Department of Agriculture

At a Glance

STEVEN K. REVICZKY, *Commissioner*
***Established* - 1925**
***Statutory authority* - CGS Sec. 22-1**
***Central office* - 165 Capitol Avenue**
Hartford, CT 06106
***Average number of full-time employees* – 58**
***Recurring operating expenses* – $5,529,141**
***Capital Purchases* - $8,101**
***Organizational Structure* – Office of the Commissioner, Bureau of Regulation and Inspection, Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Preservation, Bureau of Aquaculture, Connecticut Marketing Authority, with Business Office and Human Resource Support from the Department of Administrative Services.**

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 aquacultural 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 are found in Sections 12, 22, 26 and other sections of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Public Service

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture worked during FY 2011-12 to facilitate the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development, which was reshaped through Public Act 11-189. As council chair, Commissioner Reviczky convened three meetings between January 1, 2012 and June 30, 2012. He also led the council through the undertaking of an unprecedented strategic planning effort to grow Connecticut farms.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture continued during FY 2011-12 to seek media opportunities through news releases and scheduling of Commissioner Reviczky and other representatives through television/radio and print media. These segments and stories help educate the public about the agency's work and raise awareness of Connecticut agriculture and Connecticut Grown farm products. The agency has developed a communications plan to strengthen these efforts.

The Department, through the Bureau of Regulation and Inspection, continued the process of updating its traditional licensing system to the e-license system. Approximately 80% of the agency's licenses, permits and product registrations are now accessible in the e-license system. The e-license system provides a web based interface available to the public in which the status of licenses can be determined and lists of licenses, permits and product registrations can be downloaded facilitating access to information that would otherwise only be available to the public by submitting a more time consuming request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act.

BUREAU OF AQUACULTURE

- Collected and analyzed 6889 seawater samples for fecal coliform bacteria, examined 150 phytoplankton samples for harmful algal blooms, 35 samples for paralytic shellfish poisoning, 238 shellfish tissues for fecal coliform bacteria analysis, 11 shellfish tissue samples tested for total *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and total *Vibrio vulnificus* and 25 histopathology samples were processed. In addition, 59 shellfish tissue and municipal wastewater samples were analyzed for MSB levels, Male-Specific Bacteriophage, to determine the viral levels after heavy rainfalls.

- Initiated the testing of shellfish and municipal wastewater samples to determine the levels of Male-Specific Bacteriophage. 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 it

provides a safe way 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 effluent waste has effectively controlled bacteiophage levels. This procedure has proven to be a useful tool in assessing and monitoring viral levels in both seawater and shellfish.

Based on both the MSB and fecal coliform samples that have been collected to date, we have been able to determine that shellfish growing areas in Eastern Fairfield are not impacted by Bridgeport WPCF bypass events of up to 10 million gallons and up to 20 million gallons for the recreational shellfishing areas and the western portion of the growing area. This determination will allow productive commercial and recreational shellfishing beds to remain open, when in prior years; they would have been required to be closed. The Department of Agriculture Bureau of Aquaculture (DoAg BA) will continue to sample to determine if the trigger can be raised again.

MSB testing was also used in to reopen growing areas, most recently Greenwich and Stamford, prior to the standard 21 days closure required after a large raw sewage spill. DoAg BA is additionally using MSB sampling in the Housatonic River to determine if an upgrade from Prohibited to Restricted Relay would be appropriate. This would benefit commercial operations as harvesters are currently not allowed to remove the any of the large amount of market size product in the area due to its classification. The industry would also benefit as potentially disease causing shellfish would be removed.

- Staff performed sanitary and record inspections of the 110 shellfish harvest vessels, 44 harvest operations and 35 wholesale dealer/distributors as required and numerous follow-up inspections throughout the year.

- Issued 128 Conch Licenses and 138 Personal Seed Oyster Licenses and 49 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. The Connecticut Shellfish Mapper tool was a collaboration between Sea Grant, DoAg BA, and UCONNs CLEAR. 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.

- Bureau staff managed a total of 58 Conditionally Approved shellfish areas. These areas are impacted by pollution sources such as storm-water, sewage treatment plants, and mooring fields. These areas require monitoring of rainfall and sewage bypasses 7 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 staff completed tissue verification studies as required by the FDA FY2007 PEER Growing Area Classification Evaluation in the following growing areas: Greenwich Conditionally Approved Area H (0.5" area) and Fairfield Conditionally Approved Areas A and B (1" and 1.5" areas). Results of the Tissue Verification study for Greenwich Conditionally Approved Area H were used to increase the rainfall trigger from 0.5" to1.0", and a new Verification Study is underway for the newly defined area. Verification Studies help analysts determine whether a seven day closure period is adequate to achieve reduction of fecal coliform levels in the shellstock to pre-closure (background) levels, and establish criteria for reopening based on coliform levels in the water. Water and shellstock tissue samples are collected from Conditionally Approved areas for bacteriological analysis 3-5 days (or longer) after sewage or rain related closures. Prior to reopening, water samples at all routine stations must contain less than or equal to 14 CFU/ 100ml of water and tissue samples must contain no more than the number of fecal coliforms found in background samples. No Conditionally Approved growing area will be reopened automatically following a closure event until the Verification Study for that area is complete. Shellfish tissue sampling will be removed from area management plans when the studies verify that there is a direct correlation between fecal coliforms in shellfish tissue and the overlying waters and that a decrease in fecal coliforms in seawater results in a corresponding decrease of coliforms in shellfish tissue.

- The Bureau held two mandatory shellstock shipper educational seminars on March 15, 2012, and March 20, 2012, to outline recently adopted changes to the NSSP Model Ordinance. At least one representative from each harvesting or wholesale dealer operation attended the training held by DoAg BA, for a total of 132 attendees. This training included basic shellfish sanitation and new HACCP requirements, as well as information on upcoming concerns. This year's training focused mainly on the control of *Vibrios*. *Vibrios* are naturally occurring pathogens that can cause illness from consumption of molluscan shellfish. Due to recent warming trends in many shellfish growing areas, *Vibrio*s are the species of most concern. Higher water temperatures cause these organisms to proliferate in historically low area. In order to minimize illness the NSSP includes both suggested and mandatory controls to limit shellfish exposure to warm temperatures. The controls begin at harvest and are applied at every level of processing and handling. DoAg BA developed new time and temperature requirements for Connecticut harvesters in order to minimize the risk of a Vibrio outbreak.

In Connecticut, because we have not had outbreaks of illness from either *V. parahaemolyticus* or *V. vulnificus*, harvesters are asked to abide by voluntary *Vibrio* control plans. These plans include recommendations to shade shellfish when on the deck of the boat, to limit hours from harvest to refrigeration, particularly during the warmest summer months, to spray shellfish with growing area water to keep cool, and to monitor the temperatures of shellstock once on board. Connecticut harvesters will have 12 hours from the time when the first shellfish are exposed to air until product must be placed under temperature control at 45˚F or less. New requirements require that the first dealer to take possession of the shellfish receive and refrigerate shellfish within 12 hours from time of harvest and reduce the internal temperatures to 50˚F within 10 hours of being placed under refrigeration. If product is sold prior to getting to temperature, and shipment time exceeds 4 hours, a time/temperature recording device must be provided indicating that continuous cooling has occurred.

This year's warmer water temperatures and results of FDA *Vibrio* testing have lead the DoAg BA to place further restrictions on some growing areas. The DoAg BA continues to work with aquaculture producers to ensure an understanding of the new regulations as well as educate harvesters that the warmer waters and unseasonable weather patterns must be considered while adopting strategies to eliminate the possibility of shellfish-related illnesses.

BUREAU OF REGULATION AND INSPECTION

Coordinated the Department's emergency response activities associated with Tropical Storm Irene between August 26 and September 6, 2011. The response included; temporarily relocating the Department's horses seized in animal cruelty cases from its barn at the Niantic Correctional facility, which is not structurally capable of withstanding hurricane wind forces, to the Second Company Horse Guard facility in Newtown; issuing protective actions concerning shell fishing, inspecting growers and wholesalers to ensure that flooded crops were not offered for sale; collecting information to support an emergency disaster declaration; providing extensive outreach to the agricultural community, home gardeners and pet owners on hazard mitigation, food safety and animal welfare; and responding to complaints of foods once submerged in flood waters being offered for sale. The department had additional expenses of $10,954.65 which includes 17 DAG staff with 210 hours of overtime; other expenses included feed and transportation of animals from the Niantic horse facility to Newtown. FEMA reimbursed the Department $5243.62.

- During Winter Storm Alfred in October 2011, the Bureau again coordinated the Department's emergency response activities that included: staffing the Agriculture desk at the Emergency Operations Center while activated; gathering information to support an emergency disaster declaration; responding to 3 pheasant farm structure collapses that liberated several thousand pheasants before they were due to be delivered to customers; issuing protective actions concerning shell fishing; working with DCP and DPH on guidance and outreach to homeowners concerning food safety; working with the EOC,

National Guard and CL&P on power restoration priorities affecting large poultry and livestock operations at which generators failed after extended use and restoration of power to the state's largest milk and dairy product processing facility that, while without power, resulted in major disruption of milk movement in the Northeast and losses to dairy farmers.

- With USDA cooperative agreement funding support, the Bureau continued to enhance animal disease surveillance and outreach activities for Avian Influenza, Scrapie and other reportable animal diseases; continue implementation of the National Animal Disease Traceability Program; and partially fund two positions associated with the cooperative agreement programs. The Bureau provided funding to the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory at the University of Connecticut to conduct the essential diagnostic services and to support personnel needed to accomplish surveillance goals and to assist in animal disease investigations and disease-free status certifications i.e. National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). State animal health surveillance information is coordinated by the State Veterinarian and shared with USDA through quarterly accomplishment reports and participation in the National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS) and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).
    - Avian Influenza Surveillance Activities – 6,681 birds were tested from 71 commercial and 285 backyard poultry flocks; 91 avian necropsy cases were examined for AI and financially supported by the 2011 NAI cooperative agreement; and 119 poultry outreach visits occurred, distributing over 3,500 pieces of USDA AI and *Biosecurity for Birds* literature and calendars.
    - Scrapie Surveillance Activities - 59 animals, 30 sheep and 29 goats, were examined at necropsy and tested negative for Scrapie. The 2011 Scrapie Surveillance cooperative agreement partially subsidized the necropsy evaluation for owners to encourage laboratory submissions and to meet surveillance goals set by USDA. The State Veterinarian issued 18 sheep flocks and/or goat herds official identification ear tags during this period, 241 entities to date.
    - Animal Disease Traceability Program activities – the Bureau continued to enhance its animal disease traceability capabilities with a goal of attaining the performance standards of the National Animal Disease Traceability program. This has included an increased emphasis on compliance with official animal identification and the availability and use of nationally shared electronic data bases for tracking and quantifying movement of livestock and equines in and out of the state.

- The Animal Population Control Program (APCP) issued 4,595 vouchers (2991 dogs/1604 cats) for the vaccination and sterilization of pets from municipal impound facilities, feral cat organizations and low-income CT residents. Benefits were provided for 3,158

animals (2123 dogs/71% and 1035 cats/65%) for a 69% overall sterilization compliance rate. In addition, 6,316 pre-surgical vaccinations were issued of which one-half were rabies vaccines.

- The Licensing Unit processed applications and issued licenses and registrations during FY 2012 as follows: 114 Animal Importers, 68 Bulk Milk Pickup Tankers, 23 Cheese Manufacturers, 276 Commercial Kennels, 1 Commission Sales Stables, 123 Dog Training Facilities, 4 Egg Processing Plants, 2 Equine Auctions, 521 Feed companies (>10,000 labels reviewed), 288 Fertilizer companies (>4,000 formulas), 1 Fur Breeders, 379 Grooming Facilities, 68 Poultry Dealers, 31 Livestock Dealers/Brokers, 71 Milk Dealers, 136 Milk Examiners, 126 Milk Producers, 90 Milk Subdealers, 107 Pet Shops, 2 Poultry Slaughter Facilities, 5 Raw Milk/Cheese Manufacturers, 2,904 Retail Dairy Stores, 16 Retail Raw Milk Producers, 73 Seed labelers and 3 Swine Garbage Feeders.

- Continued to operate a large animal rescue facility in cooperation with the Department of Correction at the York Correctional Center in Niantic. This past fiscal year the State Animal Control Division seized 6 horses from abusive situations and they were added to the horse population at the facility. After extensive rehabilitation the Bureau auctioned 10 horses at the UConn College of Agriculture's Animal Science sale. In addition the Bureau adopted 6 horses with special needs into new homes, 3 of which are now part of the Equine Management class at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury, CT.

- The Corrigan - Ragdowski Correctional Center in Montville retrofitted an existing barn with horse stalls. The Bureau along with the Department of Corrections now has a memorandum of understanding that allows for the Bureau to house two rescued horses at the facility providing inmates with the experience and responsibility of caring for large animals.

- The Bureau issued $6,198,735 in Dairy Sustainability Grants to 130 dairy farms pursuant to the provisions of Public Act 09-229.

- In September 2011, the Bureau arranged and sponsored an animal disease response training program held at the Connecticut Fire Academy with 57 attendees. The training curriculum, endorsed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, included an overview of agro-terrorism and biosecurity, plus training modules on quarantine, worker personal protective equipment, de-population euthanasia procedures, disposal of animals, and cleaning and disinfection. Foot and Mouth disease and Avian Influenza outbreak scenarios were featured and emergency responder field notes were provided.

- Public Act # 11-187, effective October 1, 2011, now requires animal importers to register with the Department. To date, 114 rescue organizations that are importing companion animals from states outside Connecticut for sale/adoption have registered and now must meet animal health standards similar to those pet shops must meet.

- Continued its active participation in the New England States Animal Agriculture Security Alliance (NESAASA) chartered in July 2010 by the 6 New England Governors and consisting of the state agricultural veterinarians and key state animal agriculture officials in all the New England states. NESAASA's mission is to strengthen all-hazard animal and animal agriculture emergency response capabilities in New England by developing multi-state projects in alliance with state and federal agencies, industry and academic institutions. A key current project is the development, testing and implementation of a New England secure milk supply (SMS), continuity of business plan, in the face of a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak. Bureau staff participated in a Foot and Mouth Disease/SMS planning and test exercise as part of regional effort supported by NESAASA.

- 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. The presence of illegal drugs was not detected in any animals tested.

- Collected and analyzed 871 samples of processed milk, milk products and cheese, 65 samples of producer raw milk for pasteurization and 256 samples of retail raw milk for compliance with milk safety regulations including the presence of pathogens and animal drug residues.

- Conducted 578 inspections of facilities producing, transporting, processing or storing milk and milk products. Commissioned 3 new farmstead milk processing operations.

- Conducted twenty one (21) inspections of four (4) registered Shell Egg producers.

- Conducted 4 poultry processor (slaughter) inspections of two (2) registered facilities.

- Conducted one hundred one (101) inspections and seven (7) certifications of five (5) registered Controlled Atmosphere apple storage facilities.

- FDA conducted a triennial program review of the Bureau's Milk Safety Program and found no significant deviations from national standards.

- Issued eleven (11) orders prohibiting the sale of milk or milk products and thirty two (32) warning notices for milk or milk product quality and inspection violations.

- Investigated twenty five (25) consumer complaints alleging product defects or illness that involved milk or milk products or, pet or livestock feeds. Conducted eighty four (84) effectiveness tests during one (1) large pet food recall.

- Collected 362 samples of seed, 75 samples of livestock feed and 72 samples of fertilizer 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; 354 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 6,228 dairy cows as required by the Milk Safety Program.

- Investigated twenty two (22) environmental/nuisance complaints related to agricultural activities.

- Investigated thirty nine (39) livestock neglect complaints.

- Investigated one (1) complaint of cattle rustling.

- Inspected 101 dog pounds, 165 pet shops, 384 pet grooming facilities, 215 commercial kennels, 117 dog training facilities, and processed 208 rabies cases where domestic animals or humans were exposed to a rabid animal. The Division investigated 1,149 complaints, 7 livestock damages, issued 92 written warnings, 22 infractions, 4 misdemeanor summons, and executed 27 arrests.

BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE PRESERVATION

- Continued to work on cooperative joint municipal farmland preservation projects with the towns of Suffield, Lebanon, New Milford, Woodstock, Ellington, Columbia, and Coventry, and on joint acquisition projects with the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

- $10 million in bond funds were authorized by the legislature and allocated in lump sum funding by the State Bond Commission for the Farmland Preservation Program to fund the purchase development rights.

- $5,035,845 was awarded to Connecticut from the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program for the purchase of development rights to qualifying farms.

- Development rights were acquired on seven farms totaling 860 acres at a total cost of $6,005,578, bringing the total number of farms protected to 296 farms and 38,214 acres. Two of the farms included municipal partnerships contributing $600,000.

- 14 additional farm development rights projects are pending, totaling 1,507 acres for $8,476,920.

- Three farms have development rights contract offers extended on 214 acres for $1,859,652, which include a municipal and land trust partnerships.

- 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, Hampton, Bethany, Eastford, Sprague, Southbury, Cromwell and Woodstock.

- A new pilot Community Farms Preservation Program was announced on May 30, 2012. The purpose of the Community Farms Program is to encourage locally supported farmland preservation on smaller farms that have excellent agricultural soils and contribute to local economic activity, but which may not be eligible for other protection programs. Twenty-four towns entered into cooperative agreements with the Commissioner of Agriculture and 11 Community Farms Preservation Program applications have been received totaling over 750 acres.

- In January $5,000,000 in bond funding was approved for the newly created Farmland Restoration Program. This voluntary program provides matching grants of up to $20,000 for restoration activities that increase the state's farmland resource base for production agriculture, with an emphasis on prime and important farmland soil and human and livestock food production. A conservation plan, or farmland restoration plan, is required for participation. Forty-six applications located in 31 municipalities have been received to date proposing to restore an average of 14.9 acres per farm or 684 acres with an average cost of $42,000 per project and a grant average of $16,000 per project.

- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program received 48 application and information requests during this period.

- Conducted 50 site reviews of proposed state and local projects for impact on prime and important farmland soils.

- Updated five brochures/online listings promoting Connecticut agricultural producers and Connecticut Grown farm products.

- Updated seven commodity brochures promoting Connecticut producers and Connecticut Grown products for this period. 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 regional centers, and UConn Cooperative Extension offices. They are also available at department displays, trade shows, presentations, and online at www.ctgrown.gov.

- Continued to produce and distribute the Connecticut Weekly Agricultural Report. The report contains informational articles; price reports for fruits, vegetables, eggs, livestock, and hay; and classified advertising. In FY 2011-12, the report's e-mail and print subscriber list grew to 1,959. The report is also posted on the agency's website.

- Continued a positive working relationship with the Department of Economic and Community Development and its Office of Tourism as a result of the Agritourism Brochure Distribution Program. In June 2012, a Familiarization Tour was conducted to inform Welcome Center staff about agritourism destinations in Connecticut.

- Administered the expenditure of $116,865 in funds from the United States Department of Agriculture originally awarded in FY 2008 through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. These funds were used to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops in Connecticut through planning of a new year-round farmers' market facility on the property of the Hartford Regional Market.

- Awarded $428,912 from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. These funds will be used for eight projects: six by state producer associations, one in cooperation with the Department of Consumer Protection, and one conducted by the agency to solely enhance the competiveness of Connecticut specialty crops.

- Awarded $400,000 from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to fund nine projects.

- Awarded $39,000 through the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program 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.

- Updated and developed new pages for the agency website which enables producers to access pertinent regulations and statutes, license and permit applications, information on farmland preservation, and grant applications. The website also allows the public to find information about area farms and farmers' markets along with information on animal control and pet health.

- Continued partnering with Food Export Northeast to increase Connecticut exports to international markets. Connecticut company participation has increased significantly over the last year. The Agency was actively involved in organizing educational seminars in cooperation with the US Department of Commerce, the Northeast Buyers Mission and the Seafood Buyers Mission in Boston, MA. An intern from Eastern Connecticut State University was hired to assist staff with expanding the program's outreach to Connecticut companies.

- Continued support of the Connecticut wine industry through the Connecticut Farm Wine Development Council offering successful marketing and legislative efforts to support this sector of agriculture.

- Provided Certificates of Free Sale to eligible food companies who wish to export products and are in need of required documentation in order to expedite shipments. Approximately 75 certificates were provided during the period.

- Continued to promote farmers' markets throughout the state. The state is home to 125 certified farmers' markets, with over 600 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 women, infant, and children (WIC clients) low income seniors and (new in 2012) families with children between the ages of 5 and 18 living in Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority Housing (CHFA) sites. The FMNP serves over 54,000 WIC clients, over 30,000 low income seniors and over 2,400 CHFA families. Clients receive their benefits from the local agencies that include: local WIC offices, seniors/social services offices and CHFA housing administrators. Eligible FMNP clients purchased CT Grown fruits and vegetables valued at over $745,000 at authorized farmers' markets throughout Connecticut in 2011.

- In conjunction with the Connecticut Agricultural Information Council hosted Ag Day at the Capitol annually. Over fifty agricultural organizations assemble in the North Lobby and Hall of Flags in the State Capitol Building to showcase Connecticut agricultural offerings and highlight the importance of agriculture in Connecticut.

- Developed new baseline questionnaires for the Farm to School program for annual review. Only thirty six schools and school systems reported this year, and there are fifty-one farmers and nine wholesalers in the program. Wholesalers report working with over 100 more farmers in the state to distribute locally grown food to schools. The Department serves as the lead on two regional groups for the state.

- Continued to add listings on the Farm Link website, with 194 farm seekers and 86 farm owners who are presently or have been listed with the program. There are 2,600 acres presently listed on the site. The Department coordinates and participates with other programs in the region in this work.

- The Farm-to-Chef Program continued in FY 2011-12 to connect Connecticut Grown producers with commercial foodservice professionals. Since the program's inception in October 2006, it has scheduled 11 tours/workshops to educate chefs, five annual meetings of members, and three Farm-to-Chef weeks to raise public awareness of Connecticut Grown ingredients and agriculture. A monthly email newsletter and other resources are distributed and posted on the website. This year, the program has been aligning itself closely with the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development to complement the council's work.

- During the reporting period, Farm Reinvestment Grants were awarded to 16 producers totaling $466,611 with a total project value of $1,094,896.

- Since 2005, Agriculture Viability and Farm Transition Grants have been awarded to 102 producers, 2 Agriculture Cooperatives, 77 municipalities and 37 Agricultural Non-Profits totaling over $6,328,360 with total project values over $16,285,989.

- Utilizing Community Investment Account funds, Agriculture Viability and Farm Transition Grants were awarded to 16 producers totaling $466,788 with total project value of $1,094,896; and to 8 Municipalities and 11 Non-Profits totaling $448,490 with total project value of $926,838.

- 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. Preliminary planning was completed for a new, year-round facility for the farmers' market, utilizing a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service.

- Through a Federal-State agreement with the USDA-Agriculture Marketing Service (USDA-AMS), the Connecticut Department of Agriculture has a USDA licensed auditor that can provide USDA food safety audits that include Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Audits, Harmonized Audits, and commodity specific audits. These are voluntary food safety programs that verify 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-AMS website. In 2011, 5 farms/businesses successfully passed these audits. This program will continue to help Connecticut farmers, re-packers, and wholesalers remain competitive nationwide and worldwide as the demand for food safety programs continues to grow.

- Through the USDA Specialty Crop Block grant the CT Department of Agriculture is offering a Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices 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.