



Board of Chosen Freeholders

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Hunterdon Helps NJ Gain #1 Ranking Nationwide In Farmland Protection

New Jersey has been ranked the #1 of all the states for farmland protection policies in a recent report from the American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Hunterdon County has been a key leader in helping to gain that ranking, Hunterdon County Freeholder John E. Lanza reported, at the June 2nd Freeholder meeting.

Lanza, the Board's liaison for the Planning and Land Use Department, stated, "Hunterdon County has been a leader for the state in farmland preservation. The County has not only preserved over 34,000 acres of farmland, second in the state in total acreage, but also 446 farms, the most in the state, have been preserved.

And while the AFT report looks at the reduction in farmland across the nation, far from losing farms, Hunterdon County is gaining farms. Last year the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a Census of Agriculture report that showed over the past five years Hunterdon County has seen a 5% increase in total farmland acreage and an 11% increase in the number of farms."

Lanza said, "The AFT ranking is a reflection of the New Jersey's 35+ year history of supporting farmland preservation. It has been a joint effort by the state, county, and local governments, as well as the voters who have approved the creation of open space trust funds, and the farming community.

The recognition is a great achievement for the state and Hunterdon County, and is probably incredulous to many, both within and outside New Jersey, in their view of our highly urbanized state."

Lanza also reported, "For those farmers interested in preserving their farms, the county's farmland preservation program is currently accepting applications on a rolling basis. So those interested should contact the County Ag specialist Bob Hornby."

The non-profit AFT's multiyear study evaluates and ranks each state's policy response to farmland loss in order to identify the policies and programs that are most important and effective in ensuring farmland protection.

The report and scorecard are available on the County Agriculture Development Board's webpage, www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/cadb.htm