

New York State Sod Industry At a Glance

TPI's 2010 Summer Convention & Field Days are being held in New York, a state with an impressive turfgrass production industry as Turf News found out in this interview with Elizabeth Seme, executive director of the New York State Turfgrass Association (NYSTA), and her NYSTA colleagues.

Turfgrass Producers International will meet in New York for its Summer Convention & Field Days. What would you like TPI members to know about New

the economy. Here are a few more survey findings:

- Turfgrass covers 3.43 million acres in New York
- 93 percent of the 3.4 million acres are private lawns, golf courses and acres managed by lawn care companies
- Over 843,000 new turf acres were established in 2003 at a cost of nearly \$1.56 billion
- The value of turf equipment owned by all sectors surveyed totaled over \$6.3 billion
- The total payroll for turf employees was nearly \$467 million

(The New York Turfgrass Survey was sponsored by the NYSTA, which is comprised of 1,600 green industry professionals who share technology, promote environmental stewardship, support education, advance research and disseminate research findings.)

How many turfgrass sod farms are there in New York?

NYSTA: According to 2007 NASS statistics, there were 21 sod farms operating in the state.

How many acres are planted to commercial turfgrass sod?

NYSTA: The total area planted to sod was 7,508 acres, according to 2007 NASS statistics.

York's turfgrass industry?

NYSTA: According to 2007 National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) statistics (the most recent data available), turfgrass sod farms in New York State generated \$33.3 million in sales.

The New York Turfgrass Survey in 2003 indicated that the turfgrass industry employed 43,000 people and contributed \$5 billion in turf maintenance expenses to



Field Irrigation at Pine Island Turf Nursery, Inc. TPI President, Charles (Chip) Lain, Jr., is owner and host of this year's Field Days.

What other legislation could impact the state's turfgrass producers?

NYSTA: "Sod farmers should be concerned with S7787 (introduced by New York State Senator George Onorato) which would enact the Farmworkers' Fair Market Labor Practices Act, granting collective bargaining rights, workers' compensation and unemployment benefits to farm workers. This bill would bankrupt many farms across New York State," says Jeff Lane, government affairs lobbyist, Vandervort Group, LLC, which represents the New York Alliance for Environmental Concerns.

In addition, the New York State budget proposed by Governor Paterson does not contain any funding for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund. An appropriation of \$175,000 would help fund research in turfgrass management that strives to reduce the industry's reliance on pesticides.

Previous appropriations from 2006-2008 funded research at Cornell University, which studied turf's resistance to the annual bluegrass weevil, crane fly identification techniques and turf diagnostics.

The budget also does not fund the New York Farm Viability Institute, which fosters a vibrant agricultural/horticultural sector in the state by supporting applied research, education, information transfer, technology adoption and market analysis to reduce practical barriers to the success of farming enterprises.

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Early morning harvesting at DeBuck's Sod Farms of NY, Inc. The expanded field days includes tours of DeBuck Sod Farms.



NYSTA past president, Steve Griffen, is co-owner of Saratoga Sod Farm, Inc.