



Rhode Island
Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade Street
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News Advisory

FOR AP DAYBOOK: **Photo Opportunity

Date: Friday, May 28, 2015
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., with speaking program at 2 p.m.
Location: State House Rotunda (speaking program in Governor's State Room)
Event: RI Agriculture Day

For Release: May 26, 2015
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DEM, FARMERS AND AQUACULTURISTS TO CELEBRATE RHODE ISLAND AGRICULTURE DAY IN STATE HOUSE FESTIVITIES ON THURSDAY, MAY 28

Large Selection of Local Foods Available for Sampling

PROVIDENCE - To recognize the importance of the state's \$2.5 billion agriculture and green industries, the Department of Environmental Management will host Rhode Island Agriculture Day at the State House on Thursday, May 28.

DEM will announce the award of 15 Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) grants of up to \$20,000 to assist small or beginning farmers and local seafood businesses promote and market their locally grown or harvested products grown in Rhode Island. The program is designed to increase the economic competitiveness of Rhode Island-grown agricultural products and local seafood. "This new initiative is one of many efforts taken by DEM to support local agriculture and our state's food economy," said DEM Director Janet Coit. "Rhode Islanders are eager to grow, eat and promote local food, and this grant program supports the growth of our local food sector to meet the growing demand of consumers."

This year's RI Agriculture Day program will include remarks by First Gentleman Andy Moffit as well as Michel Nischan, executive director of the Wholesome Wave Foundation, who will focus on the importance of a sustainable, locally-based food economy. Nischan is speaking to the Interagency Food and Nutrition Policy Advisory Council on the morning of Agriculture Day as well as the City of Providence Healthy Communities Advisory Council the following morning. There are numerous efforts within Rhode Island and state government to focus on an enhanced local food economy including the LASA grant program, which is an innovative partnership between DEM and the RI Food Policy Council, the Rhode Island Foundation, van Beuren Charitable Foundation and the Henry P. Kendall Foundation.

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In addition, Senator Susan Sosnowski and Representative Art Handy will talk about the economic value of agriculture, seafood and the local food economy in Rhode Island, and Tess Brown-Lavoie of the RI Young Farmers' Network will talk about efforts among young farmers in RI to improve the local food economy.

Rhode Island Agriculture Day will showcase Rhode Island's agriculture industry and all that it brings to the state. Beyond fresh and local produce, meat, nursery stock, sod and Rhode Island's own Rhody Fresh milk, agriculture contributes to tourism, open space, landscaping businesses, and a variety of food-related industries. The event will also continue to highlight the statewide "Get Fresh. Buy Local." campaign and farmers' markets.

"All of our state's natural resource-based functions – agriculture, aquaculture and fishing – result directly in jobs and opportunities to promote Rhode Island," said DEM Director Janet Coit. "Thursday's Agriculture Day celebration is a great opportunity to focus attention on this vibrant industry and educate Rhode Islanders on the many ways that agriculture impacts the local economy and our quality of life."

As part of the Rhode Island Agriculture Day festivities, over 40 exhibitors will host displays in the State House Rotunda from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Exhibitors will include farms and local food purveyors, as well as government and non-profit agencies that work with farmers. Coordinated by DEM's Division of Agriculture, the exhibits will highlight Rhode Island agriculture and the many organizations that collectively participate in its viability.

Large Variety of Locally-Grown Foods Available for Sampling

Several exhibitors will offer food samples, such as stuffed quahogs from Dave's Marketplace; pizza strips and hermits directly from Wright's Dairy Farm and Bakery; assorted cheeses from Narragansett Creamery; oysters from Ocean State Aquaculture Association; johnnycakes from the Kenyon's Grist and Corn Meal Company; and Rhody Fresh milk and cheese from the RI Dairy Farms Cooperative. Also, fresh cider from Jaswell's Farm in Smithfield; Cabot Cheese made with milk from RI dairy farms; Rich's Sweet Heat sauce for RI-grown vegetables and meats will be available for sampling.

Rhode Island has 1,243 farms, mostly family run, which occupy 68,000 acres. The state is a national leader in direct-sales to consumers, with approximately 50 seasonal farmers markets in the state's urban, suburban and rural areas, eight indoor winter markets, and numerous pick-your-own and farm stand operations. According to the 2014 update to URI's Green Industry Economic Impact Study, which was highlighted at today's event, the 3,327 green industry businesses in Rhode Island sustain 15,826 jobs and contribute \$2.5 billion annually to our state's economy.

The Agriculture Day speaking program will begin at 2 p.m. in the Governor's State Room, and the exhibits will be on display until 5 p.m. in the State House Rotunda.