



AGRICULTURE NEWS

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STATE ANNOUNCES ALBANY LOCATION OF NEW \$40 MILLION FOOD LAB State-of-the-Art Facility & All 49 Jobs will Remain at State Office Campus in Albany

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker and New York State Office of General Services Commissioner John C. Egan today announced that a new \$40 million laboratory facility will be constructed at the Harriman Research and Technology Campus in Albany. The new state-of-the-art laboratory is the first new structure to built on the 3,330-acre campus in decades and will replace an outdated facility, and will house the New York State Food Laboratory, as well as the State Metrology Laboratory, both divisions of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. All 49 state employees working in the current facility will be retained, which include 44 chemists, microbiologists and metrologists.

“New York is a leader in food safety,” Governor David A. Paterson said. “No other state in the nation has the myriad of food on store shelves, and we take the responsibility of safeguarding our residents and visitors from possible food related illness very seriously. I am extremely pleased to announce that we will be constructing a new, efficient and clean energy laboratory in Albany that will enhance our existing food safety programs.”

The 70,000 square foot three-story laboratory, which will be designed and constructed by the State Office of General Services, will be located approximately 100 yards from the existing laboratory which is now housed in Building 7 on the State Office Campus. New state-of-the-art testing instrumentation and biological and chemical containment systems will be installed in the new lab to enhance its current food safety and agricultural product testing programs.

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker said, “Food safety is front and center on everyone’s mind these days, and this new laboratory will enable the State to better respond to food related emergencies, whether accidental or intentional through enhanced testing capabilities. We appreciate Governor Paterson’s support of the Lab and its critical functions, and are pleased that it will remain in Albany so we will be able to retain all of our talented staff, as well as be in close proximity to other cooperating agencies, including the Department of Health and the State Police.”

John C. Egan, Commissioner of the Office of General Services, and Chairman of the Harriman Research and Technology Development Corporation said: “The construction of this facility ushers in a new era for the Harriman Campus, one based on research and technology, and which will seek to maximize energy efficiency, and sustainable building construction techniques. The HRTDC board looks forward to the laboratory’s opening as the first step in Governor Paterson’s renewal of this valuable research campus.”

Dan Rice, Director of the New York State Food Laboratory, said, "One of the main missions for the New York State Food Lab is to assist in the State's food safety efforts through surveillance testing and laboratory support for foodborne illness outbreak prevention and response. This new laboratory facility will greatly improve our already excellent food safety programs, as well as several other laboratory programs that support the State's food and agriculture industries."

The New York State Food Laboratory provides expert analytical testing for all food safety and security programs in New York State with expertise in food chemistry, food microbiology, and pesticide and chemical residue testing. The new laboratory will provide the added capability of testing food, beverages, and animal feed for select agents through Biosafety Level (BSL) 3 and chemical terrorism laboratory programs, which are lacking in the current facility.

In addition to extensive state level food safety programs, the Food Lab is part of a national infrastructure of laboratories that respond to food emergencies, called the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN). The Food Lab also has cooperative agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Microbiological Data Program to detect pathogens in fresh food and the Pesticide Data Program to test fruit, vegetables, and public drinking water for pesticide residues and drinking water for a variety of pharmaceutical products. The lab is recognized as an international leader in the development and application of existing and new technologies to protect public health by promoting safe food and beverages.

During 2008, approximately 140,000 analyses on over 19,000 samples of food, beverage, animal feed, fertilizer and lime samples were performed at the New York State Food Lab as part of regulatory surveillance programs, foodborne illness outbreak investigations, consumer complaints, and investigations of suspected food adulteration. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets' food safety programs played an integral role in several investigations of foodborne illnesses outbreaks and food laboratory test results that led to 317 food recalls in 2008 for undeclared allergens, undeclared ingredients, chemical contamination, heavy metals and bacterial contamination.

The Food Lab was recently accredited to ISO 17025 (International Organization for Standardization) standards and AOAC (Association of Analytical Chemists) criteria demonstrating technical competence in biological and chemical testing of food.

The New York State Metrology Laboratory will also be housed in the new Food Laboratory facility. This laboratory certifies the standards used to verify the accuracy of all grocery store scales, gas pumps, fuel meters, and a host of other devices used in commerce. This lab also is accredited to calibrate standards of mass, volume, length and time under International Organization for Standardization standard, ISO 17025. These calibration services are provided to both the private and public sectors on a fee basis and the services are important to companies involved in international trade.

The new Food and Metrology Laboratories will incorporate sustainable strategies to meet the standards of LEED® Silver Certification. Sustainable measures include use of a previously developed site, use of high performance façade systems, and installation of a reflective roof. Energy recovery systems will be considered for the lab spaces; in addition to HVAC systems which respond when a space is occupied. Sustainability and energy efficiency will be a major factor influencing every decision regarding how the lab is constructed and operated.