

In the last year, we have made significant strides in our goal to sustain and grow Delaware agriculture, the industry that brings one billion dollars to Delaware's economy. However, agriculture is more than just dollars. Agriculture is also about our heritage and our quality of life. It is a way of life that has sustained my family for years. I am proud to be a Delaware farmer and I thank Governor Minner for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Secretary of Agriculture.



Delaware produces many quality products for the marketplace. One of our challenges has been helping our farmers and others in the food industry to market their products. I am very pleased to say that we have recently taken a big step to improve our marketing efforts. The Delaware Department of Agriculture now has



an Economic Development Cluster. We have hired a new marketing manager to lead the Cluster and increased our marketing staff. He and his team are working hard to maximize existing markets and expand opportunities on the local, national, and international level. In a very short time, they have developed a public awareness initiative, *Grown Fresh with Care in Delaware*. This initiative is designed to increase demand for Delaware grown agricultural products in all sectors. The accompanying logo will identify our products and set us apart from the competition.

When you see this logo, you will know that the products did not travel for days from far away places. The products are picked fresh and ripe at their peak from nearby ground. You will know that you are eating meat, poultry, or farm raised seafood that was grown with care by local Delawareans – people that you know - on farms that you can see, farms that preserve open space, wildlife habitat, and scenic vistas, farms that preserve our heritage and rural culture. I encourage all Delawareans to always ask for locally grown products. By doing this, you will help Delaware's farmers, our economy, and our environment.

As 2007 approaches, the biggest challenge facing Delaware agriculture is development – sprawl and the people that it brings to the country side who are not familiar with modern agricultural practices. In the last 20 years, residential and commercial land use has increased by leaps and bounds while agricultural and forestry land use has declined dramatically. Development pressure on Delaware's natural areas, agricultural lands, and working forests continues at an unprecedented pace. Leapfrog development gobbles up valuable farmland and makes it harder for farmers to operate their businesses, get their products to market, and maintain a cohesive agricultural community that is not at odds with residential development. We need to focus more on public awareness and understanding of agriculture. The best way to address this challenge is to continue to implement Governor Minner's Livable Delaware strategy:

- Direct growth around existing municipalities where we have the infrastructure to support that growth.
- Discourage development outside of the growth areas.

The Department of Agriculture and the agricultural community must strive to help people understand that the "price" of keeping green vistas and open space is to coexist with agriculture by realizing that the noise, dirt, and the odors of the agricultural operations produce the food, shelter, and products that sustain us all.

I want to thank the hundreds of farmers, the agribusinesses, and public agencies, as well as the staff of the Delaware Department of Agriculture, for providing the information collected and organized by the Delaware Agricultural Statistics Service for this publication. A special thanks to Chris Cadwallader, State Agricultural Statistician, and his staff for preparing this publication and providing a cooperative service to Delaware's agricultural community.

Sincerely,

*Michael T. Scuse*

