



New Jersey  
Farm Bureau

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo by Rose Robson



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New Jersey  
Farm Bureau

# The Board

## New Jersey Farm Bureau 2025 Officers

Allen Carter, President  
Jim Etsch, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Jeff Burd, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Gary DeFelice, Treasurer

Liz Thompson, Executive Director

## 2025 Board of Directors

### Atlantic County:

Ed Kertz, Director  
Robert Fenton, Alternate

### Bergen County:

James Abma, Jr., Director  
Emily Secor, Alternate

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Matthew Stiles, Alternate

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### Women's Leadership

Danielle Wainwright, Director  
Darcy Perehinys, Director



# A Letter from the President

New Jersey Farm Bureau  
107th Annual Convention

Cherry Hill DoubleTree  
November 17–18, 2025

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 107th Annual New Jersey Farm Bureau Convention, taking place on November 17 and 18, 2025, at the Cherry Hill DoubleTree. Each year, this gathering provides a vital forum for our members and agricultural leaders to come together, share insights, and guide the direction of our organization and the broader agricultural community in New Jersey.

This year marks an exciting addition to our convention materials — the inclusion of our first-ever “Year in Review” report. This new publication provides an overview of the Farm Bureau’s work and accomplishments over the past year, highlighting key policy initiatives, advocacy efforts, and organizational milestones. It offers a concise look back at how our collective efforts have advanced the interests of New Jersey agriculture and strengthened the voice of our members statewide.

In addition to reviewing this report, our convention agenda will feature:

- Policy and legislative updates from agriculture leaders, addressing pressing issues such as land use, labor, environmental regulation, wildlife, and farm viability.
- Economic and commodity outlooks providing insight into current trends and future opportunities for our producers.

We will work through our resolutions process and at the end have a policy book that will help define our organization’s priorities for the year ahead. As always, your participation is essential to the success of this convention and to the continued strength of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. Your engagement, ideas, and leadership ensure that we remain a unified and effective voice for agriculture in our state. Every Farm Bureau member has the power to grow our organization — by showing up, speaking out, and sharing the story of agriculture. Whether it’s advocating for smart policy, mentoring young farmers, or simply inviting a neighbor to join, your voice matters. Growth starts with connection, and together, we shape the future of farming. Six counties reached their goal in 2025—congratulations to each! In 2026, let’s aim for all counties to hit the mark. Stay tuned for new materials designed to support everyone’s success.

So lean in, lead boldly, and let’s grow Farm Bureau from the ground up.

Thank you for your commitment to our mission and for joining us as we reflect on our accomplishments, address our challenges, and look toward a productive year ahead. I wish you a successful and rewarding convention.

With best regards,



Allen Carter, Jr.  
President  
New Jersey Farm Bureau



# NJFB Staff

## Management

Allen Carter, President  
Liz Thompson, Executive Director  
Peter Furey, Special Assistant to the President

## Professional Staff

Ben Casella, National Policy Director  
Ashley Kerr, State Policy Director  
Nicki Kavanaugh, Senior Research Associate  
Tara Smith, Research Associate  
Steven Napolitano, IT Director

## Administrative Staff

Lisa Cuomo, Office Manager  
Barbara Basheda, Bookkeeper  
Melissa Self-Gomes, Administrative Assistant

## Professional Advice

Lew Goldshore, Esq., General Counsel  
Klatzkin Assocs., Auditor  
Gilbert, Wilson & Hunter, Auditor

## Consulting

Peter Bylone, South Jersey Field Staff  
Al Murray, Policy Issues  
Glen Van Olden, Policy Issues

## Executive Director Summary

New Jersey Farm Bureau wrapped up a successful annual meeting last November, energized by policy recommendations from its delegates and reelected leadership. Allen Carter of Cape May County was unanimously approved for a second two-year term as president, and Jeff Burd of Mercer County was elected as second vice president.

Voting delegates retained **agricultural viability** as the top policy priority for the 2025 growing season, citing stagnant commodity prices, rising labor costs, and input inflation as key threats to farm profitability. A prolonged drought from August to October 2024 further strained financial stability across the sector.

As 2025 began, President Trump's election raised questions about shifts in federal ag policy, including USDA leadership and enforcement on undocumented workers. With no new five-year Farm Bill passed, farmers and stakeholders viewed the federal outlook as uncertain.

# Executive Director Summary

Throughout the winter, NJFB officers and staff participated in commodity group conventions and annual meetings (nursery, vegetable, grain) across the state, culminating in the State Agriculture Convention in Atlantic City. There, farmer delegates adopted policy recommendations for the State Board and Department of Agriculture that closely aligned with priorities set at the November Farm Bureau convention.

The Legislature opened 2025 with a renewal of the state budget, including Governor Murphy's proposed \$55 billion FY'25 plan. Farm Bureau advocacy secured a \$4.3 million boost for Rutgers Ag Experiment Station, while NJDA funding held steady at \$13 million. NJFB remained active on **farmland assessment**, which faced renewed scrutiny originating out of Morris County. Despite industry objections, the administration advanced a proposal for stricter eligibility and a \$3,000 minimum threshold for production. Farm Bureau helped block this in June and mobilized its Advocacy Action Team to delay further action until after the November elections.

**Labor challenges** remained a top concern for farm viability in 2025, with rising costs and reduced availability of seasonal workers being compounded by new federal deportation policies. Mitigation came through the expanded use of the H2A visa program, domestic labor, and White House decisions recognizing agriculture's workforce needs. **Heat stress** standards and other labor-related issues remain priorities for farm employers. Together, NJFB and NJDA secured a carve out for agriculture to create its own path and standards in regard to heat stress legislation.

**Farmland preservation** also drew attention, with the SADC fast-tracking a new appraisal formula to address long-standing valuation concerns. However, the program faced a year-long delay in final Assembly approval of the \$126 million FY'24 appropriations bill, which was finally passed and signed into law before summer recess. Additionally, a **Right to Farm (RTF)** policy in Monmouth County required SADC legal guidance to clarify procedures for municipal-level complaint resolution. Also passing both houses at the end of the spring session was a bill that would allow for **RTF restitution**, or farmers the ability to recoup costs associated with RTF cases that are won. As of July 1, Peter Furey stepped down as executive director of Farm Bureau after 43 years of service, handing over the reins to long-time staffer Liz Thompson.

Throughout 2025, environmental concerns focused heavily on opposing the DEP's proposed **NJREAL climate regulations**, championed by Commissioner Shawn LaTourette. Farm Bureau and farm landowners warned that the rules could complicate permit application procedures, expand flood hazard zones in coastal areas and along stream corridors, and impose questionable land management standards with long-term consequences. Additional issues included **PFAS** contamination in soil and plant material near rural groundwater hotspots, **dam safety**, **DEP-owned farmland leases**, **invasive species** proposed legislation for the nursery industry, **wildfire management** through improved forest stewardship, and **reduced technical assistance** due to staffing cuts at USDA's NRCS. NJFB was also able to connect USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins with a farmer in Cranbury Township who was going to lose his century old farm to **eminent domain** for affordable housing. Thankfully, the farm property was saved and will now become permanently preserved.

# Executive Director Summary

During the first six months of the Trump administration, the farming industry faced uncertainty over trade policies, tariffs (especially with China), and disruptions to landowner grant contracts, which were later reinstated. USDA staffing cuts, including those at National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) raised concerns, though Ag Secretary Rollins remained accessible to farm leaders, including AFBF President Zippy Duvall, throughout the transition. President Trump offered repeated assurances of support for farmers, and the June passage of the "Big, Beautiful Bill" budget act delivered key benefits in tax reform, regulatory relief, and partial Farm Bill provisions. Overall, federal ag policy remains a work in progress, warranting continued Farm Bureau engagement.

As of the election recess, NJFB's 2025 priorities included managing the ongoing impacts of the **avian flu (HPAI)** on livestock and tracking a new **urban agriculture** legislative proposal as well as one for **forest preservation** through the SADC. The organization remained active in state-funded hunger relief efforts, promoting local produce in food banks and advocating for expanded **Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA)** funding at NJDA. NJFB also boosted its social media presence, engaging over 12,000 Facebook followers.

President Carter and Executive Director Liz Thompson represented NJFB at a White House meeting with Ag Secretary Rollins and other Trump Administration officials. NJFB was able to engage with nursery industry leaders on shared challenges and potential membership collaboration, and met virtually with gubernatorial candidates to elevate key agricultural priorities. Staff updates include welcoming Tara Smith, a recent Rutgers graduate, as a Research Associate, and honoring the retirement of longtime assistant Sharon Besack. NJFB participated in multiple gleaning efforts to combat hunger, marked the opening of Rowan University's veterinary school, and spent a month in legislative meetings advancing our lame duck agenda. Additionally, NJFB is monitoring the FEC's adjustment to the Farmland Assessment income threshold to \$1900 and opposing a potential application fee.

NJFB sincerely thanks all members for their steadfast commitment to agriculture and for helping us grow. Your support and engagement continue to strengthen our mission and expand our impact across New Jersey's farming communities. While we've made meaningful progress together, there's still more work to be done in 2026. With your continued partnership, we look forward to building an even stronger future for agriculture in the Garden State.



**Pete Furey**

Previous New Jersey Farm Bureau  
Executive Director



**Liz Thompson**

New Jersey Farm Bureau  
Executive Director

# Women's Leadership Committee

## 2025 WLC Annual Report

*Danielle Wainwright, Chair*

The NJFB Women's Leadership Committee had a productive and inspiring year centered around agricultural education, outreach, and leadership development.

We brought hands-on agricultural learning to Clifton 5th graders through "The Garden Food Chain" program and shared "The Many Hats of a Farmer" with children during Burlington County Farm Fair's Children's Day. Our committee also visited the Ronald McDonald House in New Brunswick, where we sponsor a family room. Holding our monthly meeting there offered a meaningful opportunity to see firsthand how our support helps families in need. Two vineyard Meet & Greets connected women in agriculture from across the state, offering a relaxed space to share ideas, experiences, and encouragement plus enjoy local wine! Chair Danielle Wainwright represented the National Women's Committee Northeast Region at the AFBF Convention voting on the Delegate Floor.

At the State Annual Convention in AC, we hosted a NJ Women in Agriculture Panel featuring This Farm Wife, Meredith Bernard, alongside four outstanding New Jersey women in agriculture. The session drew a packed audience and inspired thoughtful discussion on the challenges and opportunities facing women in the industry today. We were honored to present the Beth & Owen Pool Scholarship to Aaron Foote where at SUNY Cobleskill he's studying beef and livestock. We teamed up with Rutgers University to host a session explaining New Jersey's Cottage Food Law, helping women grow their farm-based businesses.

We proudly presented Michelle Infante-Casella as the recipient of the 2025 Woman of the Year Award, celebrating her exceptional leadership, advocacy, and dedication to advancing New Jersey agriculture. A highlight this year was hosting the AFBF National Women's Committee meeting, featuring tours and networking that showcased New Jersey's diverse agriculture—from coastal fisheries to urban farms. We closed the year with a Farm to City Tour at Clover Valley Farm, welcoming Commissioner Allison Eckel and Assemblywoman Andrea Katz. The event fostered meaningful conversations and strengthened relationships between farmers and policymakers.



**Michelle Infante-Casella, Woman of the Year**



**NJFB Executive Committee**



**2025 AFBF National Women's Committee meeting**

# Ag in the Classroom

## 2025 Report

Caroline Etsch, Chair

During NJFB's 2024-25 operating year, New Jersey Agriculture in the Classroom (NJAITC) advanced agricultural literacy by delivering classroom materials, presenting workshops at the National Agriculture in the Classroom conference, and engaging educators through our monthly newsletter. The NJ Ag in a Box pilot program concluded successfully, prompting widespread adoption by school districts and individual teachers.

NJAITC received a \$6,515 USDA FIRE-UP grant to build an Agricultural Literacy Lesson Library for Spanish speaking English-Learners in grades 3-5. The project includes translating age-appropriate agricultural lessons to Spanish, supplying bilingual resources and AgMags to pilot districts in Paterson and Trenton, and establishing a Spanish Language Agricultural lesson Library on our website, lessons in Spanish New Jersey Agriculture in the Classroom, and conducting statewide educator outreach.

During National Agriculture Week (March 16-22) NJAITC launched the "Show us your Ag" campaign, inviting educators to share classroom and club photos to showcasing agricultural lessons. Promoted via social media and the monthly newsletter, the campaign drew enthusiastic participation, and 15 teachers received Amazon gift cards in appreciation.

At the June National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) conference, New Jersey and Massachusetts co-presented on cranberry farming, highlighting regional techniques, ecosystems, and family farms practices to showcase the crop's agricultural importance. In late summer, NJAITC was invited to speak to a group of high-school Science educators during Nourish the Future's "Feeding and Fueling the World" workshop alongside Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn. The national initiative, led by and designed for science teachers, is supported by the National Corn Growers Association and the United Soybean Board.

At the Middlesex County Fair, one of NJ's largest, NJAITC and NJFB conducted community outreach featuring membership info, giveaways, and the NJ Ag in a Box program. The showcase led several educators to purchase kits for their classrooms or districts.



Pumpkin Ag in a Box



NJ Ag in the Classroom Table



Experiential Education Underway!



County Fair Outreach

In September, NJAITC launched its 2025-26 NJ Ag in a Box expansion, offering kits by topic or in sets—squash, cranberries, spinach, and tomatoes. Four new boxes are in development: turkeys, soybeans, wheat (featuring a contest to win Still There Was Bread and an author visit with Lisl Detlefsen), and school gardens. Also in September, Program Leader Caroline Etsch was elected as Secretary to the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization and continues to serve on its Executive committee as an Eastern Region Representative.



**Want to learn more?**

<https://newjersey.agclassroom.org/lessons/njagbox/>  
<https://agclassroom.org/>



# Membership

# 5,832

## Total Members

***Including 187 New Members!***

*NJFB is proud to be a part of the American Farm Bureau Federation, which has **5.8 million members**.*

**Congratulations to the following counties that made goal this year:**

★ **Essex**

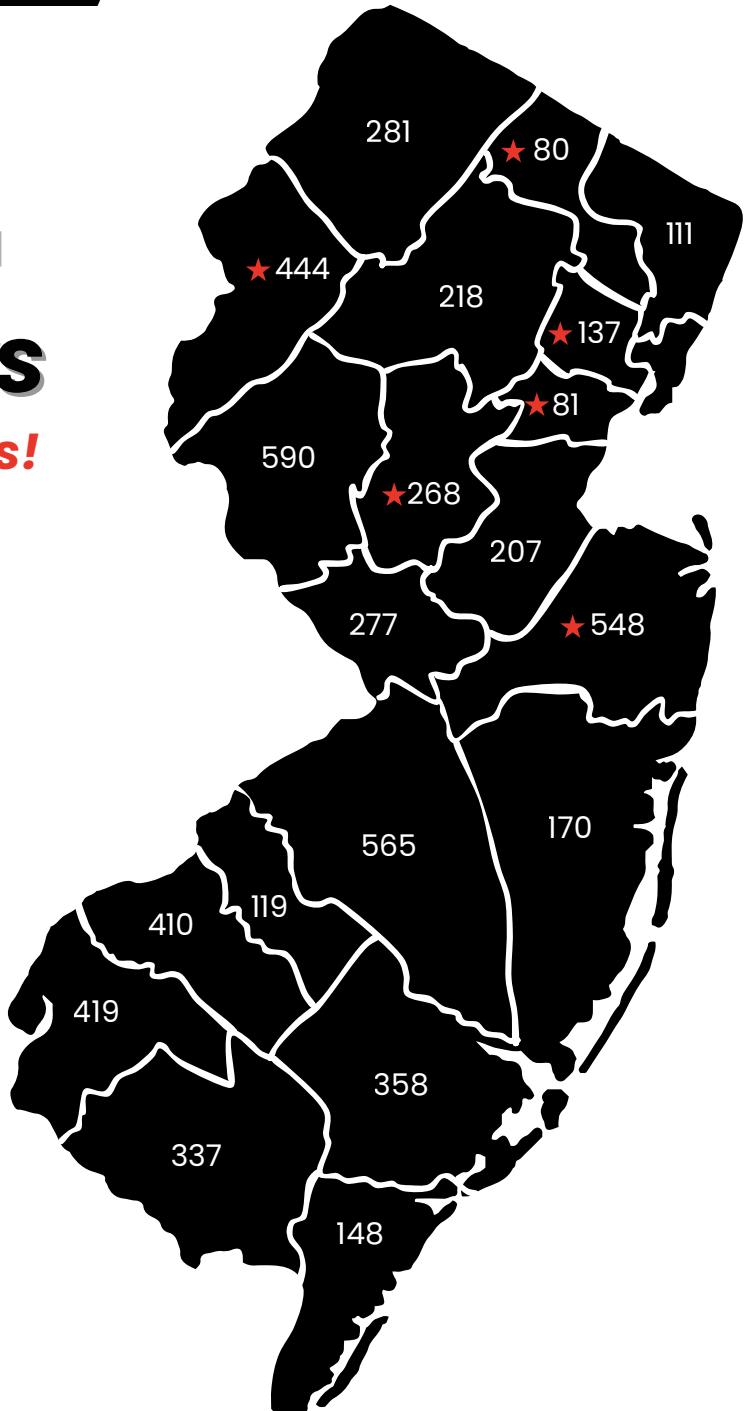
★ **Monmouth**

★ **Passaic**

★ **Somerset**

★ **Union**

★ **Warren**



*Many thanks to NJFB Membership Committee chairman Gary DeFelice and committee members Ken Osterman, Darcy Perehinys, Scott Ashley, and Rocky Hazelman for supporting membership recruitment for NJFB throughout 2025. The committee has identified several challenges and recommendations that will boost membership enrollment in the future.*

*NJFB is dedicated to the viability of New Jersey agriculture.*

# NJFB Benefits

...it pays to be a NJFB member!

Go to [www.njfb.org/benefits](http://www.njfb.org/benefits) and login with your member number and zip code to learn more about these unique benefits!

<p><b>\$10 OFF ANY FIELD CLOCK LABOR MANAGEMENT MONTHLY PLAN.</b></p>	<p><b>SHOP ALL THINGS TRACTOR SUPPLY CO ONLINE VIA NJFB'S LINK AND ENJOY CURBSIDE PICKUP/DELIVERY ON ALL CATALOGUE ITEMS.</b></p>	<p><b>UP TO 30% OFF BASE RATES WHEN USING YOUR BUDGET DISCOUNT NUMBER AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NJFB MEMBERS PORTAL.</b></p>	<p><b>\$500 BONUS CASH ON THE PURCHASE/LEASE OF A NEW FORD RANGER, F-150, SUPER DUTY, AND MORE!</b></p>	
<p><b>10% OFF REGULAR PRICE OF SHERWIN WILLIAMS PAINTS, STAINS, WALLPAPER, TOOLS AND STAINS.</b></p>	<p><b>DISCOUNTS ON MOST PRODUCTS AND GET FREE STANDARD PARCEL SHIPPING ON ALL STANDARD GRAINGER PRODUCTS.</b></p>	<p><b>SPECIAL SAVINGS ON AMERICAN NATIONAL SFP-10®, COUNTRY ESTATE AND PERSONAL AUTO POLICIES.</b></p>	<p><b>HIGH-EARNING DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS, PERSONAL &amp; BUSINESS CREDIT CARDS, VEHICLE &amp; EQUIPMENT LOANS, BUSINESS BANKING, AND MORE WHEN BANKING WITH FARM BUREAU BANK!</b></p>	
<p><b>UP TO 20% SAVINGS WHEN YOU MAKE A RESERVATION AT A CHOICE HOTEL.</b></p>	<p><b>RECEIVE A SCRIPTSAVE PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARD FROM THE NJFB WEBSITE AND SAVE!</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE UP TO \$2,750 ON CAT EXCAVATORS, SKID STEERS, WHEEL LOADERS, AND MORE!</b></p>	<p><b>SAVE UP TO \$500 ON CASE IH FARMALL &amp; MAXXUM TRACTORS, HAY TOOLS, AND MORE!</b></p>	
<p><b>RECEIVE AN UPGRADED JOHN DEERE REWARDS MEMBERSHIP (PLATINUM 1)</b></p>	<td colspan="3"><p><b>ACCESS TO AN AFFORDABLE AMERITAS DENTAL PLAN STARTING AT ONLY \$54.68/MONTH WITH THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ANY DENTIST IN AND OUT-OF-NETWORK.</b></p></td>	<p><b>ACCESS TO AN AFFORDABLE AMERITAS DENTAL PLAN STARTING AT ONLY \$54.68/MONTH WITH THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ANY DENTIST IN AND OUT-OF-NETWORK.</b></p>		
<p><b>UP TO 30% OFF (35% IF YOU USE PAY NOW) ON YOUR CAR RENTAL WITH AVIS.</b></p>	<td colspan="3"><p><b>EARN DISCOUNT SAVINGS ON THEME PARK ADMISSION, SPORTING EVENT TICKETS, CONCERT TICKETS, FOOD, GIFTS, SKI TICKETS, AND MORE WITH WORKING ADVANTAGE!</b></p></td>	<p><b>EARN DISCOUNT SAVINGS ON THEME PARK ADMISSION, SPORTING EVENT TICKETS, CONCERT TICKETS, FOOD, GIFTS, SKI TICKETS, AND MORE WITH WORKING ADVANTAGE!</b></p>		
	<td colspan="3"><p><b>A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER TO KEEP MEMBERS UP-TO-DATE ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND UPCOMING EVENTS. ACCESS TO OUR PROFESSIONAL STAFF WHO ARE ONLY ONE PHONE CALL AWAY.</b></p></td>	<p><b>A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER TO KEEP MEMBERS UP-TO-DATE ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND UPCOMING EVENTS. ACCESS TO OUR PROFESSIONAL STAFF WHO ARE ONLY ONE PHONE CALL AWAY.</b></p>		

# Shop our Store



**... and so much more!**

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# Thank you, Pete!



**43 years of service to NJFB**  
1982-2025