age of a farm operator was 61 in 2012. This is an important factor in terms of future agricultural economic development. The average age of a farmer in 2007 was 58, showing that the cohort of farmers aged with the additional years without a substantial increase in young farmers. Thus, there is a strong need to nurture a younger generation of agricultural professionals.

Economic Impact - Jobs Data: Monmouth County's farms are in transition, leading to job losses and uncertainty about the future of our regional agricultural industry. The changing agricultural landscape is being fueled by several trends: an aging and dying population of farmers, a depressed nursery industry (which is tied to the vagaries of the real estate market and the disposable income of local residents), and a depressed horse racing industry. More lucrative purses and conditions in nearby states have adversely impacted the equine industry and prompted a migration of business.

Figure 9.4: Average Annual Number of Agriculture Jobs in Monmouth County



Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

As Figure 9.4: Average Annual Number of Agriculture Jobs in Monmouth County illustrates, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages data shows that the county has experienced a 30% decline in the total number of agricultural jobs, 820 in 2012 down from 1,172 in 2002. The biggest job losses were seen in the crop production industry (533 in 2012, down from 893 jobs in 2002), greenhouse and nursery production (657 jobs vs. 388 jobs), and vegetable and melon farming (136 jobs vs. 65 jobs). In addition, 13% of the county's

permanently preserved farm acres are up for sale. Many of the preserved farms for sale are nursery and equine farms that are closing down their large operations. This further underscores the decline of the once dominant agricultural industries in the area, spurring land sales as these operations shut down. However, the recent decline of select agricultural industries is an opportunity for emerging operations.

9.2.3 The Economic Engine of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture focuses on producers but they are only part of the county's larger agricultural economy and food system. There are many interconnected suppliers, service providers, distributors, processors, and sales venues that depend upon and support local farms. For example, suppliers furnish feed and seed, fuel, packaging and equipment. Service providers range from manure removers to well drillers to barn builders to roofers and solar installers. Processors mill lumber, butcher meat, and can vegetables. According to the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, there were 100 Monmouth County businesses involved in agriculture in the 3rd quarter of 2014. On a wider stage, in 2015, Farm Credit East published the second edition of *Northeast Economic Engine: Agriculture, Forest Products, and Commercial Fishing (2015)*. The report focused on the eight states including New Jersey. The authors used an IMPLAN (economic impact assessment) software system to analyze 2012 data. They found that agriculture, fishing, and forestry generated an economic impact of $103.4 billion and supported 483,375 jobs on and off the farm. As shown in Figure 9.5: Economic Impact of Agriculture on the Northeast's Economy, the value of the products at the farm, forest and dock multiplied as they progressed to market and generated hundreds of thousands of additional jobs along the way. In New Jersey, this amounts to a $12.8 billion impact on state economic output, and 56,598 jobs. This comes to $226,156 in agricultural output per job.

9.3 Emerging Issues and Long Range Challenges

9.3.1. SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) Analysis:

The Agricultural & Economic Development Working Group held several meetings in 2014. During the meetings, attendees participated in a SWOT analysis of the agricultural economy in Monmouth County. A number of the issues discussed by the group have already been touched upon in Section 9.2 Existing Conditions but warrant further exploration. Highlights from the threats and weaknesses categories of the SWOT analysis include:

- Limited expansion opportunities due to surrounding development patterns
- High cost of entering the business for young farmers
- A need to recruit the next generation of interested and willing

Figure 9.5: Economic Impact of Agriculture on the Northeast's Economy

Source: Farm Credit East "Northeast Economic Engine" 2015 Report

farmers
- Declining equine industry
- Seasonal limitations
- Change in weather patterns affecting crops and growing season
- Water quality and supply
- Wildlife/deer/invasive species
- Government regulation: home rule, zoning restrictions, and food handling regulations

Some themes that emerged in the opportunities category include:

- More links between producers and consumers/distributors/ institutions
- Increased training and education for those seeking to enter the industry
- Better estate and succession planning for farm families
- Preparation and planning for market changes
- Better planning for extreme weather events
- Expansion of agritourism
- Direct marketing opportunities
- Urban farming on underutilized sites and those slated for redevelopment
- Value-added crops
- Diversification of operations
- Expansion of year-round production and farm visitation
- Growing number of farm wineries and breweries
- Social media and technology
- Creative zoning

9.3.2 Industry Opportunities and Trends: There are some notable trends and economic development opportunities within established segments of the agricultural industry such as produce, aquaculture, and equine as well as emerging sectors such as wineries, breweries, agritourism, and urban agriculture. Within the produce sector, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, offerings aimed at the ethnic market, and season extending technologies are important trends.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA): CSAs are an increasingly popular concept. A CSA consists of a community of individuals or members who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland in essence becomes the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm's bounty throughout the growing season, as well as satisfaction gained from reconnecting to the land and participating directly in food production. Members also share in the risks of farming, including poor harvests due to unfavorable weather or pests. (*Community Supported Agriculture*, DeMuth, National Agricultural Library, USDA, 1993)

A few CSAs have come and gone in Monmouth County but the Mendies Farm in Roosevelt and Seven Arrrows East in Rumson have active memberships. Each week or two, members receive a variety of freshly gathered crops. Aside from its winter CSA where members benefit from an output such as eggs and greenhouse-grown micro greens, Mendies offers a spring/ summer option. Honey Brook Organic Farm, the oldest organic CSA in New Jersey (based in Mercer and Burlington Counties), now delivers boxed shares to pick-up sites in Middletown.

Ethnic Produce: Ethnic produce, particularly greens and herbs that cater to Hispanic, Asian and Asian Indian palettes and recipes, reflect demographic changes in the nation and can be financially lucrative. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, between 2000 to 2010, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chinese, and Asian

Local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farm

Mendies Farm LLC is a 30-acre preserved farm located in Roosevelt, New Jersey. The farm, owned by Lawrence and Heidi Mendies, has operated a CSA since 2011, giving members regular access to fresh produce that includes fruit, vegetables, herbs, and eggs. The farm's specialties include a wide array of microgreens. Advance signups and payments by members, who are limited in number, allow the landowners to buy seeds and supplies and make other capital expenditures throughout the year while guaranteeing those who participate in the program a share of the harvest.

The Mendies Farm aims for four seasons of farming and has two different CSA tracks. The winter season enables members to obtain produce every other week, whereas the Spring/Summer option allows for pickups once a week from approximately the first week of June until early November. Although the Spring/Summer CSA program is more popular, the winter program fills a void by providing fresh produce during the months in which it is difficult to obtain a locally grown supply. To do so, the farm relies on greenhouses.

Members are assigned set pickup days. Shares are typically organized into baskets and stored in a walk-in cooler. However, members can also harvest certain crops such as shelling peas directly from the field. Volunteers drawn from the CSA membership and the local community help with tasks such as weeding, mulching, and cultivating.

The landowner employs creative and innovative farming and engineering methods that promote a sustainable farming system. For example, the farm uses only organic pesticides and additives. Mr. Mendies has built a heated underground hosing system to keep the soil warmer in his greenhouses during the winter. He has plans for an outdoor wood-burning boiler and applies various compost and organic waste to enhance the soil.

As with any CSA, there are both rewards and risks to participation. There is no guaranteed volume or product selection from week-to-week or year-to-year. These factors depend on the weather and a number of other variables. However, the Mendies Farm CSA is becoming a key player in Western Monmouth County's food system, and the landowners' entrepreneurial spirit is steering the farm towards a successful future.

Website: Mendies Farm
See also: Mendies Farm LLC Facebook page

populations grew significantly on the East Coast. These East Coast populations saw the following growth rates from 2000 to 2010: Puerto Rican, 32.5%; Mexican, 92%; Chinese, 40%; Asian Indians, 66%. To take advantage of these growing markets and the influence of immigrants on American cuisine in general, Rutgers University has been conducting research on which potential offerings grow best under local conditions.

Season-Extending Technology: A number of Monmouth County's farms are extending their growing seasons through innovative technologies as well as marketing strategies. Hoop houses allow the production of ornamental nursery stock as well as herbs, greens, and vegetables through overwintering and early seeding before the average frost-free date. Similarly, operations such as Holland Greenhouses are expanding into Monmouth County and building large, gutter-connected glass greenhouses for the production of herbs, vegetables, and flowers for the wholesale market. One long-established farm, Beyond Organic Growers (located at Reid Sod Farm in Howell), is delving into aeroponic technology within a greenhouse to grow organic herbs and vegetables throughout the year for local restaurants and markets.

Distribution Networks: New distribution networks are further linking producers to consumers. Zone 7, based in Ringoes, NJ, picks up produce from small to mid-sized farms in NJ and eastern Pennsylvania and delivers fruit, berries, vegetables, mushrooms, eggs, honey, cheese, and grain to restaurants, grocers and institutions. The business focuses on organic farms and those that rely on sustainable farming practices. Zone 7 has been gradually expanding its pick-up area. It currently works with one Monmouth County producer, Jeff's Organic Produce, which owns and farms land in Upper Freehold. Buyers include Langosta Lounge in Asbury Park and Restaurant Nicholas in Red Bank.

Beyond Organic Growers is using aeroponic technology to grow herbs and vegetables
Source: Harriet Honigfeld

Aquaculture: As previously discussed, commercial fishing, aquaculture, and seafood processing have a historic foothold in Monmouth County. Within the state, Farm Credit East estimates that 3,185 people are employed in the industry. Some new ideas may further enhance this economic sector. In Connecticut, for example, the Thimble Island Oyster Company has been using the entire water column to grow kelp, oysters, mussels, and scallops. They call this system 3D or vertical farming. Elsewhere, Community Supported Fisheries (CSFs), a spin on the CSA concept, are gaining traction. A pilot program in Atlantic County operated for the last three years under the auspices of Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County. Their Agricultural Agent worked with a variety of fishing docks and shellfish farmers to diversify offerings. The CSF accommodates biweekly pickups. Clams are available year-round and fill in more seasonal offerings such as soft shell crab and thresher shark. The concept is expanding closer to Monmouth County, with a CSF in Old Bridge

at a culinary boutique called Heirloom Kitchens. The seafood industry may also be a focal point for economic development. Middletown Township considers its Port of Belford to be a candidate for redevelopment to attract additional users to an area anchored by a ferry terminal and commercial fishing hub. The municipality is working with a consultant who will explore the possibility of redevelopment of this waterfront area.

Equine Sector: The equine sector is a critical facet of the regional agricultural economy but has been under stress. Karyn Malinowski and Paul Gottlieb of Rutgers University recently published a report entitled, *2014 State of the New Jersey Horse Racing Industry: Post-Report of the Governor's Advisory Commission on New Jersey Gaming, Sports, and Entertainment*. The white paper analyzes racing opportunities, thoroughbred and standardbred breeding, preserved farms, and hay production. The indicators do not look good for New Jersey. There are reduced racing opportunities plus a significant number of preserved equine farms for sale, particularly in Monmouth County. Local equestrians race and train for appearances at Monmouth Park (thoroughbred) and Freehold Raceway (harness racing) as well as the Meadowlands (standardbred) and out of state. The Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB) continues to preserve equine farms in the county (including one in 2014) and process new preservation applications for horse farms (including two submitted to the SADC in 2015). These would add to the scores of equine farms already preserved within the county. The Monmouth County Agricultural Agent and the county of Monmouth have been very involved in helping organize the Open Space Pace and Festival of Horses held each September at Freehold Raceway. The all-day festival features a parade of horses, educational exhibits, horse races, music, and entertainment designed to promote racing and attract new audiences. The event is recognized as a state agricultural fair and drew 4,500-5,000 attendees in 2014. The target attendance for 2015 was 6,000.

Many people would like to see racinos in the Garden State. A racino combines a racetrack with a machine gaming facility. Most are limited to slot machines and electronic gaming only, although some have table games such as blackjack. The additional gambling options attract new customers to the complex who may never have attended a horse race. Higher attendance and additional revenue allow the tracks to offer higher purses and upgrade facilities. This raises the quality of racing, drawing more media attention and larger crowds.

Monmouth County clams for sale at a community farmers' market
Source: Harriet Honigfeld

There are some positive trends emerging in this sector, especially when pairing racing with agritourism. As noted in the *Monmouth County 2015 Profile*, during Monmouth Park's 2014 season (May 10th to September 28th), daily attendance averaged 9,926. That is a 3%

increase from 2013. Average on-track handles indicated a jump of 5.6% to $538,540. The grandstand side of the track received an upgrade with a Vegas-style sports bar just outside of the paddocks. Moreover, the track has attracted new audiences by sponsoring festivals and family fun days. Along these lines, there is hope that American Pharoah's Triple Crown win will boost public interest in racing. The 2015 Belmont Stakes race, seen by millions of television viewers, ended a 37 year drought in thrilling fashion.

Despite the weaknesses in the racing industry, there are signs that other areas of the equine sector are maintaining or expanding their footing. A number of farms in the county have transitioned from racehorses to show horses (hunters, jumpers, and dressage) as well as therapeutic riding. In Upper Freehold, the Horse Park of New Jersey sponsors many horse shows including the Jersey Fresh International that features top competitors in dressage, cross country, and show jumping. Other events at the facility include barrel racing as well as exhibitions and fairs such as Freehold Fest. In an effort to challenge the industry trend, the *Monmouth County Master Plan (2016)* makes several Recommendations that support the viability of the overall local agricultural industry including the equine sector. This includes the development of an *Agricultural Sustainability Plan* (Recommendation 9.1) and assisting towns in the creation of ordinances that will help expand and develop their agricultural business opportunities (Recommendation 9.4)

Wine and Craft Breweries: Wineries and craft beer breweries are expanding their presence in New Jersey and the county. There were over 50 wineries in the state at end of 2015. Monmouth, itself, has good soils for grape production and lies in a world viticulture zone. The state's Alcohol Beverage Control division (ABC) has issued licenses in Monmouth County for wineries such as Cream Ridge Winery in Upper Freehold, 4JGs in Colts Neck, Peppadew Fresh LLC in Marlboro, and Fox Hollow in Holmdel. Eventually, these wineries could be linked by a designated wine trail. Demand for New Jersey grapes is growing and currently exceeds the available supply.

Accordingly, Cream Ridge Winery is promoting the Grape Acres Project. The project would match landowners with potential growers and offer technical support and a guaranteed buyer for those who grow grapes on small plots of land. There is also a pilot program underway to allow special occasion events such as weddings on wineries located on preserved farms. This provides an alternate and complementary source of income for winery owners.

Aside from wineries, craft breweries are rapidly emerging throughout the state. Current Monmouth County craft breweries include Beach Haus Brewery (Belmar), Belford Brewing (Middletown), Carton Brewing (Atlantic Highlands), Dark City Brewing Company (Asbury Park), Jughandle Brewing Company (Tinton Falls), Kane Brewing Company (Ocean Township), Little Dog Brewing (Neptune City), and Screamin' Hill Brewery (Cream Ridge). Screamin' Hill Brewery is a recipient of the 2015 Monmouth County Planning Merit Awards and is the state's first 'farm to glass' brewery using hops, pumpkins, and other farm-grown products to make their beer. Carton Brewing began operation during 2011 in a 5,000 square foot warehouse. They recently received line of credit written by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority for relocation to a 10,000 square foot building. This move is imperative to keep up with their growing demand, Carton currently distributes to more than 250 bars, restaurants, and liquor stores in the tri-state area with over 300 stores on their waiting list. These breweries attract visitors from all over the state and align to a growing national trend of craft brewery popularity. A proposed bill would permit certain breweries to sell beer at farmers' markets within the constraints of ABC regulations. There is a lot of excitement surrounding new craft

microbreweries and a proposed whisky distillery in Asbury Park. Interestingly, Monmouth County actually started this trend with the Laird & Company of Colts Neck, America's oldest native commercial distillery with federal distillery license Number One from circa 1780.

Agritourism: Tourism is a significant part of Monmouth County's economy. In 2014 tourism spending accounted for $2.28 billion. Agricultural tourism, more commonly known as agritourism, is a growing component of these expenditures. According to Rutgers University Bulletin E333, *The Economic Contributions of Agritourism in New Jersey (2011)*, during 2006 one out of five farms in the state offered agritourism, most frequently involving some form of on-farm direct to consumer marketing. Rutgers found that farms with $250,000 or more in annual sales are more likely to host agritourism activities. The activities fall into five categories: direct to consumer sales, educational tourism, entertainment, accommodations, and outdoor recreation.

There is a foreseeable expansion in opportunities for agritourism, particularly as Halloween and fall events keep growing in popularity. Haunted hayrides, corn mazes, and harvest festivals are just some of the growing number of seasonal offerings attracting people to the more rural areas of the county. Along with this influx, there is growing concern about the traffic congestion on rural roadways associated with these types of events.

Urban Agriculture: Urban agriculture can increase a community's access to healthy food as well as employment, education, and community engagement opportunities. Urban agriculture can also repurpose former brownfields. In Asbury Park, Interfaith Neighbors is planning an urban farm as a complement to their Kula Café, a restaurant and job training program housed in the Springwood Center. The proposed Kula Urban Farm Project will include a year-round greenhouse and outdoor raised beds. The farm will sell plants, vegetables, and leafy greens. It will allow local residents to volunteer in exchange for produce or revenue sharing and will incorporate an entrepreneurial garden (*Asbury Park Sun*, 2014). Elsewhere in the state, the Garden State Urban Farms project in Orange uses Small Plot Intensive (SPIN) farming methods to grow vegetables and herbs on a previously abandoned lot. The organization also operates a hydroponic greenhouse where at-risk youth and ex-offenders are trained to manage a sustainable business while producing high quality greens for the local community (Garden State Urban Farms website). In Newark, NJ, AeroFarms recently had a groundbreaking ceremony for a multi-story, hydroponic leafy green and herb production facility that plans to employee 78 people. Finally, Duke Farms in Hillsborough has established an Urban Agriculture Regional Training Center to teach individuals and organizations to plan, develop, and operate community food projects focused on such topics as composting, hoop houses, aquaponics, and micro-green production.

Community gardens and schoolyard gardens are other ways in which Monmouth County residents are growing and distributing fresh produce, improving health and wellness, and participating in the local food system. There are at least 34 community and schoolyard gardens in the county, a number of which bring together volunteers who tend plots for the purpose of food donation. Backyard farms are likewise increasing in popularity, not just for the production of vegetables, fruit, herbs, and greens but also for fresh eggs and honey. There is even a Colts Neck business called Oasis Backyard Farms that helps people set up their own organic vegetable gardens. Unfortunately, the desire to replace lawns with raised garden beds and house beehives and chicken coops, even on a small scale, can conflict with local ordinances and zoning. The Right to Farm Act is not designed to cover microfarms in urban and suburban neighborhoods. In some cases,

amendments to municipal ordinances may be required to better accommodate these trends.

9.3.3 Long Range Challenges: During workshop sessions, the Agricultural & Economic Development Working Group also identified several Long Range Challenges that they believe will require further consideration well beyond the *Master Plan's* 10-year lifecycle.

- *Soil and Land Retention*: The retention of soils through the continual use of generally accepted management practices and the retention of a critical mass of agriculturally productive land is necessary for the economic viability and sustainability of Monmouth County's agricultural industry.
- *Climate Challenges*: Anticipated changes in weather patterns and storm intensity will continue to affect farmland production, requiring farmers to adapt to new, more sustainable farming techniques and prepare for alternative business practices and crop production.
- *Historic Agricultural Preservation*: There are few grant opportunities and limited public assistance available for the restoration of historic barns and homes.
- *Funding Reform*: There is a need to modify the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) funding allocations and rules to allow partnering with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) when preserving farms and open space (or post preservation).
- *Public Awareness/Education on Agricultural Development Issues*: As farmers focus more on 'Direct to Consumer Marketing,' agritourism, and hospitality-related events and venues, there will need to be more public tolerance and understanding as to the challenges farmers face in maintaining a viable business in their community. More needs to be done in educating the public about agricultural food production, farm operations, nutrition, and their relationship to the local food economy. As farming operations diversify and expand, municipal officials will need guidance in promulgating regulations that protect farmers in conducting these activities.
- *Decreasing Technical Support*: The decrease in the number of Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agents means less support for farmers and poses an increased hurdle for new and young farmers that are the most in need of technical assistance provided by the agricultural agents.

9.4 Agricultural & Economic Development Stakeholder Actions and Efforts

9.4.1 Monmouth County Efforts

County agencies and departments oversee a number of projects and programs that support economic development and agricultural development.

Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): The *Monmouth County CEDS (2014)* was the first major step in viewing economic development countywide, taking into account all the various industry components that comprise the county's economy. The framework for public investment presented in Chapter 2 identifies "places where public investment supports the *Monmouth County CEDS*" as one of the criteria for the Priority Reinvestment Site or Area (PRSA). In Recommendation 9.2, the *Master Plan* calls for the *CEDS* to be incorporated as a component of the Agricultural & Economic Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan*; recognizing the *CEDS* as the county's economic development plan.

Grow Monmouth: A long-term, community-wide suite of programs, the Grow Monmouth initiative is managed through the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development and serves to promote the economic health of Monmouth County. Outlined objectives include retaining and growing current county businesses, creating jobs, and

attracting new businesses. Input is gathered from a variety of key sectors including businesses, educational institutions, nonprofits, community organizations, and state and local governments.

GROW MONMOUTH

Empowering Business. Creating Jobs.

Grow Monmouth offers resources to assist municipal economic development efforts such as:

- Municipally based outreach efforts and economic roundtables
- Economic opportunity mapping
- Identification of state and county business incentives
- Economic development and planning technical support

When called upon, the Division of Planning and Office of Community Development have been strong partners in supporting the administration of the Grow Monmouth by providing in-house professional and technical assistance. *Master Plan* Recommendation 9.3 recognizes the importance of continuing this relationship and recommends the Division of Planning continue to promote the long-term economic and agricultural viability of the county by assisting with the implementation of the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* and Grow Monmouth initiative.

Note: The [GM] superscript indicates a Grow Monmouth program

- **Made in Monmouth (MIM) Expo [GM]:** As part of the Grow Monmouth initiative, this annual exhibition showcases consumer products entirely produced within the county borders. Beginning with the first event in 2012, MIM has been free for vendors and open to the public at no charge. The 2016 MIM event, its fifth exposition, featured over 220 participating vendors, attracting over 5,000 shoppers to its Monmouth University location in West Long Branch. This event also allows local businesses the opportunity to network with one another and explore the possibility of establishing new business relationships. Many of the consumer goods presented at MIM are agriculturally-based, associated, or value-added products.

  The success of the annual MIM Expo has led to several "mini" MIM events taking place throughout the year including one at the annual Monmouth County Fair. A 2015 "mini" MIM held at the Cream Ridge Winery in Upper Freehold complimented agritourism efforts in the Panhandle Region and promoted exploration along the Upper Freehold Historic Farmland Byway.

- **Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program [GM]:** Since 2013, this program has been using U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to help improve the look of privately-held commercial structures within HUD designated eligibility areas. The Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program provides businesses the opportunity to apply for grants up to $1,850 in order to upgrade exterior façade features such as new awnings, paint, doors, or signs. As of December 31, 2015, 52 projects have been completed, reinvesting over $92,000.00 towards improving commercial facades in income eligible neighborhoods. The Division of Economic Development and Division of Planning (Office of Community Development) staff manage the program through the Grow Monmouth Committee. This committee evaluates the applications to determine eligibility and make grant awards to those proposed projects that meet program criteria.

- **Grown in Monmouth [GM]:** The Monmouth County Division of Economic Development, in conjunction with the Division of Planning and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, applied for a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant in October 2014 to obtain

funding that will lay the groundwork for a marketing and branding program referred to as Grown in Monmouth. The goal is to provide marketing assistance and business training to small and emerging agricultural producers located in rural areas of the county.

Grown in Monmouth aims to connect producers and buyers, expand small agricultural businesses, and contribute to job growth in the local area. In addition to managing MIM and mini MIM events, the Division of Economic Development also publishes an annual hyper-local Holiday Shopping Directory online.

Fort Monmouth Redevelopment: Monmouth County, represented by the Board of Chosen Freeholders, is a voting member on the Fort Monmouth Economic Revitalization Authority (FMERA) Board which oversees redevelopment of the 1,127-acre property. The site is being reimagined and recreated into a multi-use residential, retail, technology, and cultural destination in coastal Monmouth. Numerous private and public projects are moving forward as an improving economy has increased investor interest in the site. More information about ongoing redevelopment efforts can be found in the annual *Monmouth County Profile Report* and on the FMERA website.

MoCo Arts Corridor: Cohesively marketing and branding Monmouth County as an art, cultural, and entertainment destination was first recommended in the *Coastal Monmouth Plan (2010)*. The *Coastal Monmouth Plan* calls for a unified marketing theme to strengthen the year-round shore economy in the coastal areas through cooperative promotional efforts. Monmouth County Arts Council (Monmouth Arts), with support from the Board of Chosen Freeholders, NJ TRANSIT, artists, local businesses, educational institutions, and numerous tourism and cultural organizations developed a comprehensive marketing plan for the coastal area. This **MoCo (Monmouth County) Partnership** has created the **MoCo Arts Corridor** as a new signature brand. Spanning from Matawan to Manasquan, this corridor encompasses forty towns proximate to NJ TRANSIT's North Jersey Coast Line and the Garden State Parkway. The MoCo Arts Corridor is discussed further in 6.0 Arts, Cultural, and Historic Resources Element.

Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB): The MCADB is appointed by and reports directly to the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The MCADB advises the Board of Chosen Freeholders, Division of Planning, and other county departments and agencies on all matters relating to or affecting agriculture retention and development and provides direct assistance to individual landowners and municipalities on the adoption and implementation of agriculture retention and development techniques and initiatives. The MCADB also governs agricultural preservation activities in the county, issues decisions in Right to Farm cases, and makes determinations about deed of easement compliance.

Farmland Preservation Program: Staff efforts related to agricultural development and sustainability center on farmland preservation, Right to Farm Program management, and planning. To guarantee a land base of high quality soils for generations to come, the county has been permanently preserving farms since 1987. 5.0 Farmland Preservation Element of this document delves into greater detail about the county's Farmland Preservation Program. The 5.0 Farmland Preservation Element also explains the county's role in implementing the Right to Farm Act, which lends support and guidance to farmers whose farming practices and operations may raise concerns with neighbors and municipalities. Furthermore, the county prepares and interprets local and regional plans and regulations that impact agriculture.

Agricultural Sustainability Plan: Recommendation 9.1 seeks to coordinate the county's agricultural initiatives such as the *Monmouth County Farmland Preservation Plan* and Grown in Monmouth program through one comprehensive guiding document called the *Agricultural*

Sustainability Plan (ASP). The aforementioned Grown in Monmouth marketing strategy and plan is the first step in the development of a broader *ASP*.

Other Economic Development Supportive Programs: In March 2014, the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office announced the Monmouth County Community Rating System (CRS) Assistance Program to assist towns seeking to advance their CRS ranking in an effort to lower flood insurance premiums for residents and businesses in those communities. Towns that take action steps to increase their resiliency to future storm events are eligible for policyholder discounts. In general, the money saved by policyholders is typically spent and recirculated throughout the local community. More information on the Monmouth County CRS Assistance Program and the National Flood Insurance Premium's CRS program can be found in 12.0 Community Resiliency Element.

The Monmouth County Office of Community Development, housed in the Division of Planning, coordinates, implements, and monitors compliance for specific federal grant programs: the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program, Emergency Solutions Grant, and HEARTH homeless assistance grants. Working with participating communities and various nonprofit agencies, this section oversees a variety of activities that benefit low- and moderate-income households and provide reinvestment funds for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) qualified communities. More information regarding the Monmouth County Office of Community Development is in 10.0 Community Development & Housing Element.

The 24-mile **Upper Freehold Historic Farmland Byway** in Monmouth County captures the unique agricultural, historical, environmental, and cultural traditions still visible in the area around Upper Freehold and Allentown. A visit to this byway offers visitors the opportunity to view history in the context of a working agricultural area (NJDOT website, 2015). Scenic byways such as this one can be used to further develop agritourism and ecotourism by guiding travelers to many of the county's historic sites, agricultural businesses, scenic vistas, greenways, trails, and open spaces. 6.0 Arts, Historic, and Cultural Resources Element details proposals to expand the scenic byway network throughout Monmouth County.

Monmouth County's **Department of Public Information and Tourism** maintains a robust webpage along with an up to the minute calendar of events for those seeking to explore the many activities Monmouth County has to offer. They are also responsible for facilitating the development of the annual *Visit Monmouth Travel Guide*.

More details on other county supportive programs such as the Shared Services Program, the Monmouth County Improvement Authority (MCIA), and the Monmouth County Real Property Assessment Demonstration Program can be found in the annual *Monmouth County Profile Report*.

9.4.2 Partnership Efforts

The **NJ Department of Agriculture** "promotes, protects, and serves the Garden State's diverse agriculture and agribusiness industries." The Division of Marketing and Development oversees the successful statewide branding program, known as Jersey Fresh, for fruits and vegetables and its variants such as Jersey Grown for ornamental plants and Jersey Bred for horses. The division helps organize and support approximately 155 community farmers markets, bringing fresh produce to downtowns and connecting producers and consumers.

The **State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC)** is Monmouth County's main partner in its farmland preservation efforts. Aside from preservation, agricultural development is another integral part of the agency's mission. A recent endeavor was an upgrade of its farm link

website to match farmers and landowners and facilitate leasing, farm sales, apprenticeships, and estate planning. The new name for the service is NJ Land Link.

The **New Jersey Farm Bureau** is a grassroots, membership-based organization that takes policy positions, tracks legislation, and disseminates information to farmers. For example, the organization has been conducting extensive outreach on New Jersey's new farmland assessment rules.

Monmouth County Board of Agriculture is a local, nongovernmental organization comprised primarily of farmers who meet monthly to discuss farming issues of local interest and filter agricultural policy positions to the State Board of Agriculture and New Jersey Farm Bureau.

The **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES)** conducts research on new strains of crops such as strawberries and tomatoes and tests crops to identify variants most suited to local growing conditions. **Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE)** agents disseminate NJAES findings, counsel the agricultural community on local and statewide agricultural issues and best management practices, and provide training and consultation. RCE promotes healthy food choice programs and houses the New Jersey 4-H Youth Development Program and the Rutgers Master Gardener Program.

The **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)** is a technical and financial resource for farmers. The Natural Resource Conservation Service administers a number of grant programs for farm improvements and the Farm Service Agency oversees loan, crop insurance, and disaster assistance programs.

NOFA-NJ (Northeast Organic Farm Association – New Jersey Chapter) has partnered with Duke Farms in Hillsborough, NJ on an agricultural business development project. The organization describes its Incubator Farm as "a land leasing arrangement for beginning farmers who have farming experience and a business idea, but do not have access to land." Participants have access to fenced and irrigated land, mentors, equipment, barn space, and business planning and marketing support.

Aside from its partnership with NOFA-NJ, **Duke Farms** has established the Urban Agriculture Regional Training Center in conjunction with Growing Power and CityFood Resources. It is sponsoring workshops to train groups and individuals who wish to foster their community food system. Workshop topics include composting and vermiculture, micro-green production, mushrooms, hoop house construction, and aquaponics.

The FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties manages its own garden through its volunteer garden program. Volunteers help the FoodBank's farmer with preparing and tending the soil, planting crops, watering, weeding, and harvesting the yield from their half-acre onsite garden. While volunteers learn through experience about the seasonality of gardening, the herb and vegetable harvest is distributed to families in need in Monmouth and Ocean Counties.

Municipalities: Municipalities represent the county's most important stakeholders in the region's agricultural and economic development. Municipalities often handle the permits and approvals needed for new agricultural buildings and expanding operations. By taking a proactive approach and responding to trends in agriculture, municipalities may need to adopt and modify their ordinances and zoning codes. Through programs such as Grow Monmouth, Grown in Monmouth, and the Farmland Preservation Program, the county works closely with towns to foster agricultural enterprise, help towns stabilize and increase their commercial tax base, and promote a more business friendly atmosphere.

9.5 Additional Resources and Funding Opportunities

Federal

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
  - Economic Research Service
    - Land Use, Land Value, and Tenure
- U.S. Economic Development Administration (USEDA)
  - Funding Opportunities
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
  - Local Foods, Local Places

State

- Business Action Center (BAC)
- Division of Travel and Tourism
  - Grant Opportunities
    - Cooperative Marketing Grant
    - Destination Marketing Organization Grant
- New Jersey Department of Agriculture
  - Agricultural Education
  - Jersey Equine
  - Jersey Fresh
  - Jersey Fresh Farm to School
  - Jersey Grown
  - Jersey Seafood
- New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)
  - Financing and Incentives

County and Local

- Monmouth County Tourism
- Monmouth County Workforce Investment Board

Refer to Section 9.4.1 Monmouth County Efforts for discussion on Monmouth County's Grow Monmouth initiative.

Nonprofits, Research Centers, and Other Stakeholders

- Agricultural Marketing Resource Center
- Choose New Jersey
- Eastern Monmouth Area Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Monmouth Chamber of Commerce
- Innovation New Jersey
- Jersey Shore Chamber of Commerce
- Market Maker: Linking Agricultural and Seafood Markets
- Monmouth County Chamber of Commerce
- Monmouth-Ocean Development Council
- Monmouth / Ocean Small Business Development Center at Brookdale Community College
- New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA)
- New Jersey Craft Beer
- NJ Association of Women Business Owners
- NJ Vegetable Growers Association
- NJ Wine Growers Association
- Northern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce
- Rutgers Food Innovation Center
- SCORE Chapter 36 Monmouth County, NJ
- U.S. Small Business Administration

Refer to the Farmland Preservation Element (5.0) for more agricultural resources.

9.6 Master Plan Recommendations and Stakeholder Strategies

Five *Master Plan* Recommendations and numerous Stakeholder Strategies emerged from meetings and conversations with Working Groups and community stakeholders.

Master Plan Recommendations

Recommendation 9.1: Continue to support the viability of the local agricultural industry through the development and implementation of an *Agricultural Sustainability Plan (ASP)* for Monmouth County. A comprehensive *ASP* that coordinates farmland preservation, right-to-farm, agritourism, business expansion, and marketing is necessary for agricultural viability. The *ASP* requires participation from other county

departments, such as the Division of Economic Development, state agencies, municipalities, and stakeholders that have a vested interest in Monmouth County's agriculture industry. Although the county has made great strides in planning for and acquiring farmland, the *ASP* will support the continuation of the program by helping identify ways farmers can gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace to ensure their long-term commercial success.

Recommendation 9.2: Incorporate the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* as a component of the Agriculture & Economic Development Element of the *Monmouth County Master Plan*; recognizing the CEDS as the county's economic development plan. Incorporating the *Monmouth County CEDS* by reference into the *Monmouth County Master Plan* aligns the Division of Planning efforts with those of the Division of Economic Development and provides the county with an investment strategy that supports overall long-term economic development goals. The *Master Plan* and *Monmouth County CEDS* seek to expand employment, improve business investment, add value to our tax base, and motivate more public and private investment in growth areas particularly in places designated for redevelopment such as Fort Monmouth and the Bell Works property in Holmdel.

Recommendation 9.3: Provide professional and technical support for the efforts performed by the Monmouth County Division of Economic Development that promote the long-term economic and agricultural viability of the county such as assisting with the implementation of the *Monmouth County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2014)* and Grow Monmouth programs. The Division of Planning produces documents and participates in activities that support general economic development in the county. These efforts include the annual *Monmouth County Profile Report*, annual *Monmouth County At-A-Glance*, the proposed *Monmouth County New Residential Survey Study*, participation in the annual bond calls, specialized demographic and economic reports, market analysis, community development programming, and geographic information system (GIS) mapping and analysis. The Grow Monmouth initiative and the *Monmouth County CEDS* support a primary value of the *Monmouth County Strategic Plan (2009)* which is the promotion of the county's economic health. As such, the Division of Planning will continue to produce data, reports, studies, and analysis used by the county for agricultural and economic development purposes.

Recommendation 9.4: Develop model ordinances for municipalities that will help expand and develop agricultural businesses while decreasing the number of Right to Farm cases brought before the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB). The development and implementation of model ordinances and the promotion of generally accepted agricultural management practices (AMPs) reduces the number of right-to-farm conflicts in a community and diminishes environmental impacts from farming operations. With increased consumer interest for direct grower-consumer relationships, organic farming, exotic and unique foods, farm to table, and customized agritourism experiences, the remaining farms in the county have great potential to expand revenue. The Division of Planning can assist towns seeking ways to reduce conflicts between emerging agribusiness operations and existing land uses.

Recommendation 9.5: Through coordination between the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB) and the Development Review Section of the Division of Planning, draft and implement a required statement of acknowledgement for site plans and subdivision plats proposed in an Agricultural Development Area (ADA) to help raise awareness of potential neighboring agricultural activities and potentially reduce right-to-farm complaints. This type of advisory is intended to raise awareness for investors that a property is in an agricultural area and that neighboring parcels may be eligible for Right to Farm Act protections. Incorporating such language onto plats

provides another level of disclosure for those seeking to develop property in agricultural areas. It also validates local policies intended to help sustain the local agricultural economy.

Stakeholder Strategies

General

- Through the Division of Economic Development, and with assistance from the county's agricultural program planners in the Division of Planning, explore the potential for creating a revolving loan program to provide farmers with small business loans and access to credit particularly for small loans.
- Support partnerships between the local government, nonprofits, educational facilities, and community stakeholders to create community gardens, as well as establish venues and events to sell locally made, value-added products (e.g. farm stands, farmers markets, and annual Made in Monmouth Expo).
- Encourage rural municipalities to consider adopting land use measures to accommodate agricultural workers' housing since the New Jersey Right to Farm Act does not include protections for agricultural worker housing.
- Recommend to the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) to include agriculture labor housing as a protected activity under the Right to Farm Act.

Community Development & Housing

- Continue to allocate a portion of Monmouth County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) annual funding to support economic development through the Grow Monmouth Façade Improvement Program.
- Support efforts to have the state recognize onsite affordable housing for agricultural workers as a means of addressing Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) obligations in rural locales.
- Assist in identifying CDBG eligible project opportunities in the county's rural areas, particularly through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Rural Innovation Fund (RIF), which supports innovative housing and economic development in rural areas.
- Identify opportunities and assist with the creation of municipal ordinances that provide for the development of special needs facilities and institutions for the developmentally disabled located in agricultural areas and on farms that provide housing for residence and life skill development through agricultural education and experiences (e.g. Camphill Association of North America).

Community Resiliency

- As part of economic resiliency and recovery, support policies that provide for the diversification of our agricultural economy in response to marketplace transitions (e.g. value-added products, vineyards and wineries, and agritourism).
- Encourage farms and small businesses to develop plans for debris cleanup after severe weather events to ensure their timely reopening.
- Research program funding that provides small business training in resiliency methods and practices.
- Refer to *Additional Guidance on Building Requirements to Mitigate Agricultural Structures' Damage in High- Risk Areas Is Needed* (GAO-14-583: Published: June 30, 2014. Publicly Released: July 29, 2014) for recommendations on how to better protect agricultural property in high-risk flood hazard areas
- Refer to Homestead and Farm Resiliency Principles in Practice, NOFA 2013 (Ben Falk) as a success story in small farming and gardening methods for resiliency and sustainability.

Sustainable Places

- Encourage the repurposing of existing farm structures as the agricultural industry transitions (i.e. the repurposing of equine infrastructure for wine/distillery/brewery or other value-added products).
- Recycle and reuse debris from storm-related events to lessen the

need for new building materials.

- Support local food accessibility through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives, community gardens, urban gardens and farms, rain gardens and school gardens.
- Support community composting efforts that will increase soil health, productivity and reduce landfill waste.
- Work with the Monmouth County Park System (MCPS), Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board (MCADB), Division of Economic Development, Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE), educational institutions, and SADC to promote the concept of incubator farms and programs that support agriculture career training, which helps propagate the next generation of local farmers.
- Direct farmers to RCE, Northeast Organic Farm Association (NOFA), and other organizations that offer training in crop diversification techniques and introduce farmers to new crops and succession planting.

Healthy Communities

- Increase community access to healthy foods and food options that are grown locally through the support of local food movement initiatives such as CSAs, small farm operations, farmers markets and community gardens, thus working to eliminate the county's food deserts.
- Continue to support agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) that reduce the use of chemicals and fertilizers that can adversely impact groundwater and surface water quality.
- Provide educational opportunities to the public through farm tours and operational demonstrations, enhancing general awareness of the local community food systems.

Natural Resources & Open Space

- Retain soil on farms, a primary tenet of agricultural sustainability.
- Continue to support agricultural BMPs that reduce runoff and soil erosion that negatively affects streams and eventually downstream communities and ecosystems in the watershed.
- Conserve open space which in turn increases the economic value of adjacent and nearby properties.
- Preserve marginal agricultural lands for their natural resource value through the implementation of conservation and preservational zoning techniques.
- Agricultural program planners in the Division of Planning continue to work closely with the MCPS in acquiring preserved farmland concurrent with open space acquisition efforts in locations containing agricultural assets.
- Emphasize that farmland provides areas of limited disturbance, which are necessary for effective groundwater recharging of aquifers and other drinking water sources.
- Improve groundwater recharge through the reestablishment of marshlands and natural upstream barriers to improve water quality, reduce runoff, and downstream flooding.
- Continue to endorse and encourage the use of best land management and stewardship practices as recommended by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and RCE.

Farmland Preservation

- Retain current (and often historic) land use via farmland preservation and maintain and enhance the local economy through agricultural job retention and creation.
- Purchase agricultural easements to supply landowners with capital to grow their farming operations, hire additional workers, and make physical improvements to their business.
- Preserve concentrations of farms to sustain interrelated support businesses (i.e. numerous horse farms are needed as clients for a successful feed store or veterinarian office).
- Sustain farms proximate to consumers and local markets to reduce transportation and production costs.
- Generate awareness and promote products grown on preserved farms.

Arts, Historic, & Cultural Resources

- Raise awareness of our agrarian heritage through living history farms, such as MCPS's Historic Longstreet Farm and preserve the history of farming through museums, museum exhibits, signage, and county agricultural fairs.
- Use the Grown in Monmouth initiative to connect local farmers and institutional users and to assist farmers in marketing their products to potential clients. Additionally, Grown in Monmouth destinations could be promoted by the use of informational signs on county roadways; for instance "Wineries" or "Pick Your Own" directional signs.
- Promote agriculturally compatible businesses in rural areas, such as bed and breakfasts, that make use of historic structures and attract tourists into the region.
- Raise awareness of our county's agricultural heritage through wayfinding techniques, such as including the history of the U.S. Route 9 corridor and poultry farming in Howell, as part of a Monmouth County Scenic Byway Program.
- Strengthen the link and association between the arts, cultural, and historic hubs and economic development opportunities.
- Participate on the Upper Freehold Historic Farmland Byway Committee to promote implementation of recommendations outlined in the *Upper Freehold Historic Farmland Byway Corridor Management Plan (2010)*.

Utilities

- Support promulgated legislation and rules that further the ability of farms to enhance onsite energy production and storage thereby reducing costs and lessening the burden on the grid.
- Recapture rainwater via rain barrels, basins, greenhouse water recycling systems, rain gardens, etc., to lessen water utility service needs and to reduce resident's long-term utility cost.
- Encourage reuse of capped landfills and brownfields for sites of alternative energy, rather than greenfield sites.
- Encourage new development to locate near existing utilities and infrastructure while discouraging the programming of water and sewer utilities into rural locales.
- Support the use of tax and financial incentives for businesses that use renewable energy.

Planning Services, Outreach, & Coordination

- Encourage 4-H Youth Development and Mentoring Programs (4H) and National Future Farmers of America Organization (FFA) programming in schools and nonprofit organizations to provide local agriculture education in addition to business and life skills.
- Utilize Monmouth County facilities including those administered by the MCPS and Brookdale Community College to provide workforce training outreach.
- Encourage nonprofits, businesses, and local institutions to sponsor educational workshops, internships, and apprenticeships.
- Match vocational training/educational opportunities to current and emerging job markets.
- Encourage institutions to offer programs like those found at the FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties that use locally grown produce in their culinary courses and that operate their own gardens as a source of much needed fresh food for clients.

Transportation & Mobility

- Improve public transportation infrastructure and access to multi-modal transportation to lessen reliance on private vehicle use and reduce congestion, allowing for better movement of goods, employees, and customers.
- Improve the transportation connections between eastern and western Monmouth County, connecting the producers in western Monmouth with the consumers in eastern Monmouth.
- Improve transportation options in rural areas through means such as ridesharing, bicycle lanes and sharrows, vanpool options, and shuttles.
- Connect low car-ownership communities (e.g. group homes, senior

communities, assisted living facilities, and college campuses) to local markets and farmers stands/markets via ride sharing and shuttles.

- Review existing agricultural roadways' turning radius to accommodate farm vehicles and trucks.