



News Advisory

RI Department of Environmental Management
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PHOTO OPPORTUNITY FOR AP NEWS DAYBOOK:

Date: Thursday, May 1, 2014
Time: 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with speaking program at 2 p.m.
Location: State House Rotunda (speaking program in Governor's State Room)
Event: Rhode Island Agriculture Day

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DEM, FARMERS AND AQUACULTURISTS TO CELEBRATE RHODE ISLAND AGRICULTURE DAY IN STATE HOUSE FESTIVITIES ON THURSDAY, MAY 1

Large Selection of Local Foods Available for Sampling

PROVIDENCE - To recognize the importance of the state's \$1.7 billion agriculture and green industries, the Department of Environmental Management will host Rhode Island Agriculture Day at the State House on Thursday, May 1.

DEM will announce the award of 17 Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) grants of up to \$20,000 to assist small or beginning farmers and local seafood businesses promote and market their agricultural products grown in Rhode Island. The program is designed to increase the economic competitiveness of Rhode Island-grown agricultural products and local seafood. "Farming and fishing are areas of economic growth in Rhode Island, and the LASA grant program will catalyze and support local businesses," said DEM Director Janet Coit. "This new initiative is one of many efforts taken by DEM to support local agriculture and our state's food economy."

This year's RI Agriculture Day program will also kick off the 10th anniversary celebration of Rhody Fresh Milk and the debut of several new varieties of locally-made cheese. Rhody Fresh is produced by the RI Dairy Farms Cooperative, which was formed in 2004 by a group of five dairy farmers. Today Rhody Fresh Milk has grown to include eight dairy farms throughout the state and is sold at retail stores, colleges and other locations. Products include several varieties of milk, as well as cream, butter and cheese.

Bob Rheault of Ocean State Aquaculture Association will take part in the program to highlight the growth of the industry, as well as Senator Susan Sosnowski and Representative Art Handy, who will talk about the economic value of agriculture, seafood and the local food economy in Rhode Island.

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The seafood sector is nearing its way to being as successful as the agricultural sector in local marketing and sales. With the passage of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative law in 2011, the state has committed to creating a framework for effective and sustainable marketing for Rhode Island seafood. The economic value of just the raw product sales of the RI agriculture and commercial fishing industries combined is \$266 M per year, with even greater far-reaching economic benefits when multiplier impacts are factored in.

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

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

As part of the Rhode Island Agriculture Day festivities, approximately 50 exhibitors will host displays in the State House Rotunda from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Exhibitors will include farms, local food purveyors, and land trusts, as well as government and non-profit agencies that work with farmers. Coordinated by DEM's Division of Agriculture, the exhibits will highlight Rhode Island agriculture and the many organizations that collectively participate in its viability.

Large Variety of Locally-Grown Foods Available for Sampling

Several exhibitors will offer food samples, such as stuffed quahogs from Dave's Marketplace; fresh pastries directly from Wright's Dairy Farm and Bakery; assorted cheeses from Narragansett Creamery; oysters from Ocean State Aquaculture Association; johnnycakes from the Kenyon's Grist and Corn Meal Company; Rhody Fresh milk and Butterkase cheese from the RI Dairy Farms Cooperative; egg sandwiches and Del's liquid lemonade from Little Rhody Foods; and Arruda Dairy's fresh plain and flavored milk including chocolate and coffee. Also, fresh cider from Jaswell's Farm in Smithfield; meat products from Daniele Inc.; Cabot Cheese made with milk from RI dairy farms; Rich's Sweet Heat sauce for RI-grown vegetables and meats will be available for sampling.

Rhode Island has 1,243 farms, mostly family run, which occupy 68,000 acres. The state is a national leader in direct-sales to consumers, with 50 seasonal farmers markets in the state's urban, suburban and rural areas, seven indoor winter markets, and numerous pick-your-own and farm stand operations. The recent Green Industry Economic Impact Study funded by DEM and conducted by URI conservatively estimates that total agricultural revenues in Rhode Island are \$170.6 million.

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The Agriculture Day speaking program will begin at 2 p.m. in the Governor's State Room, and the exhibits will be on display until 5 p.m. in the State House Rotunda. Along with DEM Director Janet Coit, speakers will include Louis Escobar representing the Rhode Island Dairy Farms Cooperative and Rhody Fresh Milk; Bob Rheault of the Ocean State Aquaculture Association; Midwestern hog farmer Paul Willis of Niman Ranch Pork Company, who is in Rhode Island for the Niman Ranch Sustainability Conference at Brown University; Senator Susan Sosnowski and Representative Art Handy.

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