

Ag Secretary Kicks Off 2000 'Simply Delicious' Produce Season

FINLEYVILLE (Washington Co.) — Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. recently joined fruit and vegetable growers at the Trax Farms Strawberry Festival to kick off the 2000 produce season and launch the "Pennsylvania Produce — Simply Delicious" marketing program.

"It's easy to see why Pennsylvania produce is 'Simply Delicious,'" Hayes said. "From our red ripe tomatoes and succulent sweet corn — to our sweet, juicy peaches and apples — Pennsylvania growers offer a cornucopia of fresh fruits and vegetables that will be showcased under the Ridge Administration's 'Simply

Delicious' marketing program this growing season.

"Gov. Ridge and I are proud of the hard work and dedication of our growers who provide nutritious produce for our consumers. We invite all Pennsylvanians to look for the 'Simply Delicious' logo in your favorite store or farmers market to ensure you buy the highest-quality produce available."

Hayes presented a \$465,500 check to Pennsylvania fruit and vegetable growers, representing the funding for the "Simply Delicious" statewide program this year, including billboards and point-of-purchase materials. A matching grant for \$18,000 to

the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program also was included in the check.

Bob Trax, vice chairman of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Board and former president of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, and other growers accepted the check on behalf of the industry.

This is the fourth year for the popular "Simply Delicious" marketing program. Since 1997, the program has grown to include the participation of more than 200 retailers representing more than 900 stores and more

than 500 growers.

The Pennsylvania "Simply Delicious" logo is designed to increase the consumers' awareness of Pennsylvania's fresh, home-grown fruits and vegetables. The Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association, in cooperation with the Pennsylva-

nia Vegetable Marketing and Research Program, sponsor the "Simply Delicious" program.

For information on participating "Simply Delicious" stores and growers, visit the Department of Agriculture's Website, accessed through the Pennsylvania homepage, www.state.pa.us, or directly at www.pda.state.pa.us.

Farmland Preservation Milestone In Chester County

NOTTINGHAM (Chester Co.) — Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. recently marked the preservation of 10,000 acres of farmland in Chester County.

Hayes presented The Chester County Farmland Preservation Board and farm owners George and Suzanne Lamborn with certificates of recognition for reaching this milestone.

"Chester County was one of the first counties to join Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program," Hayes said. "And earlier this year, Chester County was instrumental in

helping Gov. Ridge reach his goal of preserving 100 farms in 100 days through 'Growing Greener.' Chester County has helped to make it possible for Pennsylvania to preserve farmland at a pace greater than any other state.

"I am proud to be here today to recognize Chester County's outstanding achievement of reaching the 10,000-acre milestone. Chester County has consistently shown exemplary commitment to farmland preservation."

Created in 1989, the Pennsylvania Agricultural Land Preservation Board oversees the state Farmland Preservation Program, which allows the state and counties to purchase development rights, referred to as easements. These easements guarantee that farms will remain as agricultural land. At the Pennsylvania Farm Show on Jan. 8, Gov. Ridge announced his goal of preserving 100 farms in 100 days as part of his "Growing Greener" program. He called the loss of open space and farmland Pennsylvania's biggest environmental challenge in the new century. Gov. Ridge kept his promise and preserved more than 100 farms by Earth Day, April 22.

Gov. Ridge was in Chester County in December to sign the five-year, nearly \$650 million "Growing Greener" program. Pennsylvania's largest-ever investment in its environment.

The Farmland Preservation Program continues to work toward preserving and protecting Pennsylvania's agricultural land for farm families and future generations of Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvania is on the road to becoming the No. 1 state in the nation for the number of acres of farmland preserved. To date, more than 1,300 Pennsylvania farms, totaling more than 162,000 acres of farmland, have been preserved.

For more information, visit the Department of Agriculture's Website through www.state.pa.us or directly at www.pda.state.pa.us.

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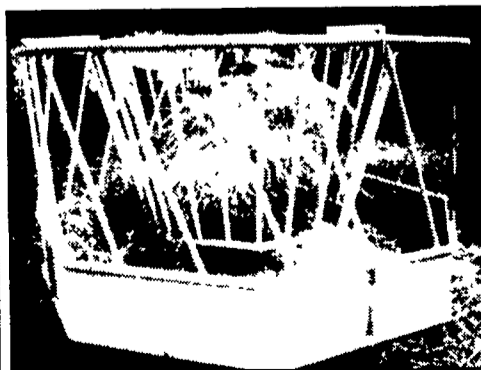
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