Local Farms and Food Supply Are Hurt by Overabundant Deer Herds

"No Farms, No Food" is more than a bumper sticker. It highlights a crucial goal: keep New Jersey's farms healthy and going strong. Our fresh, nutritious, diverse local food supply depends on them.

In many places in New Jersey, deer herd density has been measured at 100 or more per square mile, far more than what our farms and native forests can handle. This has a devastating impact on our local farmers and fresh food supply.

- In a major Rutgers study of almost 2000 New Jersey farmers, 25% reported **abandoning a parcel of land** because deer damage was so high.
- More than 1/3 of farmers have stopped growing a preferred crop – often the ones that we consumers want most – because of deer damage.
- 36% of farmers reported crop losses of over $10,000 per year, indicating major loss of local food.
- One farmer reported to **Deer New Jersey,** last season that deer cost him 3-4% of his entire crop *per week*.
- A different survey by Rutgers of 27 NJ farmers found $1.3 million in local food losses in 2019. There are about 10,000 farms in NJ.



Three deer in the foreground, and dozens in the rear.

Damage from overabundant deer adds more pressure onto New Jersey's farmers to sell to developers. For consumers, there's less of New Jersey's fresh local produce to choose from. And lower supply of crops worsens the sharp increases in food prices we've seen in recent years.



Deer nibble a little bit of each plant, causing more widespread crop loss

Strong, high deer fences are prohibitively expensive for most farmers. Yet one farmer in Hunterdon County told us, "It's just about impossible to grow fruits and vegetables without a deer fence." Costs are prohibitive for many farmerss, over $10 per linear foot.

Responsible, legal hunting is a path that many farmers choose. Many of the deer harvested from farms feed local families, including families in need, with fresh, local, healthy venison, making ethical hunting a benefit to those farmers and a large number of New Jersey residents.

References: Rutgers Cooperative Extension. How are white-tailed deer affecting agriculture in New Jersey. October 7, 1998
Rutgers Cooperative Extension. White-Tailed Deer and the Costs to Farmers' Livelihoods: A Case Study of New Jersey. 2021

DEER NEW JERSEY,

Let's Find Balance for Our Forests, Farms and Families

Mission: To achieve natural balance in New Jersey by leading a deer stewardship movement for the people, wildlife and land we love.

Vision: A future where New Jersey's land, wildlife, and communities thrive in natural balance—stewarded by the people who call this place home

We collaborate to support stewardship of deer towards a balance with biological and cultural goals

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