INTRODUCTION

New Jersey is an extremely unique state with very intense agricultural production systems, among an extremely diverse and concentrated population. The U.S. Census Bureau reports the population of New Jersey to be 8,944,469 in 2016, making the State the most densely populated in the Nation with 1,210 persons per square mile. In addition, more than 1 in 4 New Jerseyans identify as either Latino or Asian. The U.S. census data also reveals that 21.7% of persons living in New Jersey are foreign born. Moreover, according to the American Immigration Council, in 2014 the purchasing power of New Jersey’s Latino and Asian populations was $46 billion and $46.3 billion respectively. Besides cultural diversity, New Jerseyans also earn some of the highest per capita incomes in the nation. It is an obvious strategy to market directly to consumers in a state that is the most densely populated in the U.S., with high diversity and wealth, and with farmers who recognize there are opportunities to market ethnic specialty crops for a price premium in the state. It is not so obvious, however, to a vast majority of farmers or agricultural service providers, about where specifically to market and what crops to grow for this extremely diverse population.

An educational program and on-line resources were developed by a team at Rutgers Cooperative Extension to identify demographic areas in the State of New Jersey where demands of specialty crops would be in high demand due to ethnic food preferences. The goal was to teach agricultural service providers and Extension personnel how to use population demographics information and market analysis strategies to improve education for farmers. In addition, identifying specialty and ethnic crops for farmers to grow in New Jersey was important. Therefore, the “World Crops” website was incorporated as a partnering tool for the demographics website. The World Crops website was established to provide information on sustainable production practices for farmers to grow vegetables that were popular among the large and growing immigrant populations in the Northeastern U.S.

http://sare.rutgers.edu/market-research.html

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Information taught and provided on-line, identified expanded locations for farm products to be marketed based on population demographic information about ethnic population concentrations, in specific areas of the state, and listed retail markets established for selling local farm products. Agricultural service providers and Extension personnel now have tools to assist farmers in finding new markets for specialty crops. Both farmers and customers benefit from having locally-grown specialty produce.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

• This development of this educational program was funded by a 3-year Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Educational Program grant for professional development (Award Number SNE 19-09-33242).
• Thank you to Thomas Beaver, former Director of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Marketing Division for providing community farmers market information.