



CONTACT:

Pegi Adam, 973-744-6090, pegi@mountsnow.org

Peter Furey, 609-393-7163

pfurey9119@aol.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW JERSEY FARM BUREAU COMMENTS ON PROPOSED DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE 'CUT'

Trenton, NJ (February 21, 2008) –In response to published reports, New Jersey Farm Bureau is calling on Governor Corzine to reconsider any plan to abolish the Department of Agriculture as a budget-cutting move. "We all recognize the need to streamline state government," said NJFB President Richard Nieuwenhuis, "but this goes too far and will dramatically undercut a \$1 billion industry. The NJDA provides vital support services to farmers across the state and its elimination would be a severe blow to farmers across the state."

Nieuwenhuis further explains that the purported savings by the idea of closing the department has been considered by earlier administrations, but each time it was shown that the NJDA is a lean, efficient operation. "The governor wants to grow the economy and this is an agency that is directly involved with the annual growth of cash receipts by our farmers. The Department is custodian of a mission and vision for the preservation of agriculture, and we fear there will be grave consequences if the NJDA is abandoned," Nieuwenhuis said.

Among the services provided by the 260-person NJDA are commodity promotion (Jersey Fresh), animal health inspections, plant disease control (gypsy moth), soil conservation and environmental programs, fertilizer testing, emergency food distribution, farmland preservation, agriculture advocacy and liaison with federal USDA grant funding, and others.

Nieuwenhuis concluded: "I suspect that this proposed action would have only the symbolic value of a cost savings once vital services are salvaged. But that symbol could be a death blow in the attitude of many farmers, who would rightfully wonder whether the state government could demonstrate credible support for their industry."

He called upon the governor and members of the legislature to proceed with steps that achieve fiscal discipline, but not to disproportionately levy cuts to agriculture that could easily cripple and discourage an industry that enjoys widespread popular support with New Jersey's citizenry.

###