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On-Site Event for Inaugural EPC Leadership Program A Great Success

The Eastern Produce Council's Leadership Program visited The Giamarese Farm & Orchard and Rutgers Holly House in East Brunswick, NJ on September 12th. The team of fourteen future leaders came together for their fourth component of the program to continue to build upon the foundation of hands on learning and team building last week.

The day began on Giamarese Farm & Orchard where the group was introduced to Jim Giamarese, a third-generation farmer who has worked the 35-acre land along with his family for the past seventy years. The farm is open from May to October, and as Jim told the group, "the farm focuses on direct marketing with many pick-your-own and wholesale commodities grown here on our farm."

The Leadership Program consists of five elements, three on-site visits and educational sessions, a FSMA training seminar and finally a Foundation Excellence conference hosted at the annual New York Produce Show in December. The first two on-site events for the group were held at the Gloucester Port Terminal and Greenyard Logistics in March and Rutgers Snyder Farm in June. Similar to the Rutgers Snyder Farm event, the day concluded with an afternoon session of education organized by the staff at Rutgers Holly House, also located in East Brunswick, NJ.

Professor Stan Elson, Coadjutant Instructor for the Office of Continuing Professional Education for Rutgers University commented on the Leadership Program "It is so gratifying to see this group being extremely receptive to the training. We discussed how to improve team building and coaching today, and this group clearly understood and will implement what we have learned."

Al Murray, Executive Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Society and EPC Board Member, also noted "this group has been able to engage in a very personal, face-to-face manner throughout this program that they otherwise may not have had within our industry." He continued to say, "to finally see this brainchild that was born so many years ago come to fruition, is so fulfilling." Marianne Santo, of Wakefern and EPC President, also noted the diversity of personalities in this groups has been very encouraging to watch and get to know over the course of this program. "The networking for these

'students' is a fantastic opportunity. We are also hoping they will continue in the industry and become a succession plan for the future of the EPC Board" she continued.

The founders weren't alone in their awe of the Leadership program. "This program has been a very rewarding experience thus far to see all facets of the produce industry and not just the section you work in" noted Tracy Simmonds of JOH. Chris Visone, from The Little Potato Company, also commented "the Leadership Program has been a great way to learn both in the classroom and from the field experience. We have experienced a multitude of farming techniques and new ways that agriculture has helped our environment." Chris continued, "My favorite thing about the program has been the networking between new friends in the inaugural class and learning from each other's perspectives."

The Leadership Group will receive a certificate of completion at the Keynote Breakfast prior to the New York Produce Show & Conference's Expo on Wednesday, December 12th. For more information about the EPC Leadership Program or to become a member of the Eastern Produce Council, please visit www.easternproducecouncil.com.

About Eastern Produce Council

The mission of the Eastern Produce Council is to provide the membership with multiple networking opportunities in the produce industry, to advance the sales and awareness of fresh fruits and vegetables, and to provide membership with the most relevant, up-to-date information available. For more information, please visit the website at www.easternproducecouncil.com or contact Susan McAleavey Sarlund at (908) 723-0645.

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