

Department of Agriculture



At a Glance

STEVEN K. REVICZKY, Commissioner

Established – 1971

Statutory authority – CGS Sec. 22-1

Central office – 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

Average number of full-time employees - 58

Recurring operating expenses - \$4,683,182

Capital purchases - \$4,202

Organizational structure – Administrative Services, Regulation and Inspection, Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation, Aquaculture and Connecticut Marketing Authority.

Mission

The mission of the Department of Agriculture is to foster a healthy economic, environmental and social climate for agriculture by developing, promoting and regulating agricultural businesses; protecting agricultural and aqua cultural resources; enforcing laws pertaining to public health, animal health and animal care; and promoting an understanding among the state's citizens of the diversity of Connecticut's agriculture, its cultural heritage and its contribution to the state's economy.

Statutory Authority

Statutory authority for the Department of Agriculture can be found in Sections 12, 22 and 26 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

BUREAU OF AQUACULTURE

- Collected and analyzed over 7,000 seawater samples for fecal coliform bacteria, examined 75 phytoplankton samples for harmful algal blooms, 35 samples for paralytic shellfish poisoning, 261 shellfish tissues for coliform bacteria analysis and 12 pathology samples. In addition 56 shellfish tissue and municipal wastewater samples were analyzed for MSB levels, Male-Specific Bacteriophage, to determine the viral levels after Water Pollution Control Facility bypasses during heavy rainfalls.
- Initiated the testing of shellfish and municipal wastewater samples to determine the levels of Male-Specific Bacteriophage (MSB). Coliphage are bacterial viruses (bacteriophages) that infect and replicate in *Escherichia coli*. They are often found in high concentrations in municipal wastewater and to a lesser degree found in human and animal feces. Coliphages are potentially important microorganisms for monitoring the microbial quality of waters because the traditional bacterial monitoring does not accurately indicate the presence of non-bacterial organisms such as human pathogenic viruses. It also provides a safe way to look for threatening viruses such as the Norovirus by using the male-specific bacteriophage as an indicator organism. Because human virus detection can be expensive and beyond the capabilities of most water laboratories, MSB testing provides a relatively easy way to test for human pathogenic viruses in a timely fashion. MSB has been shown to be present in most municipal wastewater treatment facilities in Connecticut but sufficient treatment of the influent waste has effectively controlled bacteriophage levels. This procedure has proven to be a useful tool in assessing and monitoring viral levels in both seawater and shellfish.

Based on the MSB samples that have been collected to date, we have been able to determine that shellfish growing areas in Fairfield are not impacted by Bridgeport WPCF bypass events of up to 10 million gallons. This determination will allow productive commercial shellfish beds to remain open, when in prior years; they would have been required to be closed.

- Staff performed sanitary and record inspections of the 110 shellfish harvest vessels, 45 harvest operations and 35 wholesale dealer/distributors as required and numerous follow-up inspections throughout the year.
- Issued 116 Conch Licenses and 120 Personal Seed Oyster Licenses and 31 Seed Boat Licenses.
- Continued in the transition to a comprehensive GIS geospatial mapping system through the conversion from paper shellfish bed maps to an electronic version which combines natural beds, and town and state commercial beds with the shellfish growing area classifications, pollution sources, sampling stations, etc. These maps are then used by DEEP for enforcement and monitoring of harvest, by Environmental Analysts for the Annual, Triennial, and Twelve-Year Comprehensive Growing Area Evaluations, and are

made available to other groups such as CT Sea Grant, universities, municipal shellfish commissions, recreational shellfish programs, and Harbor Commissions. Electronic version of partial closure maps are forwarded to DEEP ECON Officers.

- Completed Twelve Year Shoreline Pollution Source Survey in the City of Norwalk. Data Collected during the survey will be used to compile a Comprehensive Pollution Source GIS database, with the goal of having a comprehensive pollution source database for the entire CT shoreline over the next 5 years. Pollution sources (such as sewage infiltration to stormwater outfalls) discovered during the surveys is investigated to determine where the contamination is originating and are referred back to the town for correction. Investigation of these sources may require a cooperative effort between DoAg, town health officials, public works departments, local environmental groups, and US Environmental Protection Agency.

This year's survey uncovered a direct connection between a concession stand and the stormwater outfall that was discovered during the course of an investigation conducted by DoAg, Norwalk Department of Public Works, Norwalk Health Department and sampling conducted by Harbor Watch/River Watch, DoAg, and US EPA. This connection had required commercial and recreational beds in the area to be closed due to elevated bacteria levels in water and shellfish. Based on the results of this investigation, the cross-connection was corrected, and shellfish beds were able to be reopened.

- Bureau staff managed a total of 58 Conditionally Approved shellfish areas. These areas are impacted by pollution sources such as stormwater, sewage treatment plants, and mooring fields. These areas require monitoring of rainfall and sewage bypasses seven days a week, 365 days a year. Areas are often managed by a cooperative effort between town health departments, public works departments, treatment plants, shellfish commissions. These Conditional Areas require additional sampling and monitoring, but provide the potential of an additional 93,916 acres of valuable commercial and recreational shell fishing areas that would otherwise be unavailable for harvest. The Bureau continues to work to encourage new shellfish operations within the unleased portion of these conditional areas.

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE PRESERVATION

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continued to work on cooperative joint municipal Farmland Preservation Projects with the towns of Suffield, Sharon, Lebanon, New Milford, Woodstock, Ellington and Granby, and completed first joint acquisition with Connecticut Farmland Trust, and a municipal land trust.
- \$10 million in bond funds were approved by the legislature in lump sum funding for the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program to fund the purchase of development rights.

- \$5,973,353 from the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service, through the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program funds were awarded for Farmland Preservation – Purchase of Development Rights.
- Development rights were acquired on 17 farms comprised of 1,706 acres at a total cost of \$9,109,270, bringing the total number of farms completed to 270 farms of 35,345 acres. Six of the farms included municipal partnerships contributing \$824,408, one of a land trust contribution of \$604,000.
- An additional five farm development rights completions are pending closings, comprised of 772 acres for \$5,202,839. Another nine acquisitions are pending A-2 perimeter surveys comprised of 1,130 acres.
- Six farms have development rights contract offers extended on 566 acres for \$4,430,000, of which three include municipal or land trust partnerships. Additionally, 11 farms are being appraised and under negotiation totaling 1,100 acres.
- Continued cooperative farmland protection efforts with established municipal programs including the permanent protection of farms located in Ashford, Columbia, Coventry, Ellington, Lebanon, New Milford, Pomfret, Suffield and Woodstock.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture’s Farmland Preservation Program received 78 application and information requests.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture conducted 60 site reviews of proposed state and local projects for impact on prime and important farmland soils.
- The Commissioner of Agriculture met with his Farmland Preservation Advisory Board quarterly in the months of October, December, March and June.
- The Commissioner of Agriculture entered into two leases on 575 acres of the Lebanon Agricultural Reserve and assisted other state agencies with the leasing of state owned agricultural lands.
- The Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation’s in-house promotional efforts continue.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture updated seven commodity brochures promoting Connecticut producers and Connecticut Grown products in 2010. The agency produced 200,000 new Connecticut Farm Maps for distribution and updated the electronic farm map website. Printed brochures are distributed to five Connecticut tourism welcome centers, U.S. Department of Agriculture state offices, and UConn Cooperative Extension offices. They are also available at department displays, trade shows, presentations, and online at www.ctgrown.gov.

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture produces the Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report, a publication that contains articles of interest to members of the agricultural community; pricing for fruits, vegetables, eggs, hay and slaughter animals; and classified advertising. The Report has a subscriber list of 1,683 and is also posted on the Department's website each week.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to maintain a positive working relationship with the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Commission on Culture and Tourism as a result of the Agritourism Brochure Distribution Program.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$215,896 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant (Fiscal Year 06-07) from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops in Connecticut. Funds were used for twenty-five projects: ten conducted by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation, thirteen in collaboration with state producers' associations and two with Harvest New England, a cooperative of the six New England state departments of agriculture.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$123,322 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant-FB (Fiscal Year 08) and established a partnership between the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Funds are being used by the Experiment Station for three research projects that will enhance the competitiveness of the state's specialty crops.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$116,865 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant (Fiscal Year 08) from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops in Connecticut. Funds are being used for the planning and design of a new year-round farmers' market facility on the property of the Hartford Regional Market.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$318,809.53 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant-FB (Fiscal Year 09) from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops in 2010. Nine projects were awarded - three to commodity association, two to the University of Connecticut, one to the Connecticut Agricultural Station and two the Agency to increase the competitiveness of Connecticut specialty crops.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$445,339.20 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant-FB (Fiscal Year 2010) from the United State Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Services to increase the competitiveness of Connecticut's specialty crops in 2010. Nine sub-grantees were awarded – Four to

commodity associations, one to the Agency, two to the University of Connecticut, one to an agricultural nonprofit, and one to a regional agricultural nonprofit.

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$428,912.51 from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (Fiscal Year 2011). These funds will be used by eight sub-grantees to solely enhance the competitiveness of Connecticut specialty crops.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was awarded \$39,000 through the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (Fiscal Year 2011) from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service to increase Connecticut agricultural exports in cooperation with the US Department of Commerce, International Affairs Division.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture regularly updates and develops new pages for the agency website which enables producers to access regulatory statutes and legislation, license and permit applications, information on farmland preservation, and grant applications and information. The website also allows the public to find information about area farms and farmers' markets along with information on animal control and pet health.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to develop a Connecticut Farmer Database, which houses all Connecticut producers' information and the Bureau programs they participate in, as a result of receiving a \$29,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development. A questionnaire requesting information to update the data base was sent to over 7,000 farmers with a return rate of 64%. The database is now being expanded to accommodate nearly the entire agency.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture was the lead-organizing state on a three-day New England-wide agricultural marketing conference in March 2011. Over the three days, more than 800 producers and exhibitors attended. The agency is planning the next conference anticipated for February 2013.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to be active with Food Export Northeast to increase Connecticut exports to international markets. Connecticut company participation has increased significantly over the last year. The Agency is actively involved in organizing an educational seminar in cooperation with the NY State Department of Agriculture, a Northeast buyers mission, and seafood buyers mission in March. The Agency also works with the US Department of Commerce to promote exports.
- The partnership between the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and the University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Cooperative Extension System continues as the Connecticut Women's Agricultural Network becomes more

established offering educational programs to assist new and women owned farms to become better established and successful in Connecticut.

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to promote farmers' markets throughout the state. The state boasts 125 certified farmers' markets, with over 400 farmers and vendors selling local products and contributing to the local economy. DoAG also administers the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), this supplemental food program provides CT Grown fruits and vegetables to WIC (Women, infant, and children) and low income seniors. This program serves over 56,000 WIC Clients and over 32,000 low income seniors. WIC clients receive benefits from their local WIC office, and seniors from their local social services office. WIC and senior FMNP clients purchased over \$774,000 worth of CT Grown fruits and vegetables in 2010 at authorized farmers' markets throughout Connecticut.
- The Farmers' Market Reference Guide assists both farmers and the market masters in establishing, participating in, and understanding the various regulations and rules pertaining to farmers markets. This guide is updateable and available on the DoAG website for those interested in pursuing a Farmers' Market in their community.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the Connection Agricultural Information Council annually host Ag Day at the Capitol. Over fifty agricultural organizations assemble in the North Lobby and Hall of Flags in the Capitol Building to showcase Connecticut agricultural offerings and showcase the importance of agriculture in Connecticut.
- Using PA-05-228 dollars to support the Farm-To-School Program there are now eighty-eight reported schools and school systems with fifty-one farmers on our site. There are nine wholesalers listed on our site. They work with over 100 more farmers in the state to distribute locally grown food to schools.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continued to add listings on Farm Link website, with 168 farm seekers and sixty-nine farm owners who are presently or have been listed with the program. There are 2,000 acres presently listed on the site.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farm-to-Chef Program has grown to 1,061 members since its inception in October 2006. Ten tours/workshops have been conducted to educate chefs about Connecticut Grown products, and four annual meetings of all members have been held. A monthly email newsletter and other resources are distributed and posted on the website. Program chefs have performed Connecticut Grown culinary demonstrations around the state. Two annual Farm-to-Chef Weeks in the fall have helped raise public awareness about Connecticut Grown ingredients and agriculture.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation issued a total of eighteen news releases between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011. During the same period, the Department of Agriculture scheduled thirty-

seven guests for radio and TV shows to discuss Connecticut Grown products, programs, and related topics.

- Since 2000, Farm Reinvestment Grants have been awarded to 143 farm projects including \$5,342,561 of actual grants with total project values of \$18,878,870.
- In 2010, Farm Reinvestment Grants were awarded to seven producers totaling \$251,169 with a total project value of \$1,793,818
- Since 2005, Ag Viability Grants have been awarded to eighty-six producers, two Ag Cooperatives, seventy-seven municipalities and thirty-seven Agricultural non-profits totaling over \$5,417,693 with total project values over \$14,134,146.
- Utilizing Community Investment Account funds, Ag Viability Grants were awarded in 2010 to eleven agricultural producers, six non-profit agricultural organizations and eight municipalities totaling \$714,000 with total project values over \$1.7 million.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continues to support the Connecticut wine industry through the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council, a Council overseen by the Commissioner offering successful marketing and legislative efforts to support this sector of agriculture.
- In 2010, the Milk Promotion Board was legislatively mandated and is overseen by the marketing division. Their function is to promote Connecticut dairy products.
- The Connecticut Regional Market, 101 Reserve Road in Hartford, is the largest terminal produce market between New York City and Boston. The market was established in 1950 and consists of thirty-three acres. It serves both consumers and agricultural businesses. Currently the Connecticut Regional Market consists of twenty-five tenants who sell and distribute foods including produce and meats. It also houses a Farmers Market seven days a week with over 200 farmers at different times of the year. These farmers sell Connecticut Grown products to consumers and businesses. Planning and design of a new, year-round facility for the farmers' market is underway, utilizing a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service.
- Through a Federal-State agreement, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture is now offering USDA-GAP/GHP (Good Agriculture Practices/Good Handling Practices) Audits. This is a voluntary audit based, food safety program that verifies adherence to the recommendations made in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. Upon completion and achievement of satisfactory score, the farm/business will receive a certificate from the USDA and be listed on the USDA-Ag Marketing Service website. This program will help Connecticut farmers, re-packers, and wholesalers to remain competitive nationwide and worldwide as the audit based food safety programs are being required more than ever.

- Through the USDA Specialty Crop Block grant the CT Department of Agriculture is offering a GAP/GHP Cost Share Grant. Farms/businesses that successfully pass an audit from an accredited third party auditing firm are eligible for reimbursement. The reimbursement will cover 50% for the cost of the audit, up to \$500. This initiative relates to the newly formed USDA-GAP/GHP Program. The CT Department of Agriculture is now offering, to any third party, a food safety audit such as USDA, Primus, Safe Quality Food Institute, and various others. Audit based food safety programs are growing in popularity. The cost share program eases the financial burden that farmers and other agriculture related businesses face for new programs and help them remain competitive in today's marketplace.

BUREAU OF REGULATION AND INSPECTION

- Through funding from Avian Influenza (AI) cooperative agreements with USDA, the Bureau has enhanced AI surveillance and control in the state and implemented enhanced measures to identify, control and eradicate AI in poultry populations – measures that are essential to maintain international trade and eliminate production loss due to infection. Funding provided by the Bureau to the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (CVMDL) at the University of Connecticut enhances AI testing capabilities by supporting personnel and the purchase of supplies and equipment.
- Other cooperative agreements with USDA provide partial funding for:
 - A partial position for the implementation of the National Animal Traceability System for livestock.
 - Foreign Animal Disease surveillance.
 - Scrapie surveillance program in sheep and goats.
- The Bureau's Animal Population Control Program issued 3,993 vouchers (2,514 dogs/1,479 cats) for the vaccination and sterilization of companion pets adopted from municipal impound facilities. Budgetary constraints forced the elimination of benefits offered to non-profit organizations for feral cats and to low-income residents for their own pets. Benefits were provided for 2,682 pets (1,709 dogs/973 cats) for a 67% overall sterilization compliance rate. In addition, 5,364 pre-surgical vaccinations were issued of which half were rabies vaccines.
- The Bureau of Regulation and Inspection continued to operate a large animal rescue facility in cooperation with the Department of Correction at the York Correctional Institution in Niantic after intensive rehabilitation the Bureau auctioned 11 horses and adopted out four horses to new homes at the UConn College of Agriculture's, Animal Science Department sale. The animals had been seized in animal cruelty cases and rehabilitated at the Department's large animal rescue barn operated in conjunction with the Department of Corrections.
- The Bureau investigated an animal neglect case involving over 2,500 chickens, resulting in the arrest of one individual on several animal cruelty counts and the humane

ethanization of the flock due to poultry disease detected through specimen analysis conducted by CVMDL.

- The Bureau issued \$4,848,016 in Dairy Sustainability Grants to 134 dairy farms pursuant to the provisions of Public Act #09-229.

BUREAU OF REGULATION AND INSPECTION REGULATORY ACTIVITIES

- The Bureau conducted random tests for the presence of analgesic and performance enhancing drugs on twenty animals entered in pulling contests at Connecticut fairs under authority of C.G. S. §22-126a.
- Collected and analyzed 656 samples of processed milk, milk products and cheese and 372 samples of raw milk and retail raw milk for testing for compliance with milk safety regulations including the presence of animal drug residues.
- Conducted 578 inspections of facilities producing, transporting, processing or storing milk and milk products. Commissioned two new milk processing operations.
- Conducted twelve inspections of registered Shell Egg producers and sixty-four inspections of registered Controlled Atmosphere apple storage facilities.
- FDA conducted one routine check audit of the Bureau's Milk Safety Program and found it to be in substantial compliance with national standards.
- Issued fourteen orders prohibiting the sale of milk or milk products and eighteen warning notices for milk or milk product quality and inspection violations.
- Investigated twenty-eight consumer complaints alleging product defects or illness that involved milk or milk products or, pet or livestock feeds.
- Collected 339 seed samples, 284 feed samples and 124 fertilizer samples for laboratory analysis conducted by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Samples collected and submitted to UConn's CVMDL for livestock and poultry disease surveillance testing included: 3,983 milk samples for mastitis testing; 431 samples for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies testing; 7,233 samples for Avian Influenza testing; and 261 environmental samples for *Salmonella enteritidis* (Se) testing as a component of the state's Se Risk Reduction Program in egg-laying hens.
- Conducted T.B. (tuberculosis) surveillance testing on 6,330 dairy cows as required by the Milk Safety Program.
- Investigated twenty-five environmental/nuisance complaints related to agricultural activities.

- Investigated thirty-seven livestock neglect complaints.