

## Press Release

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### **CUMBERLAND EMPOWERMENT ZONE CORPORATION CONSTRUCTING FARM LABOR HOUSINGS UNITS**

**Mt. Laurel, New Jersey – October 20, 2003** -- USDA Rural Development has approved a \$3,000,000 in low interest loan to the Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corporation (CEZC). The loan funds are to be use to construct 40 farm labor housing units for farm worker families. This funding is the result of cooperative efforts between federal, state and local partners and is the first such funding for off farm labor housing in New Jersey in more than a decade.

“The area has demonstrated a strong need for housing for farm workers and their families. Rural Development’s commitment toward a healthy agriculture industry while supporting needed housing for farm workers will be just another step in assisting production agriculture in the region,” said Andrew M.G. Law, State Director.

“Though most farms in New Jersey are family-owned and operated, many of them need to hire labor to operate successfully. From planting and harvest to the daily care of plants and animals, agriculture is a labor-intensive industry,” said New Jersey Agriculture Secretary, Charles M. Kuperus. “Securing federal funds for new farm labor housing is another important step toward strengthening New Jersey agriculture and retaining our farms.”

“The Rural Development funding presents a great opportunity to augment one phase of a multi-phase neighborhood revitalization plan that was developed by the Bridgeton Housing Authority,” said Jerry Velázquez, CEZC Executive Director. Mr. Velázquez added, “this initiative fulfills a great housing need and promotes comprehensive redevelopment in one of the most distressed neighborhoods in the community.” These partnerships have also resulted in a number of other grant and low interest loan awards that support various aspects of New Jersey’s agricultural community.

Further information on Rural Development’s programs and opportunities for small and rural residents please access our web site [www.rurdev.usda.gov/nj](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nj)

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