

Farmland Preservation and Agritourism in South Jersey: An Exploratory Study

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Introduction

In *Garden State: The Story of Agriculture in New Jersey*, published by Rutgers University Press in 1955, journalist John T. Cunningham described a state with 25,000 farms in which agriculture was an important industry in every county, and “the supreme way of life” in well over half (Cunningham 1955, 14). Today, there are less than 10,000 farms and every county in the state is classified by the Census Bureau as “metropolitan.” Urban, suburban, and now exurban sprawl have halved farmland acreage since 1950 (New Jersey Future, 2001). Farming at its height in the second half of the nineteenth century accounted for nearly two-thirds of New Jersey’s total land area; today this has shrunk to 15%. A Rutgers analysis of land use and land cover data for 1986-95 concluded: “Every year New Jersey adds approximately 16,000 acres of new development while losing more than 9,600 acres of farmland, 4200 acres of forest, and 2,600 acres of wetlands...This development rate is likely to make New Jersey the first state in the nation to reach build-out” (Hasse and Lathrop 2001:1).

As a New Jersey Future report (2001) observed:

an entirely new landscape type has crept over more than 80 percent of New Jersey, just as it has over metropolitan regions across the country. The suburbs and their adjunct—the ‘exurban’ fringe—are a landscape new to cultural history and to public policy. The checkerboard pattern of exurban New Jersey mixes three distinct elements: suburban life, agriculture, and natural ecosystems...we are now struggling to create new public policies appropriate to our new suburban/exurban landscapes.

Furthermore, this exurban pattern has become increasingly extensive in nature, such that since 1994, 55% of all land developed in the United States for single, detached, non-farm homes has been on lots of ten acres or more (Dodds-Wir and Dykstra 2003:1). This pattern is evident throughout South Jersey, where estate-style houses sit on vast acreage of grass lawns (one of the most polluting “crops” the land can be used to grow). Rural, single-unit housing constitutes the largest single source of development in New Jersey (Hasse and Lathrop, 2001:9).

An extensive literature of books, reports, articles, surveys, and news articles have documented widespread citizen concern in New Jersey about suburban and exurban sprawl. The public litany of discontent is well known and includes long commutes, traffic congestion, air and water pollution, endless strip mall development, increased taxes, and decline of open space and of agricultural landscapes and opportunities. These concerns are sometimes articulated in terms of the erosion of a sense of place and the creation of a “geography of nowhere” (Kunstler 1993). As South Jersey has become a major growth pole in the state, these issues have acquired increased resonance in the region.

Starting in 1964, when New Jersey became one of the early states to implement reduced taxation for farmland, a broad range of programs have been created to support its agricultural sector. In recent years, the most visible and costly program has been the state’s farmland preservation program, generally involving the purchase of “development rights” in conjunction with municipalities and counties. New Jersey ranks second (to Maryland) in the nation in the proportion of total state acreage enrolled in its farmland preservation program.

These programs have nonetheless failed to reverse the decline of farmland in the state. The New Jersey Future (2001) report estimated the average loss of 10,000 acres per year in the 1990s. Between 2000 and 2005, New Jersey farm acreage declined from 830,000 to 790,000 acres (NASS 2006:2). Assessing the overall state of New Jersey agriculture is more complicated, however. The real market value of farm output sold declined by about 10% between 1982 and 2002, but average sales per farm rose. While some types of longstanding New Jersey farming have been in virtual free fall, other (generally non-traditional) sectors and niches have been expanding rapidly. As Brian Schilling (2006) of the Rutgers Food Policy Institute has noted, adaptation and change have been hallmarks of New Jersey agriculture for years.

In the past five to ten years, virtually every state in the country has identified “agritourism” as a promising additional source of income for farmers that may under certain conditions spell the difference between success and failure of farm enterprises and the general sustainability of farming. Agritourism means different things in different places, but the common denominator is some sort of direct experience of agriculture. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) has maintained since 2004 an a searchable online agritourism database and in that year created a Agri-Tourism Industry Advisory Council, composed of representatives from the various sectors of the agriculture that deal directly with the public. It also commissioned Rutgers University’s Food Policy Institute to conduct an inventory of agritourism activities in the state and to study the experience of the farmers involved to date.¹ The South Jersey Tourism Corporation (SJTC), created in 2003, has also expressed interest in identifying and developing “agri-tourism assets,” and has highlighted farms that receive visitors at the “Outdoors” section of its Visit South Jersey website.

There is substantial evidence that agritourism is a major component of farm income in many places, especially in Europe. One survey of farmers throughout England found that 63% said that tourist income was vital to them (Rilla 1999). In a recent study of agritourism operators in Pennsylvania (Ryan, DeBord and McClellan 2006:10), 43% said that they were unable to support their family and/or farm without the income they made from agritourism.² Vermont, which reports that one-third of its farms earned income from agritourism in 2002, averaging \$8,900 each (NEASS, 2004), is widely considered the gold standard of U.S. agritourism. But while the popular media periodically conjures up “bumper crops” of tourists flocking to farms, the targeted objectives of agritourism promotion are seldom specified. Claims about agritourism’s extensiveness and importance depend greatly on the definition employed.

Public support for farmland preservation in South Jersey³ has been consistently strong, and the engagement of the public as consumers in the nascent agritourism industry suggests the possibility of substantial growth. But since even those who support South Jersey farmland preservation often know little about New Jersey agriculture generally, this report will begin with a brief overview of agriculture in the state and in South Jersey. It will then take up the question

¹ This study had been submitted but was not yet available as of the writing of this report.

² Based on a response rate of 19% of the 1795 surveys distributed to identified agritourism operators.

³ South Jersey in this report will refer to the southern seven counties of the state: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem. See Appendix A for a brief discussion of differing definition of South Jersey in tourist and other contexts.

of public support for farmland preservation, and examine the question of what the public interest in agriculture and agritourism might be said to be. The report will then turn directly to agritourism, first defining its meaning and scope more specifically, and then surveying its presence in South Jersey. It will end by identifying some key issues and by making some tentative proposals.⁴

A Brief Overview of New Jersey Agriculture

For many residents of New Jersey, agriculture is relatively invisible. Travelers to the north and south, and east to the shore as well, mostly drive on limited-access highways whose landscaping shields them from even realizing that they may be driving through farm country. When they learn the facts, many New Jerseyans express surprise about both the extent and relative health of New Jersey agriculture.

In narrowly economic terms, New Jersey's agricultural production is today miniscule, contributing about a quarter of one percent to the state's economy and employing only four-tenths of a percent of the state's labor force [The food industry generally, which also includes processing, marketing, and wholesale and retail trade, accounts for almost 12% of the state's employment, but much of it has little relation to New Jersey agriculture (ERS 2005).] The nation's overall food supply would be little affected were New Jersey agriculture to cease to exist, but in a few agricultural commodities New Jersey is a major player: second in blueberries, third in cranberries and bell peppers, and fourth in peaches nationwide.

The average and median farm size in New Jersey is 82 and 22 acres respectively. Seventy percent of farms in the state are less than 100 acres. In contrast to most of the rest of the country, farm size has been shrinking. Statewide, 52% of principal farm operators claim farming as their primary occupation, but 80.6% of farms reported gross sales lower than \$25,000. Only 10.8% of New Jersey farms reported gross sales over \$100,000 in 2002, accounting for 94.4% of the total. Most farm families, in New Jersey as elsewhere, depend heavily on nonfarm sources of income to get by.

Average value of cropland in New Jersey was estimated by NASS to be \$10,500 per acre in January 2005 (ERS 2005), the highest in the nation. New Jersey also has the highest cost for pastureland. Quite apart from the readiness of developers to bid up the price of farmland, such land is in demand for lifestyle and prestige reasons. Realtors are known to encourage wealthy buyers to purchase preserved farmland for their estate, tearing down the farmhouse and replacing it with their mansion, as the law technically allows them to do. This in effect removes the land

⁴ This report is based on extensive field observations at agritourism sites in South Jersey and several neighboring states, on interviews and discussions with South Jersey farmers engaging in agritourism, on attendance at Agri-Tourism Industry Advisory Council and other relevant meetings and conferences, on examination of training manuals and other materials produced by agritourism initiatives in other states, and on available literature and data on South Jersey agriculture and agritourism generally. While the theoretical aspects of the subject will not be explicitly addressed, this report is informed by key ideas in economic sociology, notably the social embeddedness of economic behavior and institutions, and the social construction of collective meanings and memories. It is also informed by the author's past research on agritourism in Europe.

from ownership by farm families forever, since few farm families could ever afford it.⁵ High farmland prices—even for preserved farmland—are a major problem for young families interested in starting out on a farming career.

Average age of principal operators in 2002 was 55.1. While this figure—almost identical to the national average of 55.3—is often cited as cause for concern about the next generation of farmers, the average has risen only slightly from 53.8 in 1974. A NASS study of 2002 data found that New Jersey farms had higher-than-average multiple operators and that the proportion of these who were of different generations—thus providing a working basis for generational succession—was likewise relatively high, and increased with the income of the farm (Allen and Harris 2005; USDA 2002).

Table 1
Cash Receipts from New Jersey Farm Marketing:
Major Commodity Groups and Number of Farms

Commodity Group	Cash Receipts (2005)	Number of Farms (2002)
1. Greenhouse, Sod, Nursery and Christmas Trees	\$368,546,000	2727
2. Vegetables	158,385,000	1,442
3. Horses and Mules	109,000,000	878
4. Fruits and Nuts	94,863,000	966
5. Field Crops (corn, hay, soybeans, wheat, etc.)	58,269,000	3137
6. Dairy Products	32,308,000	138
7. Poultry and Eggs	31,500,000	910
Total Farms and Receipts	866,719,000	9924

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA, *New Jersey's Farm Facts* (Sept. 16, 2005); USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA, *2002 Census of Agriculture*. Table does not include several smaller commodity categories.

Table 1 reflects the impact of suburban sprawl upon New Jersey agriculture. By far the largest sector—comprising 2727 farms and 42.5% of total receipts—involves the growing of trees, plants and sod for the grounds of homes, businesses, and institutions. Reflecting New Jersey's truck garden history, vegetables and fruits and nuts remain the state's leading edible

⁵ The New Jersey Department of Agriculture sponsored a study that made proposals to close this loophole, that obviously runs counter to the intention of farmland preservation and the public's wishes. Opposition from farmers concerned about lowering their property value killed the proposal, however.

crops. Commercial horticulture thus accounts for 72% of total agricultural production. The third place ranking for horses and mules reflects the growing importance of the state's equine industry, but understates its overall significance by being limited to "production" (breeding) of horses and mules. According to the NJDA, 81,000 acres of farmland are devoted to the equine industry as a whole, which is contributed an estimated \$109 million to the state's economy in 2004 (NJDA 2005).

While recent debates at World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings have highlighted issues of national subsidies and global competition, these factors are comparatively insignificant for New Jersey agriculture. Relatively little of the state's agricultural output is devoted to commodity crops heading for export. Only 6% of New Jersey's farmers receive U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) subsidies, the second lowest proportion in the nation. Overall, New Jersey receives one-tenth of one percent of total USDA subsidies. Nonetheless, these subsidies amounted to almost \$94 million between 1995 and 2004, and can be significant for those who receive them. As with the national pattern, the beneficiaries have mainly been larger farmers growing the specific crops that happen to be covered by USDA commodity programs (which do not cover nursery, equine, or most vegetable or fruit or nut production, the four top components of New Jersey agriculture). Undoubtedly there would be less cropland devoted to commodity field crops like corn and soy beans without USDA subsidies, since in most years the market price is well below the production cost to the farmer.⁶

The low figure for the New Jersey dairy industry (138 farms) reflects its rapid and inexorable decline, down from 5000 dairy farms fifty years ago and from 400 in 1995. The continued viability of the industry, which provides only about one-eighth of the milk in the state, is very much in doubt. In his 1955 book on New Jersey agriculture mentioned earlier, Cunningham (1955:93) wrote:

Scenery puts no dollars in the farmer's pocket, of course. Yet the very nature of New Jersey's \$65,000,000 dairy industry makes scenery an automatic counterpart. Milk cows need spreading green pasturelands, preferably on a rolling hillside and preferably with a cool bubbling stream slipping the fertile lands. Dairying means big barns, eye-catching tall silos, net yards and outbuildings. It can add up only to pastoral correctness.

This passage, written before CAFO's (confined animal feeding operations) had ever been heard of, speaks volumes. Today agritourism tries to capture some of the value of that kind of scenery, but the industrialization of the dairy industry nationally has eliminated the "need" (at least for the cows' owner) for pastureland, to say nothing of bubbling streams. Yet is striking how much the "pastorally correct" landscape of the dairy farm remains the visual icon of a healthy agriculture for organizations like the American Farmland Trust and the Farm Bureau (and, not least, the "Preserved Farmland" sign provided by the SADC), as well as for many urban and suburban

⁶ As a matter of fact, farmers can collect their loan deficiency payment when the price is low even if they sell later when the price is above the government guaranteed price. So the incentive to grow government-supported commodity crops is double: insurance against loss and a potential windfall extra profit.

residents. In New Jersey, pastureland has shrunk to just 5.2% of total farmland. Nonetheless, dairy barns and their silos still dot the farming landscape and remain potential agritourism “assets,” even if they are largely abandoned or used for other purposes.

Table 2 provides selected agricultural data for the six counties of South Jersey. With 3836 farms in 2002, the seven counties of South Jersey accounted for 39% of the farms, 47% of the acreage, and 60% of the total value of agricultural production in the state. South Jersey farms accounted for 61% of crop sales in the state, but only 38% of livestock sales. The category of nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod accounted for the largest proportion of production (in terms of market value) in four of the counties; vegetables ranked first in three counties, and fruits and nuts in one. These relatively labor-intensive crops (particularly at harvest time) account for the fact that South Jersey farmers employ 67% of the hired agricultural laborers in the state, mainly from Puerto Rico and Mexico (Bonilla-Santiago 1988). South Jersey farmers clearly focus mostly on local and regional markets.

Some idea of the agricultural landscapes that result from these choices may be seen in Table 3, which look at acreage devoted to different crops and purposes at the county and state level. While the relationship between agritourism and specific types of agriculture remain largely unexplored in the literature (but see Vanslebrouck and Van Huylenbroech 2002 for a study of farm type and guesthouse prices in Flanders), some tentative patterns will be identified later in subsequent sections of this paper.



Table 2
Selected Agricultural Data, South Jersey Counties (2002)

	State	Atlantic	Burlington	Camden	Cape May	Cumberland	Gloucester	Salem	SJ Total	SJ % of State
No. of Farms	9924	456	906	216	197	616	692	753	3836	38.7
Farm Acres	805,682	30,337	111,237	10,259	10,037	71,097	50,753	96,238	379,958	47.2
Av. Farm Size (acres)	81	67	123	47	51	115	73	128	--	--
Total Farm Production (Market Value) \$ millions	749.8	78.5	83.2	13.6	11.3	122.7	66.0	72.5	447.9	59.7
Crop Sales \$ millions	675.5	77.7	72.9	13.5	10.7	120.0	62.0	55.8	412.6	61.1
Livestock Sales \$ millions	92.4	.8	10.4	.1	.5	2.7	4.1	16.7	35.3	38.2
Av. Sales per Farm (market value) \$	75,561	172,166	91,891	63,141	57,110	199,143	95,389	96,310	--	--
USDA Subsidies \$ thousands	6,416	29.7	892.0	1.2	4.0	344.0	499.0	1,128	2,897.9	45
Modal Sales Category	nursery	Fruits/nuts	nursery	vegetables	nursery	nursery	vegetables	vegetables	--	--
Preserved Farmland (acres)	137,944	3,335	19,817	467	2,444	11,854	7,885	18,408	64,210	46.5
No. of preserved farms	1273	27	172	7	37	87	79	134	543	42.7

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2002 *Census of Agriculture*; Environmental Working Group, *Farm Subsidy Database*.

Table 3
No. of Farms and Acreage for Major Crops By South Jersey County, Region and State

	Atlantic	Burlington	Camden	Cape May	Cumberland	Gloucester	Salem	South Jersey	New Jersey
Nursery									
#Farms	111	182	51	55	177	114	80	770	1529
# Acres*	1726	7129	182	1508	7347	2118	2133	22,143	37,371
Vegetables									
#Farms	89	116	56	54	143	5	104	567	1435
# Acres	5177	4176	1563	382	12,399	na	13,348	37,045	55,374
Orchards									
#Farms	42	43	23	9	33	51	12	213	721
# Acres	510	568	1271	28	1540	4809	na	8726	12,155
Berries									
#Farms	72	131	16	20	31	24	24	318	561
# Acres	5863	5774	131	18	69	64	44	11,963	12,565
Soybeans									
#Farms	5	85	5	3	78	76	151	408	611
# Acres	na	22,022	158	400	12,726	8165	18,240	61,711	96,032
Corn for grain/silage									
#Farms*	28	83	17	8	50	51	164	401	952
# Acres	507	8614	174	na	5385	1274	17223	33,177	80,456
Pastureland									
#Farms	157	480	87	87	255	358	416	1840	5574
# Acres	2099	9269	825	1068	5512	6174	8628	33,575	113,945

*may be overstated, since number of farms for each has been added, whereas some presumably grow both
Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2002 *Census of Agriculture*

The Public Interest and Agriculture in New Jersey: From Farmland Preservation to Agritourism

The family farm holds “mythic status” in the United States (Lobao and Meyer, 2004:20). Many observers see an enduring agrarianism harkening back to Thomas Jefferson’s belief in the virtues of yeoman farmers, fused over time with romantic sensibilities (e.g. Brown, 2001). While in reality the history of farming and farmers has been anything but romantic, and while critical voices have always been there, it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that a generalized critique of U.S. agriculture as “industrial agriculture” emerged, puncturing the myth of the family farm and exposing industrial agriculture’s destructive health and environmental impacts. Culminating in books like *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture* (Kimbrell 2002), which brought together many of the critics, a sharp line was drawn between agrarian and industrial visions of agriculture. In a state like New Jersey, with its troubled environmental legacy of industrialism, these concerns certainly resonated with many.

But by and large, New Jersey agriculture is not industrial agriculture. Even the big farms are small by standards of Midwestern and western states, and CAFO’s are few in number and do not include the most polluting types, those housing hogs or cattle. As noted earlier, few New Jersey farmers receive USDA subsidies, and hence New Jersey agriculture has been somewhat protected from their distorting—and often environmentally negative--effects. Operating within a framework of fairly strong environmental controls, particularly in the Pinelands and more recently within the Highlands, New Jersey agriculture has largely escaped the sharper jabs of contemporary agrarian and environmental critiques.

Should New Jerseyans care about the future of the state’s agriculture? In *The End of Agriculture in the American Portfolio*, agricultural economist Steven Blank argues that agriculture is doomed in the United States and that this is a good thing: “America doing agriculture is like a Ph.D. doing child’s work—we can do it, but it is a waste.” Blank criticizes expensive farmland preservation programs in states like New Jersey because they allow land to “sit idle instead of being developed into something useful. This is an example of shooting yourself in the foot” (Blank 1998:18,194). These passages are striking in their negative evaluation of agricultural knowledge and skills, in their view of contemporary agriculture as a form of economic idleness, and in their implicit assumption that strip malls are more useful than local food production. But they do point to an important issue. Bucking market trends—and the pressure of powerful developers--to preserve agriculture is expensive. Are New Jerseyans willing to pay the price?

New Jersey voting patterns appear to say so. Voters have consistently passed, generally in overwhelming numbers, ballot initiatives to raise money for open space and farmland preservation. At the state level, 100% of ballot initiatives for these purposes have passed, starting with the nine Green Acres bond issues from 1961 onwards, to the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund in 1998 and an increase in its authorized debt in 2003. According to data collected by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), ballot initiatives at the county and municipal levels in its Pennsylvania and New Jersey area to raise additional money for open space and farmland preservation have had a success rate in excess of 85%. For Burlington, Camden and Gloucester Counties, the pass rate was 91% (41 approvals, 4

rejections) between 1999 and 2005.⁷ These approval rates are vastly higher than school budget approvals in these years.

Some observers interpret support for open space and farmland preservation as an expression of the narrow self-interest of those rich and fortunate enough to live on the suburban fringe: an exurban elite which has constructed its gentrified rural idyll and wishes now to deny others the same opportunity (e.g. as summarized in Mariola 2005 and Bunce 1998). This viewpoint is captured in such jokes as “What is the difference between a developer and an environmentalist? Answer: The developer wants to build a house in the woods, the environmentalist already has one” (quoted in Goertzel and Leonardis 2001). The distribution of funded open space and farmland preservation programs does not seem to support this cynical view however. DVRPC data show that suburban, “mature,” and rural municipalities all have higher rates of open space and farmland preservation programs than do exurban (suburban fringe) communities.

The broad level of support for open space and farmland preservation across the board is supported by attitudinal survey data as well. In a North Carolina study designed to test the view that support for farmland preservation is concentrated in wealthy exurban communities, Furuseth (2001) found no correlation between place of residence and farmland preservation support, which was 71% for his regional sample overall. Goertzel and Leonardis (2001) present data from a three-region survey and a statewide survey using an identical survey question that likewise finds support for open space and farmland preservation to vary only slightly between shore (Atlantic and Cape May), southern agricultural (Cumberland and Salem) and Suburban (Burlington, Camden and Gloucester) counties.

Some researchers have noted that it is difficult distinguish support for farmland preservation from support for open space generally. The Garden State Preservation Trust Act explicitly divided the distribution of funds into 56% for open space, 38% for farmland preservation, and 6% for historic preservation. Some county and municipal ballot initiatives have been similarly precise. For example, one successful Gloucester County initiative allocated two-thirds of the proceeds to farmland preservation and one-third to open space; a Harrison township initiative solely involved farmland preservation. But most ballot initiatives combine the two indeterminately. Fortunately, the South Jersey and statewide surveys reported by Goertzel and Leonardis asked separately about support for preserving open space and preserving farmland, and found that support for preserving farmland consistently outpolled preserving open space, as summarized in Table 4 below. A separate question about allocating more money for both elicited support between 62% and 69% from respondents, while a statement, “The State should take steps to preserve farmland in New Jersey,” received between 90% and 93% approval in the three county groupings. The comparison to the statewide survey of New Jersey Future suggests that support for open space and farmland preservation is higher in South Jersey than in the rest of the state, lending support to the idea that South Jerseyans define their regional identity, at least partly, in terms of their region’s rural amenities.

⁷ I wish to thank the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission for its generosity in sharing its data with me and in responding efficiently to my questions.

Table 4
Support for Preserving Open Space and Preserving Farmland

How important is it for us to address..	Shore Counties	So. Ag. Counties	Suburban Counties	NJ Futures Statewide Survey
Preserving Open Space				
Very important	72%	65%	72%	61%
Somewhat important	24%	29%	22%	30%
Not very important	5%	4%	5%	6%
Not important at all	0%	2%	2%	2%
Preserving Farmland				
Very important	75%	71%	75%	64%
Somewhat important	20%	25%	20%	26%
Not very important	4%	3%	5%	6%
Not important at all	1%	1%	1%	3%

Source: Goertzel and Leonardis, 2001

These data provide strong evidence that South Jersey residents have a strong desire to preserve farmland, not just open space. Further evidence at the state level is the Right to Farm Act, enacted in 1983 and amended in 1998, whose provisions have been further strengthened by the existence of 72 municipal right to farm ordinances, although the amount of added protection varies.⁸ As of 2005, 18 of New Jersey’s 21 counties had established Agricultural Development Areas to protect farming, and 37 municipalities had adopted Farmland Preservation Master Plan Elements.

These local and regional data are consistent with the findings of a USDA-sponsored study, *Farmland Protection: The Role of Public Preferences for Rural Amenities*. The study defines rural amenities as “positive externalities generated by agricultural lands that have a public good nature” (Hellerstein et al. 2002:8). Agricultural public goods such as farming landscapes and a sense of agrarian heritage share with other public goods the characteristics of nonrivalness—one person’s enjoyment of the good does not make it less available to others—and nonexcludability—the good is available freely to all without direct cost. Since public desires and preferences for such rural amenities do not therefore take the form of market demand, other techniques must be used to ascertain them. The USDA study takes two approaches. The authors first survey twelve studies of public attitudes and find, despite varying degrees of methodological sophistication, that all demonstrate broad support for farmland protection, although the level of that support tends to be higher in more urbanized regions. The authors then turn to an analysis of enabling legislation and guidelines for farmland preservation programs in 48 states as an indirect measure of public preferences, and find support not simply for agricultural production but for the rural amenities that it (and the broad array of practices on farms, including wildlife habitat conservation) creates. Among the states, New Jersey ranks high in the level of attention to a broad array of rural amenities mandated by the enabling legislation. Still, soil quality and contiguity to other preserved farmland are the factors ranked highest by most New Jersey counties.

⁸ The seventy-two municipal right-to-farm ordinances were collected by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) with the assistance of the county agricultural committees; the SADC does not know if that list is exhaustive or not.

Interestingly, the USDA avoids the term widely used in Europe and elsewhere to deal with the positive non-commodity outcomes of agriculture. This word is “multifunctionality” and has become something of a bone of contention between the U.S. and the European Union (EU) over farm subsidies. While the U.S. position on the term has softened somewhat in recent years, it still mainly treats the term as a disguised way of justifying agricultural protectionism. In Europe, in contrast, the term is interpreted as a way of guiding the inevitable process of reform necessitated by globalization generally and the pressure of WTO agreements specifically. The term has a broad focus, as in the following statement in *Multifunctional Agriculture: A New Paradigm for European Agriculture and Rural Development* (Belletti et al. 2003:55):

Multifunctionality refers to the fact that agriculture fulfills other societal functions besides satisfying the basic demand for food. These include biodiversity, pollution control, amenity values (i.e. landscapes), cultural heritage, food safety, rural settlement, and retention of economic activities in less favoured areas.

In “What does the public want from agriculture and the countryside? A review of evidence and methods,” Hall, McVittie and Moran (2004) focus specifically on the question of whether the rural amenities desired by the public require active agriculture—or whether ruralness in general will do. While they note the methodological limitations of existing studies, they conclude that collectively studies in both the U.S. and the U.K. demonstrate a widespread public conviction that not only is agriculture multifunctional, but that it alone can provide many of the things desired in the countryside (a meaning-laden term in much of Europe that is quite different from the term “rural” in U.S. discourse).⁹

Based on this kind of broad public support and the dedicated municipal, county, and state revenues that it has generated (direct federal funding for farmland preservation is minimal), New Jersey has established one of the more successful farmland preservation records among Northeast and mid-Atlantic states. It has been these states, where development pressure on farmland has been most intensive, that have developed the largest farmland preservation programs (Hellerstein et al, 2002). Relying on a broad array of tools, New Jersey has preserved—mostly through the purchase or transfer of development rights—over 1300 farms and 140,000 acres, close to 20% of all New Jersey farmland. In the seven South Jersey counties in this study, 543 farms and 64,210 acres had been preserved at the end of 2005—43% of the statewide total. Burlington and Salem counties led the state in the amount of acreage preserved. On average, two-thirds of the funds for farmland preservation have come from the state, about one-third from municipalities and counties (American Farmland Trust and Agricultural Issues Center 2003). The current pace of farmland preservation—15,000 to 20,000 acres per year—will decline sharply if the acquisition phase of the Garden State Preservation Trust comes to an end around 2008, but given past experience, voter renewal of the program seems likely. Still, the fact remains that around 80% of New Jersey farmland is still up for grabs.

⁹ Indeed, in the most complete comparative study of farmland preservation programs available, Alterman (1997) notes that some countries have overtly redefined farmland preservation as countryside preservation, and argues that “Countryside preservation must be a goal in its own right.”

In *Saving American Farmland: What Works*, the American Farmland Trust (1997) provides a useful overview and analysis of the “farmland preservation toolbox: agricultural protection zoning; purchase of agricultural conservation easements (also known as development rights); transfer of development rights programs; agricultural tax programs (mainly differential assessment and circuit breaker tax relief credits); right-to-farm legislation that protects farmers from nuisance complaints; and agricultural district programs. The toolbox can be seen to contain both tools for farm land preservation per se and tools to promote the economic viability of agriculture, but the emphasis is squarely on the former. “Agritourism” finds no explicit mention, nor do many of the other ideas (biofuels, organic agriculture, fundamental restructuring of government subsidies, etc.) that currently dominate the debates over how to keep farmers afloat. The past decade has been characterized by a growing awareness of the problem succinctly captured in a *Burlington County Times* article on the county’s agriculture: “Farmland Protected, But Farming in Jeopardy” (Reitmeyer 2005) and in *The New Jersey Farmer Newspaper* (2006) story, “Preserving South Jersey farmers—not just the farm” The story, as many similar ones to be found both in the press and in research reports, emphasizes a variety of factors coming together to make it difficult for farmers to stay in business and to ensure intergenerational succession.

In this context, the state’s promotion of agritourism can be interpreted as an attempt to enlist the public in the preservation of farmland and agriculture not just as taxpayers but as consumers, starting with the New Jersey Fresh and New Jersey Grown campaigns and now focusing more on a more experiential relationship between consumers and farmers involved in the broader meanings of agritourism. In reality, New Jersey farmers have long ranked high in direct marketing due to their proximity to urban and suburban populations. According to the *Census of Agriculture* for 2002, New Jersey ranks twelfth in the nation in the level of total direct farm sales to consumers, two-thirds of this being sales of vegetables, fruits and nuts. Indeed, among the twelve top-ranked states in this respect, New Jersey ranked fourth in average sales per farm engaging in direct marketing. This very much reflects the American Farmland Trust description of the active response of farmers to the challenges they have faced in states like New Jersey:

Farmers have also responded to the challenges by adapting their operations to take advantage of urban opportunities. Farms in metropolitan areas tend to be more specialized and more intensive than those in rural areas. They produce a diversity of high value crops such as fruits and vegetables, nursery products and specialty livestock. They often change from selling their products wholesale to direct marketing through roadside stands, farmers’ markets and pick-your-own operations, or to selling directly to stores and restaurants. These farms are highly responsive to market demand and sometimes supply services to urban residents to increase income. Farm-based services include recreational activities, landscaping and bed-and-breakfast facilities....Some of them even promote the fun of rural living by offering ranch vacations, hayrides, bus tours, haunted haystacks or maple syrup breakfasts (American Farmland Trust 1997:15)

These latter examples are of course staples of what has come to be known as agritourism, and it is to the meaning and nature of South Jersey agritourism to which we now turn. In doing

so, we will come to see that agritourism's potential extends beyond the issue of economic viability to fundamental issues of culture, knowledge, and public health.

Understanding Agritourism: Definition and Scope

While the preferred label may vary in different countries—*agriturismo* in Italy, farm holidays in the U.K., *Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof* in Germany, etc.—“agritourism” has increasingly become both the academic and the official term of choice around the world in the past decade. Its meaning, however, varies significantly. In Europe, where agritourism is most developed, its core meaning is always farm-based accommodation (Nilsson 2006; Busby and Rendle 2000; Garcia-Ramon et al. 1995; Opperman 1996). Indeed, in their influential notion of a transition from “tourism on farms” to “farm tourism,” Busby and Rendle (2000) take for granted that accommodation in the farmhouse is the primitive stage of agritourism, where cheapness and proximity to other attractions is likely to be of more importance to the visitor than the farm experience itself. The evolution into “farm tourism” proceeds via an increase in scale and a diversification of the tourist product, as well as a hypothesized change in the “state of mind” of both farmer and consumer, all of which combine to make this form of tourism increasingly focused on the farm experience itself. This is not a model that has much applicability to the United States, where “tourism on farms” in this sense has barely existed.

Agritourism in this sense is an almost universally-recognized part of the tourism landscape in Western Europe, with national organizations such as the Farm Stay UK (formerly the Farm Holiday Bureau), *Urlaub auf dem Bauernhof* in Germany, and *Gites de France*, and in some countries it represents a substantial proportion of tourist accommodation—around 20% in Austria, for example (Nilsson 2002:16). A study in the 1980s found 20% of all farms in Sweden offering accommodation (Bowen, Cox and Fox 1991:51). In North America, however, farm tourism involving accommodation is very much the exception rather than the rule, and the growing use of the term “agritourism” there has required a much broader definition. A recent study of Pennsylvania agritourism (Ryan, DeBord and McClellan 2006:7) adopts the following definition from the American Farm Bureau:

Agritourism refers to an enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner. Agricultural tourism refers to the act of visiting a working farm or any horticultural or agricultural operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation that also adds to the economic viability of the site.

Apart from the questionable empirical assumption that agritourism *necessarily* increases the economic viability of the enterprise, this definition is useful but somewhat narrower than the implicit one used in New Jersey, which is more accurately reflected in the following discussion from a Canadian study:

Agritourism...is the economic activity that occurs when people link travel with products, services and experiences of the agriculture and food system. Increasingly tourists want to experience rural life, meet and interact with the local people. Agri-tourism can include

farm bed and breakfast operations, farm vacations, horse and carriage rides, hay rides, picnic and camping sites on farms, on-farm craft and food stores, educational tours, agricultural fairs and farmer field days, farmers' markets, and so the list goes on. (D.W. Knight Associates, 1999:i)

In contrast to the Farm Bureau definition, this approach includes off-farm direct sales (e.g. farmers markets) as well as off-farm farm-related events (such as county and state fairs). This definition suggests that agritourism is a broader category than farm tourism, and is not limited to working farms.¹⁰ A study of agritourism operators in Virginia (McGehee and Kim 2004), which used as its sample the members of the Virginia Farmers Direct Market Association, found that only 55% of the respondents described their operation as a "working farm." Only 5% reported providing some type of accommodation (B&B, guest house or cabin, or campground) for tourists, reflecting the smallness of the farmstay sector characteristic of U.S. agritourism generally.

In the Pennsylvania survey of agritourism operators mentioned above (Ryan, Debord and McClellan 2006:11), the primary activity for 78% was farm markets, roadside stands and gift shops; agritainment for 11%, agri-lodging for 9%, and agri-education for 2%. Average farm size of respondents was 147 acres, with 41 acres (35%) on average devoted to agritourism. Peak season was August through September, in contrast to the general tourism peak season of June through August.

While most of the farmers interviewed for this project were familiar with the concept of agritourism, they tended to use it in rather different ways. One farmer's wife of a quite large extended family agritourism operation examined the farm's books and concluded that agritourism accounted for 12% of the farm's income—a proportion that can make the difference between viability and failure for some farms. However, from the definition of agritourism implicitly employed by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the vast bulk of the farm's income came from agritourism, since that definition would include the thriving farm market on the property that sells virtually all the farm's produce along with other items. The farmer's wife considered agritourism to involve income from school trips, birthday parties, pumpkin patch hayrides and corn mazes in the fall, and Easter bunny rides in the spring. It didn't occur to her to include the farm market, the main source of the farm's income, but one can argue, as the state apparently assumes, that its appeal stems partly from the on-farm experience it provides and therefore is part of agritourism.

While both conceptually and policy-wise this blurring of boundaries can be confusing, it reflects an ongoing process of engagement between different social and economic worlds. A Quebec tourist development officer has been quoted as saying: "Agri-tourism is the meeting of two worlds—the world of agriculture and the world of tourism and it is the symbiosis between the two which is important" (quoted in D.K. Knight Associates, 1999:4). In formulating the issue this way, it is useful to recognize that while the world of agriculture has become very removed from the life worlds of most people, tourism in contrast has become so "dedifferentiated" (Urry 1990)—so folded back into everyday existence--that touristic elements pervade a broad array of environments, institutions and interactions. This is one reason why

¹⁰ For an even broader definition and typology of "agriculturally based leisure attractions," see Cox and Fox (1991).

shoppers at a community farmers market can be considered in some sense “tourists.” Agritourism therefore is indeed about an attempt at a new symbiosis, but its potential meaning and outcomes extend well beyond the usual meaning of “tourism.” It is only in this context that the full public interest in both farmland preservation and agritourism can be understood.

Two central notions from this broadly-defined tourism side of the equation can help us further understand agritourism better: *experience* and *authenticity*. It is a common dictum in the tourist industry that it is above all in the business of marketing *experiences*, and in that sense it can be seen as representing a vanguard in the development of what has been called the “experience economy” (Pine II and Gilmore 1999). From the consumer point of view, the most fundamental common denominator among the range of agritourism experiences is this notion of unique experience. How else, for example, can we make sense of the fact that people may pay good money to labor in the hot sun picking fruit or vegetables to take home, sometimes at prices no cheaper than those found in the supermarket? Freshness and quality of the product are of course factors, but clearly the experience of being on a farm, of participating in agriculture, is a major part of the appeal of U-Pick operations. Wendell Berry has famously reminded us that eating is an agricultural act, and for many people, harvesting one’s own food is an important symbolic representation of that fact, one that parents often want to convey to children on such an outing.

Authenticity has been an abiding theme in tourism studies since MacCannell’s provocative work, and it may have a special resonance in this symbiosis of agriculture and tourism. For one thing, the image of the family farm remains imbued with deep authenticity, the surviving representation of the Jeffersonian ideal. To partake in agritourism is therefore likely to convey the sense of having an deeply authentic experience. As Hjalager notes in an insightful study of Danish agritourism, the desire to reconnect with the life world of one’s ancestors may conflict with the nature of modern agriculture, which has fragmented the production chain and eliminated many traditional family and home tasks. Hjalager (1996:108) notes:

It is still a question of whether the tourist will want to face the realities of modern agricultural production. Therefore, the most distinctive innovative effort involved effort involved in developing rural tourism products is concerned with the reinvention of tradition.

She gives as examples the reinvention of home-produced products long since replaced by manufactured commodities and the provision of “hands-on-experiences” in crafts often reinvented for tourists. Although Hjalager does not goes this far, some have criticized agritourism enterprises of turning farms into Disneyfied theme parks (see for example the exchange in *Small Farm News* (Jolly 1999:2), and indeed the term “entertainment farms” has entered the lexicon of the trade.

Theme park or not, a common observation among the South Jersey farmers I interviewed was that agritourism is definitely not for everybody (a point consistently made as well in the various manuals that states and institutions have made for farmers considering whether to take the plunge). Some felt that most farmers were simply temperamentally unwilling to put up with the hassle of the seemingly-endless succession of necessary permits, inspections, and approvals.

Others commented on the ambivalent nature of interaction with visitors; as one dairy farmer who had opened his milking barn to public view noted, “Not every farmer wants to be a monkey in the zoo.” The wife of one farmer whose farm depends on agritourism income to break even observed: “It’s sad that farmers can’t just be farmers anymore.” Some however found reward in correcting public misconceptions. “They think we are Amish,” one said, who took pleasure in opening the eyes of children both to the fact that New Jersey farmers do indeed have electricity and cars as well as to the wonders and joys of agriculture.

Agritourism Activities in South Jersey

To begin with what South Jersey agritourism is not: opportunities for farmstay experiences, the core of agritourism in Europe and elsewhere, are essentially not available in South Jersey. I have been able to identify only two places in South Jersey, both B&B’s, that offer overnight accommodation on a farm, but in neither case are the owners involved in working the farm or making the farm a major part of the B&B experience. Some farmstay opportunities exist to the west in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, but only a small handful in the rest of New Jersey, with the farm generally there more as picturesque backdrop than a locus of participatory activity. With distances short from urban and suburban centers, with a landscape attractive but hardly spectacular, and without the special cultural appeal of the “Pennsylvania Dutch,” farmstay agritourism probably does not have much of a future in South Jersey.

Table 5
Major South Jersey Agritourism Activities

	On-Farm	Off-Farm
Direct Marketing of Produce	Roadside Stands U-Pick (often with hayrides to the site) Xmas trees to pick, cut Farm Stores Wine-tasting Community supported agriculture (CSA)	Community farmers markets Non-farm roadside stands Off-farm store Fairs and festivals (highly variable)
Education	School Tours Adult tours Exhibits Nature trails	Farm to school programs Fairs and Festivals (4H and other displays) Agricultural museums and historical sites Living museums
Agritainment	Party barns or areas Petting and feeding zoos Pony or horseback riding Hayrides Corn Mazes Haunted hayrides/houses Fishing/Hunting opportunities Invented traditions/rituals	County agricultural fairs (tractor pulls, etc.) Themed Festivals (Blueberry, Peach, Tomato, etc.) Rodeos Horse shows

Table 5 identifies the major agritourism activities currently found in South Jersey. It distinguishes between on-farm versus off-farm activities, and between three overlapping but

generally-distinguishable categories: direct marketing, education, and agritainment. In terms of number of enterprises, the vast majority are limited to direct marketing, but school tours, corn mazes, and haunted hayrides and houses can be quite profitable. It is worth noting that not only are the boundaries between these categories porous, but also those between agriculturally-based activities and those that are not. Farm stands routinely sell baked goods and processed foods that are manufactured in traditional ways by non-farm enterprises serving both regular stores and farm stands, even if the farm's name is printed on the label. One farm in southeastern Pennsylvania not only engages in virtually all the activities listed above, but also maintains two swimming clubs on its property. Economists are fond of saying that contemporary farmers are actually in the "land management" business, and the Census Bureau announced in the early 1990s that because of the small number of farmers and the fact the many people living on farms did not work in agriculture, it was ceasing to publish its report on farm residents and replacing it with a new report entitled "Farm Entrepreneurial Population." In such a context, the limits of "agritainment" are uncertain. This raises the important practical question of what "agritainment" activities are protected against municipal or neighbor challenge by the Right to Farm Act. In New Jersey, Agriculture Management Practices (AMP's) define standards for various activities that, if met, are protected by the Right to Farm Act. However, efforts to create an agritourism AMP have been unsuccessful to date, and in any case the emphasis in the proposed AMP on such things as the number of portable toilets required for farm events does not go very far in defining what kinds of events may fall under the label of "agritourism." The distinction is further complicated by the deliberate inventions of new traditions, sometimes modeled on old ones elsewhere, as in one Mercer County's farm to draw customers in snowy January with an English wassailing ritual in the orchard.

Apart from simple roadside stands, most farms that are involved in agritourism tend to offer a range of the different activities listed in Table 5, although the trajectories of involvement appear to vary with the type of farm. Farms growing vegetables and/or fruits and nuts typically start out with a roadside stand which may evolve into a store that gradually expands into other areas. These are the farms that are most likely eventually to integrate all three categories, the typical model (represented most fully by such South Jersey farms as Duffield's, Heritage Station, Johnson's Corner Farm, and Springdale Farm) consisting of a substantial store selling not only the farm's produce but other products as well, supplementing its income (and attracting store customers) with U-Pick options, school tours and various forms of agritainment, most commonly pumpkin patch hayrides and corn mazes. It is common for such enterprises to have branched into nursery sales and production and to sell plants (annuals and perennials) as well. Dairy and commodity crop farms are more likely to go directly into agritainment and sometimes education. Agritainment specialization is most likely with farms growing corn, which provides the basis for a corn maze with perhaps an added pumpkin patch.¹¹

Farmers who integrate the three functions emphasize the reinforcing pattern between them, especially between educational activities—school tours, or less frequently, farm programs in schools—and the on-site farm market. "The children bring back their parents" is a commonly-heard refrain. School tours can be one of the most lucrative agritourism activities. At \$6 a head

¹¹ There has been some controversy over the practice of a farm purchasing pumpkins elsewhere and spreading them in a field. Even some farms that grow their own pumpkins have had at times to resort to this practice, given the susceptibility of pumpkin crops to disease.

and with as many as 20,000 schoolchildren a year, hosting farm tours at relatively low capital cost can make a significant contribution to farm viability. It is worth noting that some South Jersey farms near major highways attract significant numbers of school tours from Philadelphia, due to the quick access provided by the Walt Whitman Bridge. With population increase throughout most of the region, the potential for expansion of school tours is considerable.

Table 5 focuses on activities that are either directly commoditized or else are part of a commoditized context (e.g. the entry fee at a county fair). Equally-important are background elements that are not directly commoditized. One very important one is landscape. Part of the pleasure of visiting a farm may well be the drive through the farming landscape on the way. (Indeed, in most cases the landscape is enjoyed without visiting a farm, raising the issue, discussed earlier, of the non-compensated provision of public goods by farmers.) Landscape as a central component of cultural heritage, as something to be actively protected, preserved, and sometimes transformed through public policy, is an idea that is much more developed in Europe than in the United States, although there are some indications that it may be becoming increasing its political salience here as well (e.g. Friedland 2002). Research also shows that at least historically, the host-guest relation in farm tourism has been a central attraction, although in terms of farmstays, there is some evidence that there is a trend towards detached, self-catered accommodation. Such relationships may be more fleeting in the kinds of more limited activities that characterize South Jersey agritourism, but it is noteworthy that both farm websites and interactions are often designed to foster a sense of authentic interaction with a farm family. As one farm website states: “ We are the typical farm family and you will more than likely meet at least one of us during your visit to our farm. Ask questions, we love to answer them. This is a way of life that we love to share with everyone we meet.”

Table 6 provides rough estimates for several different types of agritourism activities at South Jersey farms. The statewide data come from New Jersey Department of Agriculture agritourism database; the South Jersey statistics also draw on several other online databases, as well as my own observations from the extensive travel carried out for this project. The South Jersey and statewide numbers are therefore not strictly comparable.

Table 6
Agritourism Activities in South Jersey and Statewide
Number of Places

	South Jersey	Statewide
Roadside Farm Stands/Farm Markets	186	485
U Pick Opportunities	73	154
Community Farmers’ Markets	20	87
Agricultural Fairs and Festivals	10	23
Wine-Tasting	8	21
Education (school tours)	8	13
Agritainment (one or more agritainment activities listed in Table 5)	15	45

Source: New Jersey Department of Agriculture online agritourism data base, accessible at <http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/agriculture/jerseyfresh/searchform.pl>. South Jersey data modified by listings available at Rutgers-If Plants Could Talk Pick Your own farms at <http://ifplantscouldtalk.rutgers.edu/pyo/> and by personal observations.

There are a number of reasons to believe that consumer demand for each of the categories above—but especially education and agritainment—could support a significant expansion of all of these activities. For one thing, almost all of South Jersey, including its most intensive agricultural areas in Atlantic, Burlington, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem counties, are within an hour’s drive of urban or concentrated suburban populations. Furthermore, comparisons with other states where agritourism is more developed suggest that the enterprise per capita ratios are substantially lower in New Jersey than elsewhere, suggesting potential for growth. Finally, the continuing public support for agriculture expressed through ballot initiatives reflects a positive orientation towards local farming that can be tapped in other ways as well.

Agritourism is not a panacea for the economic problems New Jersey farmers face, but it is clearly making an important contribution—sometimes a critically-important one—for a number of farmers participating in it. Several related how they were either losing money or just breaking even in their various other agricultural activities, and that it was ultimately agritourism that was “paying the bills.” So while the economic contribution of agritourism at a statewide level may be limited, it is critical for a significant number of enterprises.

In *Beyond Food: Towards a Multifunctional Agriculture*, Jervell and Jolly (2003:14) pick up on the European view of multifunctionality as being about a new set of relations between agriculture and society and argue that small farms are the ones with both the incentive and means to forge these new relations through agritourism, organic farming, and other innovations. Since most New Jersey farms are both small and diverse in their niche operations (organic production, cranberries, orchids, alpacas, sheep, etc.), the potential pool of agritourism operators is large. Not large enough to be part of national distribution chains, small farms share an interest in the revitalization of local food and service markets, in which the proportion of income generated by farm produce declines, and the proportion generated by processed goods and by services increases.¹²

In a unique study of on-farm roadside stands and markets in Burlington County, Hayes-Conroy (2006) suggests that these enterprises have shifted from being part of a “landscape of production” to a “landscape of memory,” with potentially problematic implications. On-farm roadside stands, which blossomed in the 1950s, were based on an interchange and interdependence between suburbanites and local farmers, even as the stands typically began to sell produce of other local farmers and not just their own. “Thus, in as much as 1950s suburbanites bought food from the local roadside markets, the closeness of agriculture to the residences of suburban dwellers truly allowed them to regard their eating as an ‘agricultural act’” (Hayes-Conroy 2006:103).¹³

¹² Desmond A. Jolly is the longtime director of the Small Farm Program at the University of California at Davis, which has been a pioneer in promoting agritourism through its extension work and through publications such as *Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California: A How-To Manual for Farmers and Ranchers* and *A Primer on Agritourism and Ecotourism Startups and Management*. Another valuable manual is Mark Lattanzi, *Creating Successful Agritourism Activities For Your Farm*, published by the central Massachusetts-based Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA).

¹³ The reference here is to Wendell Berry’s famous statement, noted earlier, that “eating is an agricultural act” in his “The Pleasures of Eating,” in his 1990 book, *What Are People For?*

Hayes-Conroy argues that with the precipitous decline of agriculture in the county, combined with new suburban dwellers who have never known the relationship with agriculture that earlier ones had, both the motivations and significance of farm stand patronage has changed. The farm stands increasingly sell produce from other regions and states, delivered by large container trucks. Much of the produce they sell is not local, and may be indistinguishable from that available in the supermarket. She suggests that

the success of their modern markets does not lie in the viability of agriculture but in the nostalgic remembrance of its past vitality. This does not mean that these markets are not real, or that supporting them does not support local agriculture. But it does mean that these farmers can no longer rely on the interdependence of producer and consumer to provide them with profits. Instead, it is the memory of such interdependence that attracts the consumers to their markets, hoping that with their support, agriculture might once again become a central activity in the township, county, and state.

In a conclusion that echoes the centrality of the issue of authenticity in tourism generally, Hayes-Conroy (2006:132) warns that “The authenticity of South Jersey’s farm markets is in danger of deteriorating, even collapsing, if local agricultural production continues to decline.”

The same danger most likely also applies to community farmers’ markets, which have been the most rapidly-growing form of agritourism in the state in recent years: twenty-eight new ones in the past four years (Lockwood 2006). A Rutgers survey of consumers at twenty-one north and central New Jersey farmers’ markets found that 90% agreed with the statement that freshness and direct interactions with farmers were the most important reasons for people going to such markets. Over two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they also patronized roadside stands, and over one-fifth reported that they also went to Pick-Your-Own farms (Govindasamy, Italia and Adelaja 2002). These data suggest that these different agritourism activities are mutually-reinforcing and rest on an agriculture that is perceived as local and which provides food for consumers (most notably vegetables and fruits). If agritourism is to perform its desired role of contributing to farm viability, the right kind of agriculture has to be there to support it. Farmland preservation in contrast is often aimed at larger farms producing commodity crops not directly sold to consumers.

However, the public interest in agritourism development goes considerably beyond its contributions to farm viability and the production of rural amenities or even its multifunctionality. At a time when a best-selling book is titled *Last Child in the Woods* and coins the phrase “nature-deficit disorder,” and when childhood obesity is recognized as one of the most serious public health challenges facing the nation, the relevance of expanded opportunities to experience agriculture and to deepen understanding of the relationship between ecological and individual health is more evident than ever. Agritourism, from the simple experience of stopping at a roadside stand, to the more participatory experience of picking one’s own, to the broader sensory experiences of both educational tours and agritainment, expands the range of agriculture’s public goods, and these in turn have the potential to promote a more educated approach to consumption and food. It can therefore be argued that the expansion of agritourism opportunities is itself in the public interest, quite independently of the instrumental

goal of using agritourism to enhance farm viability. Agritourism may be seen as potentially having an important contributions to make to knowledge and public health.

Issues and Recommendations

Several states have produced manuals for potential agritourism operators that explore the challenges that will have to be faced by those who choose to go down this road. A few, including most recently Pennsylvania, have surveyed their agritourism operators, assessed their problems, and made useful recommendations. It is not surprising that many of the issues that arose in my interviews and observations were ones already recognized and addressed in these manuals and reports. It would seem somewhat superfluous simply to restate them here. At the same time, my joint focus on farmland preservation and agritourism in this study did lead me to rethink the connection between these two practices that are not ordinarily considered together, except in the rather narrow sense of seeing agritourism as a useful tool for keeping preserved farms economically viable. Indeed, it might be suggested there is some truth in the reverse: that farmland preservation needs to help make agritourism economically viable if agritourism is to be fully successful in its mission. In this final section I shall therefore first touch on several barriers to agritourism development and success whose importance was reinforced by my interviews, and then explore two issues which I believe have been relatively ignored in the literature: 1) the potential for developing a more synergistic relationship between agritourism and farmland preservation; and 2) the potential for linking agritourism more effectively to the public interest in better understanding of agriculture and food—that is, to its potential educational role.

Barriers to Agritourism Development and Success. Two widely-recognized obstacles that farmers face in developing and succeeding in agritourism are liability insurance and business skills. A survey of West Virginia farmers found that liability insurance was the largest single concern that farmers expressed (WVDA 2005), and it was the top-ranked difficulty selected by agritourism operators in the Pennsylvania study (Ryan, DeBord and McClellan, 2006:15). My own interviews indicated the importance of this issue for agritourism operators, even if most had found ways to live with it. Farmers are familiar with insurance, but the major farm insurance companies sometimes refuse to provide agritourism insurance, especially for agritainment activities. Several farmers reported being dropped by their insurance company after a single agritourism claim. For one two-generation family that runs hayrides, a corn maze, and a haunted house in the month of October, special insurance for that month alone comes to \$20,000. This represents a very substantial bite into the month's receipts that are expected to carry the farm through the rest of the year and can make the difference between profit and loss in a month like October 2005, when three weekends were rained-out.

Several states have attempted to address this issue. North Carolina has passed legislation to limit farmer liability, and Kansas provides a tax credit for part of the insurance costs. New Jersey agritainment farmers report paying premiums up to eight times what farmers in other states report; this in a state where the farmland tax burden, even with farmland assessment, is three times the national average. If agritourism is seen itself as a kind of public good, more serious efforts to address both the tax and insurance burden seem warranted.

The most active and successful state agritourism programs, such as Kansas, provide both technical assistance and seed grant money for agritourism development. The recent study of agritourism in Pennsylvania recommends the development of a statewide infrastructure for education and training, including an Agritourism Development Fund. The report also notes that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Division of County Fairs has implemented an agritourism initiative to promote farm markets, wineries, B&B's and corn mazes at county fairs. The virtually total lack of any such connection or promotion was one of the most striking aspects of the South Jersey county fairs I attended. There is ample evidence that agriculturally-related experiences tend to be mutually-reinforcing, but the connections need to be made much clearer, especially at county and other agricultural fairs. These two Pennsylvania initiatives are worthy of emulation in New Jersey.

In this connection, however, the Pennsylvania study's assumption that Pennsylvania agritourism "is threatened by the competition of surrounding states" may be questioned. The claim seems dubious, given the local nature of most agritourism visits and the mutually-reinforcing nature of agritourism experience, where participation in one type of activity appears to lead to participation in others. Some states have recognized that for many visitors, region rather than state boundaries are what matter. Garrett County in Maryland and Preston County in West Virginia, for example, produce a handsome brochure extolling twenty-one sites in the two counties entitled, "Visit Our Working Farms: Share Our Rural Heritage." At whatever level, however, agritourism promotion is as key as it is for other forms of tourism, and here New Jersey compares very poorly with most of its neighboring Mid-Atlantic states, particularly Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.¹⁴ The state Agritourism Council is working with Rutgers University to upgrade the Department of Agriculture's agritourism website, but there is a need for far better promotion at all levels. Such promotion should take into account the fact, well established in the tourism literature, that most people combine different types of "tourist" activities when they travel. "Agritourists" should not be thought of as a distinctly-specialized type of tourist.

Agritourism and Farmland Preservation. As we have seen, agritourism has often entered the discussion of farmland preservation in terms of the question: "OK, we've preserved the farm. How are we going to preserve the farmer?" In reality, a relationship already exists before the instrumental possibilities of agritourism are raised.

1) The sale of development rights can provide the capital to initiate or expand agritourism enterprises. A good number of farms engaging in agritourism are under farmland protection, and interviews and anecdotal evidence indicate that it is not uncommon for the money gained from development rights to be invested in agritourism infrastructure. The decision to preserve farmland can be linked from the start with the decision to expand agritourism, as with one recent Gloucester County farm family's decision to preserve acreage for wine production.

¹⁴ Sussex and several neighboring "Northwest Skylands" counties in North Jersey are a partial exception, providing detailed information about agritourism opportunities on the web at <http://www.njskylands.com/guideagsuss.htm>. Gloucester County in South Jersey provides a "Guide to Gloucester County Farm Products," which appears to include both farms that do and do not receive visitors.

2) Farmland preservation decisions may affect the potential for agritourism. The USDA study of “rural amenities” discussed earlier raises the issue of whether the row-crop farming often favored by farmland preservation programs is the kind of farming that produces the rural amenities most desired by the public. It notes the importance of finding the proper balance between focusing on soil quality and commodity crop farming and “obtaining the best mix of preserved farmlands” in terms of public preferences” (Hellerstein et al. 2002:vi). As we have seen, agritourism does seem related to type of farming. Roadside farm stands and community farmers’ markets depend on production of vegetables and fruits. School trips sometimes favor dairy farms or other farms with animals.

3) The terms of farmland preservation may restrict the possibilities of agritourism development. The land on which a farmer’s house sits is not included in the land preserved, nor is land devoted to commercial purposes other than agricultural production. (Both are taxed differently as well.) Hence when farms with pre-existing on-farm markets and related commercial structures have entered farmland preservation, they have been careful to keep this part of the land out as well. For a farm which may not have engaged in agritourism activities before preservation, the deed restrictions may discourage agritourism development. My interviews elicited varying opinions on how serious a problem this is, but at a minimum there is need for clarification of what kinds of agritourism activities can be carried out on preserved land. To the degree that some activities are disallowed, consideration should be given to adjusting the terms of the easement. It appears that perceptions of existing farmland preservation practices have on occasion discouraged the development of agritourism activities in the past.

The analysis in this report suggests that to a certain degree, the question, “what can agritourism do for farmland preservation?,” should be supplemented with the question, “what can farmland preservation do for agritourism?” This is because agritourism has the potential to respond to broader public values and preferences than simply the preservation of agriculture, important as that may be. These may be the particular landscape and other amenities that the USDA Hellerstein report discusses, or the desire for a connection with local agriculture that various other studies have documented, or the educational experiences that many hope will inform better environmental and eating decisions. In this broader context, the following recommendations are tentatively offered:

- Balance narrowly-agricultural concerns in farmland preservation decisions with the recognition that the public, which ultimately foots the bill, has more interest in some types of farmland preservation than others. Issues of broad public concern such as environmental sustainable farming practices and attractive and accessible landscapes deserve attention in deciding which farms to preserve.¹⁵

¹⁵ The interesting research of Nassauer (1997; 2004) on perceptions of different scenarios for agricultural landscapes suggests that the public and farmers share similar normative visions. A Vermont study (Wood et al. 2000) found that 84% of visitor survey respondents said they valued the agricultural landscape of the state and close to two-fifths said they would be less likely to come to Vermont if it were significantly diminished. Vermont’s

- Give decision-making “points” for farmland preservation proposals that provide some form of public access to farmland. Unlike much of Europe, where the public has the right to cross privately-held farmland, even farmland preserved with public funds confers absolutely no access right for the public in the U.S.¹⁶ While this is unlikely to change, agritourism constitutes the major way in the U.S. whereby limited access rights are granted. Accordingly, quite apart from its contribution to economic viability, the public’s interest in access to farmland and agricultural experience through agritourism deserves consideration in farmland preservation planning and decisions.
- Reduce bias against small farms seeking to sell their development rights, especially if they are engaged in educationally-relevant agritourism practices.
- Require the posting of farmland preservation signs. While these signs, generally available from both the county and the state, do not provide any access rights, they remind the public of the benefits of their dedicated tax dollars and thereby are likely to contribute to future support for farmland preservation ballot initiatives and to confidence that local agriculture has a future.
- Recognize that the long-term authenticity of key types of agritourism—most notably roadside stands, U-pick, and community farmers’ markets—depend on local, or at least within-state, production of what they sell. Hence if agritourism is to contribute to farm viability, it make sense for farmland preservation to support the types of agriculture that specifically support it.
- At a minimum, ensure that preserving farmland does not limit the potential for agritourism development in the future. Plug loopholes that enable preserved farmland to be used as estates for the wealthy, both because this is likely to undermine public support for the program and to make the land too expensive for families in the market for land for agriculture and agritourism.

Agritourism and Education in the Public Interest. Starting with my first interview, all the farmers I interviewed expressed dismay at the growing ignorance of younger generations concerning both nature and agriculture. Public health officials see that ignorance as a contributing factor to the striking rise of obesity and diabetes. More critical voices point to the role of powerful economic interests that exercise enormous marketing and political power and both produces this ignorance and suppresses alternatives (e.g. Winson 2004). Responding to the “Reinventing Agricultural Education for the Year 2020” initiative, sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, New Jersey came up with its own “benchmark report” in January 2000. Unfortunately, both the national strategic plan and the New Jersey response mostly mouth platitudes about “factual knowledge” about “agriculture, food, fiber and national resources systems and developing networks “to promote free enterprise and entrepreneurship for all students” (National Council for Agricultural Education, 1999:5,8). The main goal appears to be recruiting young people into the food industry. No acknowledgment is made of possible conflicts of interest or opinion of the various stakeholders the initiative seeks to bring together, nor of the critical environmental, public health, and ethical issues that others have raised about agriculture,

farmland preservation program favors farms that lie along significant public roads. Korfmacher (2000) makes the case for linking farmland preservation much more specifically to sustainability as does Mariola (2005).

¹⁶ Combined with unique restrictions on state “taking” rights in property, both the tools and the significance of farmland preservation are quite different in Europe and elsewhere. See Alterman (1997) for a fascinating comparative international survey of farmland preservation programs.

agribusiness, and American eating patterns. “Education” of this sort hardly increases the capacities of people to make informed choices about either personal eating or public food policy choices.

It would be unrealistic to expect farmers to take charge of such a process of a broader and more critical agricultural education, but agritourism currently offers one of the few means of connecting students and families with farms, farmers, and agriculture. School tours bring several hundred thousand children to farms in New Jersey each year, and tours aimed at adults as well are on the rise.¹⁷ Establishing such connections with agriculture can be one way to promote both public dialogue and greater individual awareness and understanding.

While school tours are a welcome source of income for several farms in South Jersey, the level of agricultural education involved is quite limited. For one thing, farm visits are typically one-shot, several-hour affairs for primary school kids. While some farms post lesson plans online, there is little follow-up and the school children seldom return. A primary school farm visit appears to constitute agricultural education for K-12 *in toto* in many school districts.

As noted above, one virtue of school trips is that kids tend to bring back their parents, and hence hosting school groups is an important marketing mechanism for farms with on-site markets. The existence of agritourism opportunities therefore enables families to maintain some degree of contact with agriculture. The combination of limitations and potentialities of agritourism-based education are the basis of the following tentative proposals:

- Work with school districts to treat agricultural education as a continuing experience extending from primary school to high school. However, in contrast to the NCAE, the focus should be less on career opportunities than on the fundamental importance of agriculture to everyone, and the need to be able to think critically about the environmental, labor, nutrition, health, and other issues involved.
- Work with farmers to upgrade their educational programs to enable older students to grow their agricultural knowledge; consider providing small grant programs to encourage this.
- Explore ways to strengthen the link between consumer and farmer at community farmers markets, e.g. through open houses at participating farms, farm tours, etc.
- Sponsor regional farm open house days along the lines done in Delaware and Maryland, especially in Montgomery County in the latter.
- Work with county fair administrators to include a presence of agritourism operators and to broaden participation by currently-neglected types of agriculture, e.g. wineries and nurseries, etc.

Concluding Comment

Agritourism is not a panacea for meeting the diverse challenges farmers face in New Jersey, but the income it generates can make the critical difference for some farms—farms which for many New Jerseyans become in the process the human face of agriculture in the state. It can

¹⁷ For example, cranberry harvest tours, running around \$20 a head.

reinforce the goals of farmland preservation in New Jersey, but at the same time play a broader role in educating and connecting New Jerseyans to agriculture. This report has sought to place agritourism in the specific context of South Jersey agriculture, the state's farmland preservation program, and the educational potential that it carries. Agritourism deserves support, and this report has sought to identify some key barrier issues as well as to make some tentative proposals about linking agritourism more effectively to both farmland preservation and public education.

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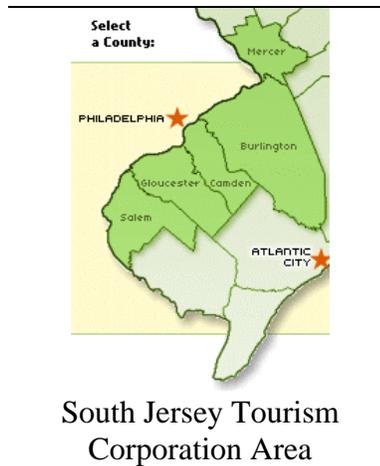
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Appendix A Defining South Jersey in Agricultural and Tourist Contexts

The common colloquial geographical expression, “South Jersey,” lacks both clear definition and institutional manifestation. Books and articles about South Jersey history and cultural heritage typically differ in the geographic boundaries used. Some go as far north as Mercer and Ocean Counties. Others treat it as another term for the hinterland of Camden, or else as the counties bordering the Delaware River.

State agricultural policy is administered essentially at two levels: at the state level, mainly through the divisions of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and at the county level through County Agriculture Development Boards. No intermediate agricultural regions are officially defined.

The New Jersey Commerce, Economic Growth & Tourism Commission aggregates counties into six tourism regions (see Figure 1), which not only divide the southern part of the state into four regions, but extend it farther north than commonly perceived. The South Jersey Tourism Corporation, funded primarily by the Delaware River Port Authority, takes the state Delaware River tourism region as its definition of South Jersey. This includes Mercer County, generally considered to be part of Central New Jersey, and omits Cumberland, Cape May, and Atlantic counties, generally considered to be part of South Jersey. An attitudinal survey by



Rutgers sociologist Ted Goertzel and his student Jason Leonardis (Goertzel and Leonardis 2001) omit Mercer County but include the southern part of Ocean County to produce the map in Figure 3. Since both agricultural and tourism policy in New Jersey are ultimately based on counties, I have opted for the Goertzel-Leonardis definition of South Jersey minus the part of Ocean county that it includes. In other words, South Jersey in this report means Atlantic, Camden, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties.

Appendix B

A Sample Online “Agritourism” Tour

Members of the Agri-Tourism Industry Advisory Council have been encouraged by Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus to develop sample tours to agritourism sites in the state. In response, I have created a tour homepage with a link to one proposed tour, with others to follow. The tour homepage may be accessed at :

<http://www.camden.rutgers.edu/~wood/Agritourism/agtour.htm>

I have attached copies of the tour homepage and Tour #1 in this appendix.



South Jersey Agritourism

Agritourism is about experience with agriculture--from buying fresh produce from farmers at your local farmers' market or roadside farm stand to picking fresh produce in a farm field to taking an educational farm tour to finding your way through a corn maze and more. It's a way for families to reconnect with agriculture and to relearn the pleasures of real food. It's also a way to help keep farming a viable part of the industry and landscape of the region.

The following tours provide itineraries that sample different types of agricultural experience in the southern six counties of the state.

Tour 1: [Johnson's Corner Farm, Kirby's Mill, and Valenzano Winery](#)

(a preserved family farm with lots to see and do; a peaceful look back into rural life, and a visit to one of New Jersey's twenty wineries)

Further information about agritourism possibilities in New Jersey is available at the state's [Agri-Tourism Events and Attractions website](#), which includes a searchable database.

For questions or comments, email Professor Robert Wood at Rutgers University, Camden at wood@camden.rutgers.edu



Tour 1: Johnson's Corner Farm, Kirby's Mill, and Valenzano Winery

This tour combines visits to a 100 acre farm on the edge of suburban development, a National Register historical site that provides a window of time into New Jersey agriculture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a recently-established winery on the edge of the Pine Barrens. **To get started:** Find your way to the Marlton Circle, where Routes 70 and 73 intersect. Follow Route 70 eastwards for 4.5 miles, and then turn left on to Hartford Road.

As you approach [Johnson's Corner Farm](#) at the corner of Hartford and Church Roads in Medford, you will see the biggest threat to farming in New Jersey: sprawl, which is transforming farmland into housing and commercial development at a rate close to 10,000 acres per year. Yet enterprising farm families like those of Eric and Pete Johnson have exploited the market that sprawl has created. Like [Springdale Farms](#) in Cherry Hill and [Duffield's](#) in Sewell, Johnson's Corner Farm has evolved into an enterprise specializing in both agriculture and what has come to be called "agritainment."



133 Church Road, Medford
609-654-8643

The core of the operation is the farm market, open from April to December, where almost all of the farm's produce is sold, along with items from the bakery and nursery. But outside there are a broad range of activities visitors can participate in: an animal barnyard, a corn maze in summer, hayrides to pick-your-own fields, and more, depending on the season. Check the farm's [website](#) ahead of time to find out about what kinds of activities are available. It's easy to spend a few hours here, especially with children. When you are done, leave the parking lot via the exit by the picnic area, turning left on to Church Road.



Hay wagons take U-pickers to fields



You may notice a sign that indicates that Johnson's Corner Farm was the one-hundredth farm to be enrolled in Burlington County's farmland preservation program. Farmers who enroll in this program sell their "development rights," which means that their land forever cannot be developed and taken out of agriculture. Burlington County leads the state in farmland preservation, with over 20,000 acres preserved. Statewide, over 140,000 acres have been preserved, close to twenty percent of all farmland in New Jersey. Watch for other farmland preservation signs as you continue on this and other tours. New Jersey is second in the nation in the proportion of its total area in preserved farmland (only Maryland has more).

Going east on Church Road, you will pass through a mix of farm country and development. 2.5 miles from Johnson's Corner Farm, you will find the [Kirby's Mill](#) complex on the left. Dating to the 1770's, you will see here a grist mill and waterwheel, a blacksmith shop, a multipurpose barn, and a small sawhouse. This picturesque and peaceful site conjures up an earlier era of agriculture, when it was central to both economic and social life in this region. The grist mill, used for almost 200 years to grind grain into flour and later into animal feed, now houses a small museum run by the Medford Historical Society, open on Sunday afternoons 1-4 pm in July and August (609-654-7767). Admission is free. But the site is worth exploring on foot even if the museum is not open.



275 Church Road, Medford



. If you time your visit to explore the museum, you will find a nice display of agricultural implements, a model country store, a lathe workshop, and more. There are also several annual events at Kirby's Mill well worth catching: a quilt show on the first Saturday and Sunday each June; a "country day" (particularly recommended) on the second Sunday in July, an Art Sale on the first Sunday in August, and an Apple Festival the second Saturday in October.

Kirby's Mill is a pleasant place to walk and linger, and shutterbugs are likely to find the quiet lushness and the reflections in the water irresistible. To head on to [Valenzano Winery](#), continue a little ways further on Church Road, then turn right on Eayrestown Road. When you reach Route 70, turn left (east) and go about 3.5 miles to Route 206 and turn south.



En route to the winery you will pass several sod and turf farms as well as several farm nurseries. Nursery, greenhouse, and sod products are the largest product sector in New Jersey agriculture, accounting for close to one-half of total sales (but a much smaller proportion of cultivated farmland). When grown in New Jersey, these products earn the [Jersey Grown](#) designation, which complements the [Jersey Fresh](#) designation for vegetables, fruits, and wines, administered by the [New Jersey Department of Agriculture](#). You may want to stop at one of these places, e.g. the Coop Growers Association Tabernacle Gardens on the left side at 1360 Route 206 as you proceed south.



1320 Old Indian Mills Rd, Shamong
609 268-6731

Continuing south on Route 206, you will reach an intersection with Tuckerton Road. Turn left (east) and then turn right at the next intersection (Old Indian Mills Road). Valenzano winery is shortly on your left.



One of [twenty wineries](#) in New Jersey, [Valenzano Winery](#) is located on the edge of the Pine Barrens and several of its wines reflect that heritage, most notably the two excellent (grape-based) cranberry wines. But there are numerous other, more traditional, wines as well. A tasting room is open Thursday and Friday 11am-6pm and Saturday and Sunday 11am-4pm. The grapes are grown at this site and at two others owned by the family.



Valenzano Winery's annual [wine festival](#), pictured on the left, is a relaxed and convivial affair, with arts and crafts booths on the side and musical entertainment. Check the winery's website for details. Valenzano's New Jersey Fresh wines may be purchased on the premises.

When you are done, retrace the route back to Rt. 206 and head home to enjoy your Jersey Fresh and Jersey Grown purchases and memories!

[Return to South Jersey Agritourism](#)