Agriculture: A Vision & State of the Industry in Kent County and Beyond

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Delaware Agriculture

- Bragging Rights
  - Over 2,500 farms in Delaware
  - Almost 40% of land is farmland
  - Over $1 billion in farm sales
  - $8 billion in economic activity

Delaware Agriculture

- Ranked 1st in U.S. in value of production per acre
- Ranked 1st in U.S. for acres of lima beans harvested
- Sussex county is #1 broiler producing county in the U.S.

Delaware Agriculture

- **Cultural**
  - Traditions celebrated and respected
  - Not just a business – a way of life
  - Preserving farmland – 110,000+ acres are permanently preserved

- **Educational**
  - The need for agricultural knowledge led to land-grant University of Delaware & Delaware State University
  - Cooperative extension bridges University research with farmers in the fields
Kent County Agriculture

- Within 8 hours of 70 million people
- Over 50% of farmland is permanently preserved
- Cannot separate from other counties and states: Part of an integrated agricultural economy
- Relies on markets determined in other counties and states
Kent County Agriculture

- 825 farms
- 46% of county is farm land
- $188 million in farm sales
- 366 in Nation out of 3,076, or in the top 1% of all U.S. Counties

Source: 2007 Census of Ag
Kent County Agriculture

- Corn, Soybeans, Wheat
- Vegetables
  - Fresh
  - Processing – Hanover Foods, Clayton
  - West Farms, Milford; Schiff Farms, Harrington
- Poultry – Perdue Farms, Milford
- Dairy
- Nursery/Greenhouse, Turf
## Kent County Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Farms</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Acres</td>
<td>185,329</td>
<td>173,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average size of farm</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm sales</td>
<td>$128,675</td>
<td>$188,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>55 years</td>
<td>53.4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2007 Census of Ag
Vision of Agriculture

- Profitability, profitability, profitability
  - Sustainability
  - Viability
  - The Next Generation

- Competitive Advantage
Canned & Frozen Vegetable Industry
The Rise & Fall of an Industry
A Case Study
Processors in Delaware

- **1919 – 103 Processors**

- **1927 – 71 Processors**
  - 8 in New Castle County
  - 27 in Kent County
  - 36 in Sussex County

- **1960 – 29 Processors**
  - 2 in New Castle County
  - 11 in Kent County
  - 16 in Sussex County

- **2013 – 3 Processors**
  - PictSweet
  - J.G. Townsends
  - Hanover Foods
What Happened?

- **California**
  - 95% of processed tomatoes in the U.S.
  - DE, MD and NJ led that statistic until 1954
  - California concentrated its ag research & technology
  - Produce 30 tons/acre in 1975; Delmarva
    - 20 tons/acre
What Happened

- Regulations
  - “All of a sudden, what had been the lifeblood of the community became an eyesore.”
    - Sylvia Jarboe Gannon, Easton/St. Michaels, Harrison-Jarboe Canning Company

- No succession plans for next generation

- Hesitancy for companies to invest in upgrades due to regulations and cost of business in Mid-Atlantic region
Threats Today

- Farmland resources & costs
- Maintaining water resources for irrigation
- Attracting young people to agriculture and the food industry
- Regulation costs
  - Environmental
  - Transportation
Initiatives

- Help enhance existing ag businesses
  - Processors/Grain & Vegetable Markets
  - Supply Side
- Farmland preservation
- Attract the next generation of farmers
- Identify and attract new ag businesses
- Discussion on water resources & environmental management
Success Stories

- Allen-Harim purchase of the Vlasic plant
- Delaware Farmland Preservation Program – 110,000 acres or almost 24% of farm land is permanently preserved
Success Stories

- Delaware’s Young Farmers Program – financed 22 farms totaling 1,200 acres
- Delaware Farmers’ Markets had record sales of $2 million in 2012
- Agritourism & value-add industry growing
- Delaware Rural Irrigation Program (DRIP) – about 2,400 additional acres
Thanks!

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