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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THIS YEAR'S PUMPKINS ARE BIG, BRIGHT, HEALTHY & PLENTIFUL
Farmers Report 'Best Crops in Years' to New Jersey Farm Bureau**

Trenton, NJ (October 5, 2007) – One of the best seasons in years for New Jersey fruit and vegetable crops continues into autumn, with pumpkins, squash and other fall crops. Farmers polled by New Jersey Farm Bureau are very pleased with these crops, ripening now, projected to be at peak throughout October and well into November. The consensus of growers throughout the state is “one of the best pumpkin crops in many years,” with little or no damage from pests or fungi, good color and size. One farmer boasts several pumpkins weighing more than 100 pounds.

The pumpkin picking season begins in late September and continues through the first frost. New Jersey farmers grow a wide range of sizes and varieties, from the smallest pumpkins and gourds to great big jack-o-lantern types and sell both retail and wholesale, through such auctions as Hightstown. On the retail side, pumpkins are available from pick-your-own farms, farm stands and community farmers markets throughout the state. Some come with faces pre-painted and some farms hold pumpkin decorating days for kids to use their own creativity. Many farms add to the pumpkin- and apple-picking experience by offering hayrides, corn mazes and other activities, falling under the mantle of agri-tourism, which is helping to keep farming viable in the state. According to a new Rutgers University study, agri-tourism generated \$57.5 million in revenue for the state's farmers in 2006, and it continues to grow.

Pumpkins convey the change in season, autumn, and Halloween festivities. “They tend to draw people to our farms, to enjoy fresh air in a rural setting, get into the fields and

pick their own pumpkins and apples and get the last fresh vegetables from the harvest,” says Richard Nieuwenhuis, president of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. “The pumpkins attract the kids and families want their children to make that important connection between what they eat and where their food comes from. The pumpkin season, generally throughout the month of October, allows the farm stands to remain open through Halloween. When people come for the fall activities, they also buy the other produce that's still being picked," he concludes.

The New Jersey Farm Bureau lists approximately 125 farms throughout the state as growing pumpkins, with the majority of farmers growing them to sell at their own stands or community farmers markets, rather than supplying supermarkets. Pick-your-own farms are now in every region, most offering a range of visitor activities, such as hayrides, pumpkin painting, Halloween hauntings, corn mazes, farm animal displays and others. For farm listings and details, check the "Produce Directory" section of the Farm Bureau website.

This year’s auction market for pumpkins is humming, according to Alfred Finocchiaro, manager, Hightstown Cooperative Auction Market. “This crop is amazing -- perfect in size, color, shape and quantity,” he says. “The pumpkin demand seems to grow every year, often making it hard for farmers to gauge how big a crop to plant; that’s where we come in. Those farmers who don’t have enough to meet their retail demands are coming to us.”

The last available U.S. Department of Agriculture’s New Jersey crop summary, from 2004 (the latest available; pumpkins have since been dropped from the summary), 1,800 acres of pumpkins were harvested in 2004, valued at \$3,456,000.00. Most New Jersey pumpkins are purchased for decoration, with quantities for pies. (Pumpkins are native to America and, botanically, members of the squash family.

**A Sampling of Pumpkin Growers from the Farm Bureau Produce Directory
2007 pumpkin crops**

<p>Tradition Farms Inc. 456 County Route 614-Pattensburg Asbury, NJ 08802 Ken Ravenburg (908) 730-8303 <u>Farm Details</u></p>	<p>excellent, best year in years, no fungus, no pests, good size. about 40c pound this year, about same as last year.</p> <p>good year for all produce.</p>
<p>Hunter's Farm and Market 1101 Union Landing Rd Cinnaminson, NJ 08077 John Hunter (856) 829-6834 <u>Farm Details</u></p>	<p>grow enough for school trips, ready for picking around end of September .</p>
<p>Alstede Farms, LLC 84 County Route 513 (Old Route 24) Chester, NJ 07930 Kurt W. Alstede (908) 879-7189 <u>Farm Details</u></p>	<p>great, plentiful crop. ripe for pick-your-own and ready-picked.</p>
<p>Springdale Farms 1638 Springdale Rd Cherry Hill, NJ 08003 Tom Jarvis, John Ebert, Mary Ann Jarvis (856) 424-8674 <u>Farm Details</u></p>	<p>great, plentiful crop. Deer fencing protected them from being eaten.</p>
<p>Giamarese Farms 155 Fresh Pond Rd East Brunswick, NJ 08816 Jim Giamarese (732) 821-9494 <u>Farm Details</u></p>	<p>good year, 20 acres. apples also real good. pricing about late year's rate. most at pick your own. best crop in 5/6 years. harder to grow. pick your own now.</p>
<p>Ashley Farms 25 Hillside Ave Flanders, NJ 07836 Larry Ashley (973) 584-7578 <u>Farm Details</u></p>	<p>look good. at least as many as last year.</p>
<p>Schaefer Farms 1051 County Road 523 Flemington, NJ 08822 Chris Schaefer, Jr. (908) 788-5907</p>	<p>great crop. other area farmers saying same thing. best crop in years.</p>

<u>Farm Details</u>	
Myers Farms 425 Route 47 North Goshen, NJ 0821804 James Myers (609) 465-8777 <u>Farm Details</u>	<p>best year ever. used well water through drip tape to irrigate. no rain for 7 weeks, which he liked, then he could control his irrigation. has few 100 lb + prize pumpkins. picking now through end of Oct.</p> <p>Other farmers in Cape May County also report best ever pumpkin crops.</p>
<u>Wholesale only</u> Sunny Ridge Farm- 47 Hampton Heights Road Lafayette, NJ 07848 Charlotte Dietrich (973) 383-8707 <u>Farm Details</u>	<p>didn't plant many this year. but ones she planted are great, ready a bit early this year.</p>
Les Guiles Walnut Grove organic farm Newton 973-383-5029	<p>Didn't plant as many pumpkins this year as last, but those planted are the best ever.</p>

For further information, contact the New Jersey Farm Bureau, at The Farmhouse, 168 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608. Phone 609-393-7163; fax 609-393-7072; email mail@njfb.org; website www.njfb.org

For information on the Hightstown Cooperative Auction Market, call 609-448-0193. website www.hightstownauction.com/main.htm

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a non-profit member organization of 15,000 farmers and farm-related entities within the Garden State. It is the only organization solely dedicated to representing the grass- roots interests and directives of its members in educating all levels of government and the public on the farm community's policies and positions. The Farm Bureau also takes a lead in seeking out initiatives, activities and ventures to enhance the profitability of producer members and ensure the viability of agriculture in New Jersey -- *the Garden State for Good Reason -- our farms.*

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