

# News from the Delaware Department of Agriculture

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*Left to right (Front): Ann Visalli, Director, OMB; Sarah Busker, Carlton Fifer, Rep. Brad Bennett; Mary Fennemore; Governor Jack Markell; (Back): Sen. George Bunting; Rep. Darryl Scott; Rep. Ruth Briggs-King; Rep. David Wilson; Secretary Ed Kee; Rep. Harvey Kenton; Rep. Bobby Outten; Robert Garey, Chairman, Aglands Preservation Foundation; Michael McGrath, DDA Chief of Planning; Michael Parkowski, Esq., Attorney for Aglands Preservation Foundation; Rep. John Atkins*

## **KEEPING DELAWARE'S ECONOMY STRONG MEANS INVESTING IN DELAWARE AGRICULTURE Governor Markell proposes \$10 million for aglands preservation and new Delaware Young Farmers Program**

Dover, DE – Governor Jack Markell and Agriculture Secretary Ed Kee today announced a proposal to allocate \$10 million from recent increases in projected state revenues to go to agricultural lands preservation, including the creation of an innovative Delaware Young Farmers Program.

“Building capacity for our farming future helps build Delaware's economic future,” said Governor Markell. “Preserving agricultural land and supporting our farmers is important to our commitment to grow jobs and opportunity. The Delaware Young Farmer Program will help everyone across the state by planting the seeds of economic prosperity in Delaware’s agricultural economy, the benefits of which we will reap for years to come.”

Secretary Kee said, “Governor Markell’s announcement of his intention to establish a new farmland preservation program, the Delaware Young Farmer Program, with \$3 million of the \$10 million will ensure not only the preservation, but also the continuation of Delaware’s farming traditions to the next generation of farmers. The Delaware Young Farmer Program will assist young and beginning farmers to acquire land on their own, while at the same time, providing for the permanent preservation of the land. Combining these objectives sends a powerful message that the Markell Administration is committed to agriculture for the long run.”

The funding comes at a time when the real estate market is slow and landowners continue to have a high interest in preservation, both of which means that the farmland preservation program can purchase easements at historically low prices. Landowner discounts have ranged to 70% below previous market value, which means that many more acres can be permanently preserved.

The Federal government continues to commit nearly \$5 million dollars to Delaware for farmland preservation which will require Delaware to match those funds. New Castle and Kent counties have recently committed significant matching funds to add to this funding that the state can now provide.

According to Michael McGrath, DDA Chief of Planning, “On the public cost side of the equation, every dollar spent on preserving farm and forest land from development, means multiplied savings in future expenditures for infrastructure and the costs of sprawl in energy consumption and lost efficiency. Today’s commitment reassures our young people that there is a future for them in Delaware agriculture, and for the land they farm. To all kinds of agri-businesses that fuel the multi-billion agricultural economy in Delaware, it signals that agriculture is here to stay and they can invest with confidence in the expansion of agribusinesses in the First State.”

Sara Busker, a young Delaware farmer and DDA intern said, “The announcement of this Delaware Young Farmer Program is very encouraging for my generation, as we are the future of agriculture in Delaware. This program has been created with incentives to help young farmers stick with agriculture, as a way of life.”

Today’s announcement was made at Fifer Orchards, Allaband Mill Rd., Camden-Wyoming, Delaware, which is a fourth-generation family farm that was started in 1919.

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