

Fifer Orchards honored for service to Delaware agriculture

Dover, Del. – Fifer Orchards recognized for their overall contribution to agriculture at the Delaware Agricultural Industry Dinner on Thursday evening were presented with the Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service to Delaware Agriculture.

“There has never been a time that I have asked to bring the Governor, local and U.S. legislators, government officials, or farmers from other states and countries out to visit, that Fifer Orchards has told me no,” said Delaware Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse. “This is a Delaware family farm that is able to showcase their operation and it is always exemplary.”

More than ninety-nine percent of Delaware's farms are family owned and



Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse presents Fifer Orchards with the Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service to Delaware Agriculture. Pictured (L to R): Bobby Fifer, Secretary Michael T. Scuse, Carlton Fifer, Mary Fennemore, Curt Fifer, and Governor John Carney, Jr.

operated. Fifer Orchards, located in Camden-Wyoming, was

founded by Charles Frederick Fifer nearly a century ago. Currently farmed by the third and fourth generations, Fifer Orchards continues to focus on their commitment to the community they serve and maintaining family values.

Farmers make their livelihood on the land and have a strong commitment to the environment. The land that encompasses Fifer Orchards is home to many species of wildlife, native plants, forests, ponds, and of course the agricultural crops. Dedicated to being good stewards of the lands, Fifer Orchards focuses on safe, sustainable farming practices that preserve the environment, reduce waste, and promote healthy growing systems. Through crop rotation, integrated pest management, drip irrigation, planting cover crops, reduced tillage, and reduced pesticide usage, the farm is a showcase for environmental stewardship.

Fifer Orchards continues to use the vision of Charles Frederick Fifer to focus on diversification to help reduce risk. From the main farm, to the farm stores, to selling to local grocery stores and wholesale, to supporting Delaware's Farm to School initiative, to developing a successful agritourism operation, to growing their community supported agriculture program, the farm has been able to minimize risk to weather the ups and downs involved in farming.

Consumers have become more and more interested in where they get their food from. Increasingly, this means going local – either buying directly from a farmer or knowing the food in the grocery store comes from local family farms that utilize best practices. As a Global Good Agricultural Practices certified farm, Fifer Orchards produces safe, sustainable food using safe production methods, responsible use of resources, while ensuring the welfare of their employees and protection of scarce resources. The consumer wants to know they are getting the best and that they are helping to keep local farms viable.

Delaware family farms continue to boost our economy through job creation. Over the years, Fifer Orchards has offered positions to high school students involved in agriscience education and college students in agriculture. These opportunities have helped the younger generation developing an interest in farming and to consider agriculture as a future career.

The Agricultural Industry Dinner, in its 47th year, was attended by more than 400 people, including farmers, business leaders and elected officials. It is sponsored by the Delaware Council of Farm Organizations.

Past recipients of the Secretary's Award include brothers Richard and Keith Carlisle of Greenwood (2017), former MidAtlantic Farm Credit senior vice-president Kenny Bounds (2016); Farm Service Agency official Robin Talley (2015); Schiff Farms of Harrington (2015); farmers Laura Hill of Lewes and Barbara Sapp of Milton (2014); dairy farmer Walter C. Hopkins Sr. of Lewes (2013); then U.S. Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Michael Scuse, a former Delaware secretary of agriculture (2012); Delmarva Farmer Senior Editor Bruce Hotchkiss (2012); James Baxter of Georgetown (2011); brothers David, Ed and Robert Baker of Middletown (2010); Bill Vanderwende of Bridgeville (2009); and Ed Kee of Lincoln (2008).

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