

New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program Handbook



**A Guide for Farmers,
Neighbors, and Municipalities**

N.J. State Agriculture Development Committee

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Introduction to mediation

Across the nation, there are more than 35 states with agricultural mediation programs. In New Jersey, the Agricultural Mediation Program is coordinated by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC).

The SADC is the state agency in New Jersey that also administers the state's Farmland Preservation, Right to Farm, and Farm Link Programs. The SADC has coordinated the Agricultural Mediation Program since 2000, serving as the state's mediation service provider for farmers and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies regarding USDA issues, and for farmers, neighbors, and municipalities regarding Right to Farm issues. The program may also be used by farmers and private lenders to help resolve agricultural credit issues.

The goal of the New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program is to help farmers and others resolve agriculture-related disputes quickly, amicably, and in a cost-effective manner.

How mediation works

Mediation is a voluntary process in which a trained, impartial, and certified mediator helps disputing parties examine their issues, identify and consider options, and determine if they can agree on a solution. In this way, the mediator serves as a facilitator and helps the parties narrow their issues and look for solutions. Because the mediator has no decision-making authority, successful mediation is based on the voluntary cooperation of all the parties.

The SADC maintains a roster of certified mediators. Once each party in a dispute agrees to try mediation, the Program assigns a mediator to the case and schedules a mediation session at a time and place convenient for all the parties. In most cases, the Program will try to reserve a meeting room at the local Rutgers Cooperative Extension county office. When the mediation session concludes, the mediator describes in writing any agreements that the parties have reached, and then the parties sign the agreement and receive a copy.

Mediation is provided as a free service to all participants, with the SADC paying the cost for the independent mediator. Each mediation session is confidential, and the process generally takes only a meeting or two to complete.



Mediation benefits

One of the foremost benefits of mediation is that it can save farmers and others significant time and legal fees. Mediation exists as an alternative to the longer federal appeals process for USDA program disputes and the sometimes lengthy public hearing process for Right to Farm disputes.

Mediation also allows the parties in a dispute to retain control over the shaping of a matter’s outcome, rather than letting a third-party, e.g., the County Agriculture Development Board or SADC in Right to Farm cases, decide the issue. Mediation enables the parties to also express their different or mutual points of view, correct misinformation and misunderstandings, narrow the issues at hand, and maintain relationships.

Using mediation to help resolve your dispute

The program’s roster of trained mediators is available to help resolve three main types of disputes – those involving USDA, Right to Farm, and agricultural credit issues:

<p>USDA Program Disputes</p>	<p>Issues between USDA clients and USDA agencies in New Jersey, e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural credit and other farm program issues with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) • Farm conservation program issues with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) • Other issues with USDA agencies and programs (e.g., with Rural Development or the Risk Management Agency)
<p>Right to Farm Disputes</p>	<p>Issues between farmers and neighbors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints or concerns a neighbor has about a farmer’s agricultural management practices <p>Issues between farmers and municipalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints or concerns a municipality has about a farmer’s agricultural management practices
<p>Agricultural Credit Disputes</p>	<p>Issues between farmers and private lenders or creditors</p>

The New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program occasionally has been used to also help resolve general agriculture-related disputes, such as those that may be outside the scope of the Right to Farm Act but still involve farm operations or impact agricultural practices. Overall, all mediations must fit within the scope of the Program’s regulations (N.J.A.C. 2:76-18). If a mediation session involves a preserved farm, any mediation agreements reached must also be consistent with the farm’s farmland preservation deed of easement.

The mediation process regarding USDA program issues

There are many types of USDA services and programs for which farmers may apply. Farmers might apply to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) for a direct operating loan for a farm business, for instance, or to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for a cost-share contract to implement a farm conservation practice. If a farmer's application is denied, or if USDA issues an adverse determination regarding any matter, a farmer has the option of requesting mediation and/or pursuing additional USDA appeal procedures.

When an adverse determination is made, the USDA agency will inform the farmer of its decision and send a formal letter describing the decision. This letter also will include a description of the farmer's appeal options for seeking to have the decision modified. Each USDA agency has its own regulations, so these options may be slightly different depending on whether the decision was made by FSA, NRCS, or another USDA agency, and based on the program involved.

With FSA loan programs, the following three appeal options are typically provided:

- 1) Requesting reconsideration with the FSA decision-maker
- 2) Requesting mediation with the FSA decision-maker
- 3) Appealing the determination to USDA's National Appeals Division

With NRCS Final Technical Determinations or Program Decisions, similar options as well as an additional local appeal option are typically provided: 1) Reconsideration with the NRCS State Conservationist, 2) Appeal to the FSA County Committee (for certain programs), 3) Mediation with the NRCS decision-maker, and 4) Appeal to USDA's National Appeals Division.

Reconsideration and mediation are somewhat similar, as both involve the farmer and a USDA decision-maker coming together to meet and discuss the matter further. The primary difference is that with mediation, the parties have agreed to use an independent, third-party mediator to help guide the discussion. Also important to remember is that mediation is not arbitration. The mediator is not a judge and does not have decision-making authority, but is rather a skilled facilitator whose job is to help the parties review new information, consider the relevant facts (such as any limitations USDA may have under its regulations), and discuss potential solutions.

Remember that each case is unique and it is the farmer's responsibility to read and understand the adverse determination letter sent by USDA. A farmer's appeal rights may be different depending on the USDA agency and program involved. Some FSA matters, for instance, may also be appealed to the FSA State Technical Director. Review the letter, including the appeals and mediation information, to ensure you are following the appropriate process for your specific case.

Whether a farmer pursues reconsideration or mediation (or sometimes both, one after the other), both options are designed to give farmers the opportunity to present additional information that they or their representatives believe could lead to the USDA agency modifying its initial determination. Whether or not the determination is modified, additional ideas and solutions are often discussed during a reconsideration meeting or a mediation session. There is no cost for either reconsideration or mediation.

It is important to note the order in which a farmer may request and use his or her reconsideration, mediation, and appeal options. A farmer may utilize all of the options, but only one at a time and in the order listed on the opposite page. In an FSA loan case, for instance, a direct appeal to the USDA National Appeals Division means you can no longer use reconsideration or mediation. Likewise, starting with mediation means you have bypassed the reconsideration option.

When considering mediation after having received an adverse determination letter from USDA, keep in mind how the appeals timeframe works. A farmer typically has 30 calendar days from receiving the letter to submit a formal appeal to USDA's National Appeals Division. This 30-day clock stops when you request mediation, however. When the mediation process ends, the clock then starts again from where it had stopped. For instance, if a farmer requested mediation 20 days after receiving an adverse determination letter, the appeal clock would stop at that point, and it would remain stopped while the mediation session was arranged and held. If the mediation session did not resolve all of the issues, and the farmer then wanted to appeal to USDA's National Appeals Division, the farmer would still have 10 days left to submit the appeal.

Regarding appeals to the USDA National Appeals Division (NAD), the process begins when a farmer sends a signed, written appeal letter to NAD. A hearing officer from NAD's regional office is then assigned to the case, and the hearing officer holds a pre-hearing conference call to set up a date, time, and local place for the hearing. NAD typically schedules the hearing within 45 days of receiving the appeal and usually issues a final decision within 30 days of the hearing.



The mediation process regarding Right to Farm issues

Many farmers have good relationships with their neighbors and towns, but issues still arise at times and need to be resolved. In New Jersey, the two main avenues for resolving Right to Farm issues, i.e., complaints or concerns that neighbors or towns have about a farm's operation, are 1) the formal complaint process outlined in the Right to Farm Act, and 2) the informal mediation process available through the Agricultural Mediation Program.

Signed into law in January 1983, the Right to Farm Act is designed to protect responsible commercial farms from nuisance suits and overly restrictive local regulations. The Act states that in the event of a dispute, a neighbor or municipality aggrieved by the operation of a commercial farm must file a complaint with the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB), or the SADC in counties where no CADB exists, prior to filing an action in court. The act of filing a formal complaint with the CADB triggers a formal public hearing and review process that involves the CADB and in some cases also the SADC. Depending on the nature of the case and whether the CADB and/or SADC's final decisions are appealed, this formal process could last for an extended period of time.

As an alternative to this potentially lengthy process, mediation is available to help farmers, neighbors, and towns resolve their issues more quickly. Parties who are interested in mediation are encouraged to request mediation early on, i.e., before any formal public hearings have begun or even before a formal complaint has been filed. In this way, the parties are still able to discuss ideas and create their own solutions. The informal setting made possible by mediation also enables participants to more freely express their concerns, address any misunderstandings, and maintain or foster better relationships.

After one party has requested mediation by sending in a mediation request form, Program staff will reach out to the other party to see if he or she is also interested in trying mediation. Once staff has received each party's mediation request form, a mediation session is scheduled at a time and place convenient for everyone. Most Right to Farm-related mediations have involved a single mediation session, but additional or follow-up sessions also may be scheduled depending on the nature of the issues and the parties' interests.

Many types of Right to Farm issues have been mediated through the Agricultural Mediation Program, e.g., issues related to farm markets, signs, farm buildings, equipment storage, equine activities, water runoff, manure management, flies, odors, fencing, and dust.

How to request mediation

The process for requesting mediation is easy. Whether you are interested in using mediation for a USDA, Right to Farm, agricultural credit, or other issue, the process involves completing a short, two-page mediation request form and sending it in to the New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program.

The Program has several versions of the request form for the different types of issues that may be mediated. The forms are available online at www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/agmediation/. Each form has the same basic sections where you: list the person(s) with whom you have a dispute and are requesting mediation; briefly describe the situation; and list any other individuals you would like to include in the mediation, e.g., any agricultural experts, a spouse, an employee, an attorney, or someone else. If you are requesting mediation regarding a USDA issue, also make sure to include a copy of the USDA adverse determination letter (including any attachments) when sending in your mediation request form.

The Agricultural Mediation Program will provide a copy of your completed request form to the other party as well as to the mediator, as a part of the mediator's packet of background information on the case.



Mediation success stories

In New Jersey, the Agricultural Mediation Program has been used by farmers, neighbors, municipalities, and USDA agencies to help resolve a variety of issues. Provided here are several mediation success stories to show how the mediation program has been used over time and how mediation may be of assistance. In keeping with the confidential nature of mediation, names, locations, and any other identifying information have been changed. The topics mediated and the issues addressed in the profiles, however, are real.



Discussing a Loan Denial and Considering More Options: ***Mediation Between a Farmer and the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)***

To help with the farm's operating expenses, make repairs to a few farm buildings, and restructure the farm's debt, Matt Bauer had applied to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) for a Direct Operating Loan and a Direct Farm Ownership Loan. Matt was informed by FSA shortly thereafter, however, that his application had been denied. In the adverse determination letter that FSA sent to Matt, the agency explained the reasons for the denial and outlined Matt's appeal options. FSA described how, according to its handbook guidelines, Matt did not qualify for the loan programs because his farm's business plan, credit history, and debt load were not satisfactory. The FSA letter then listed Matt's three appeal options: reconsideration, mediation, and appeal.

Matt decided to try reconsideration first. When FSA's decision remained unchanged following his reconsideration meeting, he then requested mediation. During the mediation session that followed, Matt and the FSA decision-maker discussed the matter again, but this time in further detail and using the guided mediation format, with a trained mediator serving as a neutral facilitator. As a result of the mediation session, the parties accomplished the following: Matt gained a greater understanding of FSA's regulations and how FSA is sometimes limited in its ability to modify its decisions; FSA listened as Matt presented new information regarding his farm's plans for the coming year, and what he felt were discrepancies between how he and FSA viewed his farm's business plan, financial records, and outlook; and the parties identified what additional information might be helpful and agreed on a course of action.

The parties realized during the mediation session that Matt's greatest obstacles to satisfying FSA's loan program requirements were the farm's credit history and current debt load. If the farm could reduce its debt burden and show its ability to repay its debt, FSA could look again at the original loan denial and consider changing its decision. The parties agreed that Matt would need to document how the farm was reducing its debt and provide FSA with a budget report within a few weeks of the mediation session. If the documentation was deemed sufficient, FSA could possibly modify its decision. Otherwise, as a second option, the parties agreed that Matt could submit a new application at any time. The new application could be similar to the original one, or it could be for a different purpose or different amount. To be approved, the new application would likewise need to be accompanied by sufficient supporting documents.

Implementing Conservation Practices and Addressing Contract Issues: Mediation Between a Farmer and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Kathy and Brian Dempsey were looking to implement conservation practices on their livestock farm, and they applied to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for technical and cost-share assistance. In particular, they were interested in improving animal waste management and addressing soil erosion concerns. These areas fit well with NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program, and the Dempseys' applications for the programs were accepted. An NRCS conservation planner visited the farm and, working with the Dempseys, developed a farm conservation plan and a contract and timeline for implementing the practices. The practices were to be completed over three years and included the following: constructing a manure storage facility, starting a nutrient management plan, and installing filter strips, a berm, and cover crops. With cost-share funding approved, the contract signed, and NRCS having completed the engineering and design work for the practices, the project was ready to begin.

The Dempseys began work on the project, but then hardships caused by extreme weather and the illness and death of a family member prevented them from making progress. Two and a half years into the contract, they received a notice of non-compliance from NRCS. Shortly thereafter, they received an official contract termination letter. This adverse determination letter explained that pursuant to the EQIP and AMA program regulations, NRCS would be retaining the money that had been allocated but not spent. NRCS also assessed the Dempseys a recovery cost of several thousand dollars for the substantial engineering assistance that NRCS had provided. After considering the options outlined in the letter – reconsideration, local appeal, mediation, and appeal to the National Appeals Division – the Dempseys decided to try mediation.

At the mediation session, the Dempseys were able to explain in more detail the circumstances that had impeded their progress, and they noted how they had successfully completed other NRCS projects in the past. NRCS valued the feedback, and the Dempseys likewise appreciated NRCS' explanation of how the agency was limited by its regulations and was prevented from reinstating the contracts and funding tied to them. With this foundation established and the mediator continuing to guide the discussion, the parties found a workable solution. NRCS could not reinstate the old contract, but in consideration of the Dempseys' performance on their other past projects, i.e., always performing the work on time, the Dempseys could apply for a new contract using current year funds. NRCS agreed to rescind the recovery cost assessment, should the new application be accepted, and the Dempseys agreed to work more closely with NRCS on any future contract implementation details.

Discussing Farm Market Concerns and Finding a Solution: ***Mediation Between a Farmer and a Municipality***

At the beginning of the summer, the municipality's zoning director requested mediation with Ron Jones regarding the operation of Mr. Jones' farm market. The township felt that over time, Mr. Jones had expanded his market beyond what was permitted by the township's ordinances and beyond what Mr. Jones had informally discussed with the township in the past.

The township's position was that Mr. Jones could sell only his own vegetables and livestock products from the market, i.e., just those products he was producing himself on the farm. The township said that because he was now offering additional products not his own, he needed a use variance as well as site plan approval for the expanded retail use. Township officials said he also needed a health department food permit to continue selling ancillary food items and that he might need septic, kitchen, and restroom facilities to satisfy public health and safety concerns. Although Mr. Jones felt that his farm market operation fell within the scope of the Right to Farm Act – the Act, for instance, has a definition of “farm market” that allows for additional products to be sold – he wanted to see if the issues could be worked out informally, and he agreed to participate in mediation. With both parties having requested mediation, a mediation session was then scheduled and held.

Because of the parties' willingness to meet and start a dialogue, the mediation session was productive. Also helpful was the fact that the mediator and one of the mediation's participants (an agricultural resource expert) were familiar with how the Right to Farm Act works. As a result of the mediation, the parties improved their understanding of each other's concerns and agreed on a path to follow. They first agreed that the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) would assess whether the farm and farm market qualified for protection under the Act. If they did qualify, Mr. Jones could have the CADB review his operation, but if they did not, he would need to work



directly with the township regarding use variance and site plan topics. Mr. Jones also agreed to apply for any necessary local and county permits that didn't fall within the scope of the Right to Farm Act, such as those related to food handling issues and Uniform Construction Code building uses. The township agreed to make its staff, including code enforcement officials, available to Mr. Jones for consultation regarding these permits, and the parties also acknowledged the availability of the mediation program for use again in the future, if necessary.

Installing Deer Fencing and Addressing a Neighbor's Concerns: Mediation Between a Farmer and a Neighbor

Kristen and Tim Davis were longtime residential neighbors of Valley Farms and had always had a cordial relationship with the farm's owners, Lily and Robert Smith. The Davises loved the rural setting – they had purchased their house adjacent to the farm's open fields and appreciated the view – and they would often buy produce from the Smiths' farm stand nearby. The Smiths, meanwhile, had made an effort to get to know all of their neighbors, including the Davises.

In the spring one year, the Smiths, in response to recent deer damage to their vegetable crops, began to install deer fencing along the farm's borders. These borders included a few sides of the Davises' yard. Concerned that the fence would be fully completed before they could speak with the Smiths, the Davises sent an email to the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) describing their concerns. They didn't question the Smiths' right to farm or right to have the fence, but they did question the Smiths installing the fence without first letting them know and consulting with them. They were also concerned about the look of the fence. From the Smiths' perspective, they did not think they were doing anything wrong and felt the Right to Farm Act could support them if necessary. The CADB administrator suggested the parties use the Agricultural Mediation Program to resolve the issues. The farm and the neighbors agreed to try mediation, and a mediation session was scheduled.

During the mediation session, the parties discussed the situation and were able, with the help of the mediator, to express their different points of view and interests. In the end, the parties reached the following agreement: The Smiths would continue with the installation of the deer fence as planned, and in order to make it more aesthetically pleasing to the Davises, they would plant a row of arborvitaes along their shared fence-line border in accordance with the Davises' wishes.

This solution involved a small additional cost for the Smiths that may have been beyond what was necessary under the formal Right to Farm Act process, but it helped them maintain the relationship. It would also save them time and money later by preventing conflicts in the future. For the neighbors, the addition of the arborvitaes was appreciated, but even more appreciated was that the farmer made time to meet with them and listen to their concerns.



Discussing and Addressing Water Runoff Concerns: ***Mediation Between a Farmer and a Neighbor***

Dan Morgan had lived next to Pinnacle Nursery Farm for 15 years. Since his property was in a relative low spot, he always got a little water in his yard when it would rain, presumably from water running off the farm and from other nearby properties. Lately, however, Dan seemed to be getting more water, and now his basement was starting to flood. The time and expense involved with reseeding his yard and now also cleaning sediment out of his basement was beginning to wear on him, and he was concerned his septic system would be flooded out next. Not sure how to approach the farm's owner, Amanda Williams, who he felt should be doing more to control the runoff, Dan filed a formal Right to Farm complaint with the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB). The CADB recommended mediation as a first step to get the parties talking, and Dan and Amanda agreed to give the mediation program a try.

At the mediation session, the parties were able to talk about their different points of view and respond with additional information. With the mediator facilitating, Dan first explained how he felt the volume of runoff had increased after the farm had added more ground cover in the form of more temporary hoopouses. He also thought that the farm's irrigation tailwater recovery system, which the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had designed, wasn't drawn up properly and was now directing the overflow water onto his property. In turn, Amanda explained that she was following a farm conservation plan and said that the irrigation system, including the accompanying retention basin, had been designed and implemented properly. Amanda had invited an NRCS resource person to the mediation session, and the resource person confirmed that NRCS had designed the system according to its Field Office Technical Guide engineering standards. The NRCS person added that the increased runoff might have been the result of recent 100-year storm events that had taken place at the same time, and he also said that NRCS could review the matter further and possibly suggest additional ideas.

Building on their open discussion as well as the resources and technical information provided by NRCS, the parties were able to reach an agreement. They agreed to have NRCS do an internal review of the original irrigation water recovery project to see if any changes could be recommended to reduce runoff. From the neighbor's point of view, this seemed like a good option, as it could lead to improvements more quickly than by pursuing the formal Right to Farm complaint process. Dan knew he could also restart the complaint process later if need be. From the farmer's point of view, it also seemed like a good option. NRCS might make some additional suggestions, or it might not. Either way, Amanda trusted NRCS's work and expected NRCS's recommendations to be reasonable.

Additional information and resources

Being familiar with the agricultural resource landscape in New Jersey – the Agricultural Mediation Program, USDA agencies, and other in-state agricultural organizations – may be helpful in the event of an agriculture-related conflict or issue. See below for brief information on these resources.

New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program

The New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program is designed to help farmers and others resolve agriculture-related disputes quickly, amicably, and in a cost-effective manner. Coordinated by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), the program serves as the State’s mediation service provider regarding USDA, Right to Farm, and agricultural credit issues. Additional information, including fact sheets and the program’s regulations, are available online. The program uses the following basic forms:

- ❖ Mediation Request form (completed by the farmer and the other party to initially request mediation)
- ❖ Agreement to Mediate form (completed by the participants prior to the mediation session; it describes the basic guidelines that the participants in the mediation session agree to follow)
- ❖ Post-Mediation Agreement form (completed by the mediator, who writes up any agreements the parties make, and then signed by the parties)

Mediation is provided free of charge. The New Jersey Agricultural Mediation Program receives a cost-share grant from USDA to help cover the program’s administrative costs for mediation work related to USDA and agricultural credit issues.

www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/agmediation/

USDA Agencies in New Jersey

When USDA issues an adverse determination to a farmer and the determination is appealable, USDA is required to offer mediation as one of the farmer’s “appeal rights” options. The USDA agencies in New Jersey most often involved in mediation sessions include the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD). Risk Management Agency (RMA) policy also allows for mediation between farmers and private, approved insurance providers. See below for a link to USDA’s Agricultural Mediation Program Fact Sheet and the next page for more information on FSA, NRCS, RD, and RMA. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/ag_mediation_program.pdf – USDA Mediation Fact Sheet

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) coordinates a number of loan, conservation, and other programs to help new and established farmers. Some of FSA's farm loan programs provide farm-ownership, direct-operating, guaranteed, and emergency loans. A portion of the loan funds for these FSA programs is available specifically for minority, women, and/or beginning farmer applicants. The FSA New Jersey State Office is located in Hamilton Square, and FSA has a network of six regional service centers around the state.

www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=nj&area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing – FSA home page, with State and County office contact information

www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/fsa_br_01_web_booklet.pdf – FSA Loan Programs

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides assistance to farmers and landowners regarding the conservation and management of their soil, water, and other natural resources. This technical assistance is tailored to each customer's specific needs, is science-based, and typically includes the development of a farm conservation plan for the farmer or landowner. Financial assistance may also be available for the implementation of conservation practices. The NRCS New Jersey State Office is located in Somerset, and NRCS has a network of six regional service centers (colocated with FSA's centers) and three special project offices.

www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/ – NRCS home page

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/alphabetical/camr/?cid=nrcs143_008442? – NRCS Mediation Fact Sheet

Rural Development

Rural Development (RD) provides assistance to farmers, businesses, communities, and other individuals to help improve the economy and quality of life in rural areas. This includes technical assistance to help farmers and cooperatives get started and improve their operations; assistance and grants to communities for development projects; loans to businesses and others for projects that create jobs and focus on specific topics, like energy; and rural housing loans to help individuals afford homes. The RD State Office is located in Mt. Laurel, and there are four RD area offices statewide.

www.rurdev.usda.gov/NJHome.html – RD home page

www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/adr/auth.html – RD Mediation Fact Sheet

Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) operates the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation to help make crop insurance available. Private insurance companies, following RMA rules, sell policies directly to farmers. In the event of a dispute, farmers may request mediation with the private companies.

www.rma.usda.gov/ – RMA home page

www.rma.usda.gov/regs/mediation.html – RMA Mediation Fact Sheet

State Agriculture Development Committee

The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) is the State agency that leads in the preservation of New Jersey's farmland and works to help maintain a viable agricultural industry in New Jersey. The SADC coordinates the Farmland Preservation, Right to Farm, and Agricultural Mediation Programs in collaboration with local County Agriculture Development Boards. The SADC also coordinates the Farm Link Program.

www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/

County Agriculture Development Boards

County Agriculture Development Boards (CADBs) are the county government entities that are the SADC's primary local partners in the Farmland Preservation, Right to Farm, and Agricultural Mediation Programs. For Right to Farm (RTF) questions and issues, the CADB is the primary local contact for landowners, farmers, residents, and municipal officials. In the event of a RTF issue or dispute, a CADB might encourage the parties to try the Agricultural Mediation Program as a quicker and more amicable alternative to the formal RTF complaint process.

www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/farmpreserve/contacts/cadbs.html

New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

The New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) is the agricultural research and outreach arm of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJAES operates as Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) at the local level, with RCE county offices staffed by agricultural agents and agricultural specialists who can provide information and consultation on a variety of agricultural and natural resource topics. Farmers, neighbors, municipalities, and others often contact their RCE county office to speak with their county agricultural agent regarding agriculture-related questions. In the event of a dispute, county agricultural agents will in some cases try to help the parties resolve their issues informally, prior to mediation. In other cases, when mediation is requested, one or more of the parties might invite their county agricultural agent to participate in the mediation session to serve as an agricultural resource expert and help make recommendations.

www.njaes.rutgers.edu/ – NJAES home page

www.njaes.rutgers.edu/county/ – Contact information for RCE county offices

County Boards of Agriculture

County Boards of Agriculture are local, non-government affiliated organizations comprised primarily of farmers that typically meet monthly to discuss agricultural issues of local interest and to filter agricultural policy positions up to the State Board of Agriculture and New Jersey Farm Bureau. Farmers can visit a County Board of Agriculture’s monthly meeting to discuss issues they may be having and to obtain feedback and support. For more information on when a local board meets, contact your Rutgers Cooperative Extension county agricultural agent or New Jersey Farm Bureau, or see the contact information in the linked directory below.

www.nj.gov/agriculture/pdf/dirbook.pdf

New Jersey Department of Agriculture

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) promotes and protects the state’s agricultural industry. It is responsible for a variety of agricultural product, farm regulatory, plant and animal health, and food assistance programs. NJDA’s website has a general reference page, “Topics A to Z,” that farmers and others may find helpful when looking for more information on agriculture in New Jersey.

www.nj.gov/agriculture/





State Agriculture Development Committee

www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/

Chris Christie
Governor

Kim Guadagno
Lt. Governor

Douglas H. Fisher
Secretary of Agriculture

Notes



Notes

