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Rutgers Launches Central Jersey *Annie's Project*
National Farm Business Program Helps Women Farmers Succeed

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – Rutgers Cooperative Extension will present the nationally acclaimed farm business educational program for farm women, *Annie's Project*, to women farmers in central New Jersey, starting next month. A seven-week risk management educational program that began in the Midwest and spread throughout the country, *Annie's Project* will be presented in Bridgewater, Somerset County, NJ from November 7 for seven consecutive Monday evenings through December 19. The \$70 registration will cover all the materials for the seven classes, held from 6 to 9 p.m.

Annie's Project is based on a real farm woman, Annette Fleck, who spent her lifetime learning how to be an involved business partner with her farmer husband. The program was created by her daughter, Ruth Hambleton, who became a Cooperative Extension educator in Illinois.

Annie's Project takes Annie's farm management experiences and shares them with farm women living and working in the highly complex business of farming. This seven-week course, tailored to meet the needs of New Jersey women farmers, evolved out of two focus group meetings with female farmers in 2010 and previously held classes in both Sussex and Cape May Counties earlier this year.

According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, women operate 22% of the 10,327 farms in New Jersey. However, the average size of female operated farms is only 29 acres and the average market value of products sold is only \$22,170 annually, compared to the New Jersey farm average of \$95,564. *Annie's Project* will give New Jersey farm women the tools to help them succeed. *Annie's Project* focuses on the five areas of farm risk, including marketing and pricing, production risk, financial

management, human and personal risk, and legal risk. The course will cover a wide range of issues, including personal finance and business management practices, developing marketing plans, farm transfer and estate planning, using social media, advertising and media outreach, production record keeping and food safety issues. Program participants will also use the sessions and networking over the seven week course to assist them in completing a full business plan for their farm.

Annie's Project participants will learn about becoming better risk takers and risk managers in the production, marketing, financial, legal and human resource areas of production. The presenters are from a wide variety of venues, from Rutgers professors to Agricultural professionals. This program is a unique opportunity for women farmers to get their questions answered and the speakers to see first-hand what is of importance to *Annie's Project* attendees.

Previous *Annie's Project NJ* program graduates were also featured in Focus, the Rutgers University website, the Atlantic City Press, the Ocean City Sentinel and also appeared on NJN news.

Interested farm women are invited to review the *Annie's Project New Jersey* information online at <http://aesop.rutgers.edu/~farmmgmt/anniesproject.html>. The 2011 Central Jersey *Annie's Project* program brochure is available online at <http://someset.rce.rutgers.edu/pdfs/2011-Annies-Project.pdf>. Please contact Nick Polanin (Somerset County) at 908-526-6293 x 2535 or <http://events.rutgers.edu/njaes/> for more details.

Funding for *Annie's Project* in New Jersey is provided by the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Farm Credit East and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Cooperating agencies include Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, New Jersey Farm Bureau, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders.

For more information about *Annie's Project*, please visit extension.iastate.edu/Annie/.

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