

# Philadelphia market important to New Jersey produce

By TAD THOMPSON

The Philadelphia Regional Produce Center "is one of the largest buying organizations when it comes to New Jersey produce," said Al Murray, New Jersey's assistant secretary of agriculture.

For this reason, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus every year "pays a visit to the Philadelphia produce market," said Mr. Murray. For 2008, Messrs. Kuperus and Murray made this annual pilgrimage Aug. 20.

The secretary "likes to tour the market each year and personally thank the market and the operators at the market for their support," Mr. Murray told *The Produce News*, adding that Chuck Zambito of Zambito Produce Sales in Woodbury, NJ, "sets up the visit."

Such an excursion "is the opportunity to see where New Jersey produce is sold on the wholesale level," said Mr. Murray. "We have a great reputation there, so we are proud they enjoy handling New Jersey produce." After a walking tour of the market, "we all go up in a conference room, and it is a round-robin informal meeting."

This year there was "a lot of discussion of the new Philadelphia market," he continued. "We saw the plans, and it was all very, very exciting. Obviously, it's a state-of-the-art facility that looks wonderful. It's all enclosed, which has a lot to do with preserving the cold chain, and keeping it enclosed will help with food-safety issues. There are also opportunities for a separate farmers market there. While the market may have stayed in Philadelphia" — the state of New Jersey tried to woo the market into the Garden State — "there are still opportunities for our farmers. We are excited for them. We know they've had a long and arduous journey. We think the new facility will be a very important force for years to come."

Overall, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's call on the Philadelphia market "is a good public relations sort of tour," said Mr. Murray. "We like to go there in season and see how it's coming and hear the concerns of the operators. All in all, it's a very nice way to spend an early morning."



Chuck Zambito of Zambito Produce Sales Inc., Michael Lombardo of Pinto Bros. and New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus.



New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus with Buddy Lombardo of Pinto Bros. and John Lerro of M&C Produce Co. Inc.



Richard Nardella of Nardella Inc. with Charles Kuperus, New Jersey's secretary of agriculture.



New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus, flanked by Michael Lombardo and Buddy Lombardo of Pinto Bros.



Joe Procacci of Procacci Bros. Sales Corp. with Charles Kuperus, New Jersey's secretary of agriculture.



Chuck Zambito of Zamibito Produce Sales Inc.; New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles Kuperus; Jim Storey of Quaker City Produce Co.; and Al Murray of the New Jersey Department of Agriculture.



Charles Kuperus, New Jersey's secretary of agriculture, with Frank Stea of Stea Bros. Produce Inc.