

Our mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among New Jersey educators and students. You can learn more on our website

[newjersey.agclassroom.org](http://newjersey.agclassroom.org)

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## The Season of Evergreen Trees

We are approaching the darkest days of the year, but there still is farming going on in New Jersey. The Garden State is home to about 880 Christmas tree farms covering 5,288 acres. About 86,000 trees are sold in the state each year. In fact, the first ever Christmas tree farm was planted here. Find out more about this story below.

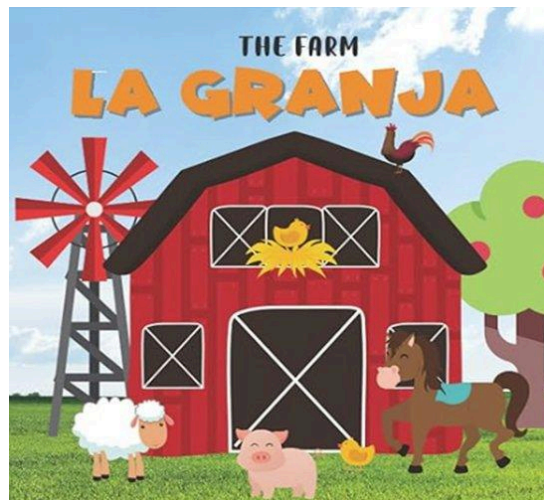
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## Introducing: NJAITC Lessons in Spanish

New Jersey Agriculture in the Classroom has translated several of our lessons into Spanish, in order to support increased agricultural literacy across New Jersey schools.

Our goal is to expand resources available to New Jersey teachers of English learners.

On our new *Lessons in Spanish* webpage, there are links to both the Spanish and English versions of the lessons. The lessons are tailored for grades 3-5, but can be modified for lower and upper grades.

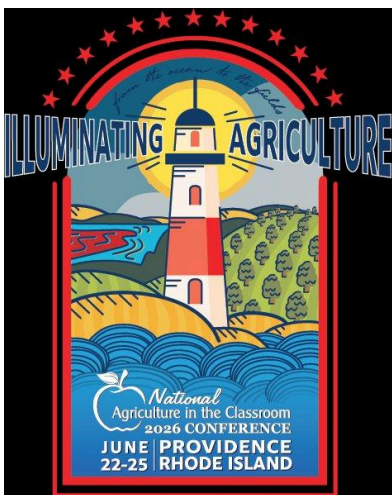


In addition, NJAITC has gathered a group of Spanish-language books and other resources on a variety of agricultural topics for emerging English learners.

To see all of our lessons and resources available in Spanish, click [here](#).

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**Apply for a scholarship to attend  
the National Agriculture in the Classroom annual conference**



There are just two weeks left to apply for a scholarship to the National Agriculture in the Classroom's annual conference. This conference is perfect for teachers interested in learning how to integrate agriculture into the core curriculum. The 2026 conference will be held June 22-25 in Providence, RI.

Scholarships are available for PreK-12 teachers that include conference registration and up to three nights lodging. (It does not include travel to and from the conference.)

Click [here](#) for the scholarship guidelines and application. The application deadline is December 15.

## Tomatoes in Space?

Check out this **free** program from **NASA!**

How cool would it be for your students to grow tomatoes from seeds that have traveled into space? The free Tomatosphere program gives students the opportunity to do just that.

NASA regularly sends tomato seeds to the International Space Station, where the seeds experience microgravity and increased radiation. Upon their return, the space-faring seeds are sent to classrooms along with earthbound seeds, so that students can compare their germination rates.



Here's the best part: this is a blind study, so neither the students nor the teacher know which seeds are which until they have completed the experiment and have sent results back to Tomatosphere. The program is designed for grades K-8.

These experiments are being conducted to help scientists understand what it will take to grow food during long-term space travel, for example, the two years it would take a manned spaceship to reach Mars and return to Earth.

Tomatosphere has lots of resources to aid teachers with the experiment. For more information and to register for the spring 2026 program, click [here](#).

## Lessons of the Month

NJAITC is pleased to announce the start of a new webpage entitled *Animal Agriculture*. Here you will find lessons, activities, and videos about the farming of animals including turkeys, chickens, cows, bees, and more.

Since many families serve turkey for the holidays, we are highlighting our new turkey lessons. Our video (below) gives students a virtual tour of Ashley Farms, a fourth generation turkey farm in Mt. Olive, New Jersey. Ashley Farms produces 8,000 turkeys per year.

To see the entire *Animal Agriculture* webpage, click [here](#).



### **My Family's Turkey Farm** **Grades 3-5** *can be modified for older students*

Students will read a book and/or watch a video to learn to identify the stages of a turkey's life cycle and how farmers take care of turkeys.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.



### **Build a Turkey Cage** **Grades 3-5** *can be modified for older students*

In this STEM design challenge, students work in small groups using the Engineering Design Process to create a cage for turkeys with everyday materials.

Click [here](#) for the lesson.

## ***Did you know?***

### ***The first Christmas tree farm ever was planted in New Jersey***

In the 1800s, if people wanted a Christmas tree, they would have to go into the woods and chop one down. By the early 1900s, people grew worried that the forests would be ruined if too many trees were cut down for Christmas.

In 1901, a farmer named W.V. McGaillard planted 25,000 Norway spruce trees on his farm in Hamilton, near Trenton in Mercer County. Seven years later, Mr. McGaillard invited people to come to his farm and cut down their own Christmas trees. He sold his trees for \$1 each. Customers could arrange to have their trees delivered by a horse-drawn wagon.

More and more tree farms were started, and now most Christmas trees are grown on farms.

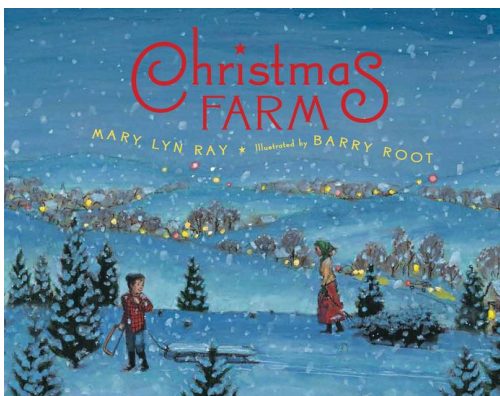
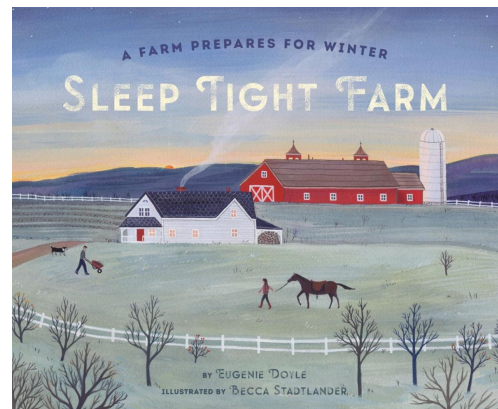
*The photo below from about 1900 shows the McGaillard home in Hamilton, NJ, site of the very first Christmas tree farm. The house is now a funeral home.*



## Library Corner

### **Sleep Tight: A Farm Prepares for Winter** *By Eugenie Doyle* **Grades PreK-2**

This book follows a family as they get their farm ready for a snowy winter, and it connects each growing season to the preparations at the very end of the farm year.



See our lesson to accompany the book [here](#).

### **Christmas Farm** *By Mary Lyn Ray* **Grades 3-5**

This is a wonderful book to read with older students because in addition to learning about Christmas tree farming, they can solve a math problem on every page.

Wilma and her young helper Parker order 62 dozen evergreen seedlings to start a Christmas tree farm. Year after year, the pair nurture their trees, keeping careful count of how many perish and how many grow into fine, full Christmas trees.

## December Ag Gag

*Why are pine trees so bad at sewing?  
They are always dropping their needles.*

***Happy Holidays Everyone!***



**New Jersey  
Agriculture in the Classroom**

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Show us how you use ag lessons in your classroom and enter to win our giveaway: an accurate ag book and lesson to teach about it.

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