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Eastern Produce Council Leadership Program Tours Rutgers Snyder Research Farm

The Eastern Produce Council's Leadership Program team received a warm welcome at the Snyder Research & Extension Farm on Tuesday, June 12th in Pittstown, NJ. The group, who is the first to participate in the Leadership Program, spent the day touring the farm, learning about the Rutgers Research and Extension program and honing their leadership and communication skills in an afternoon classroom session.

"The Leadership Program was designed with both classroom and field experience for the participants who are all rather young in their produce careers" EPC Executive Director, Susan McAleavey Sarlund stated. "We wanted to give the group a chance to get real-life, hands-on experience as part of this exceptional program and touring Snyder Farm was the perfect choice for the third component of the program" she continued. The group had previously toured Gloucester Port and Terminal in Gloucester City, NJ, Greenyard Logistics in Swedesboro, NJ, and also attended a FSMA Seminar.

Rutgers Snyder Farm is an extension of the Rutgers University. The property, which consists of 394 acres, was donated to the University by Clifford and Melda Snyder in 1988 following a lifetime of dedication to research, education and civic service from the Snyder's. The Farm responds to the agricultural and environmental needs of local farmers by providing scientific research, public education, and community outreach.

Curtis McKittrick, Head Soils and Plants Technician led the walking tour of over 75 fields and orchards containing experiments and demonstrations addressing a wide variety of agricultural, home, and commercial horticultural issues. The group started with an overview of the grounds including the farm equipment and pest management systems. They tasted the sweetness from a Stevia plant that is part of an experimental trial and continued through the green houses to learn about water and heat management on the farm.

The 15 "students" in the Leadership Program were able to get their hands dirty too. A few of them helped to plant tomato seedlings and all took advantage of a delicious "pick-your-own" strawberry field

that the Research Center provides. Curtis explained they had donated over 190,000 lbs. of fresh produce to the local area food banks last year and some even made its way to Rutgers University for the student body to enjoy!

The tour continued with a wagon ride through the peach, apple and plum orchards, fields of trials such as catnip, hops and hazelnuts and a whole lot of education from farm manager, Ed Dager. Following a nice lunch provided by the team at the Farm, the EPC group participated in an afternoon session in a classroom environment. "Our presenter, Stan Elson had a tough act to follow after our dynamic tour of the farm, but he delivered with an engaging presentation on leadership and communication skills" Sarlund concluded.

The Leadership Group will meet again in September to tour Rutgers Cream Ridge location and conclude their yearlong program at the New York Produce show in December. 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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