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EDITORS: The following information is for immediate release. If you have any questions, please contact Sue Milshaw, Agricultural Program Manager of the Chester County Economic Development Council, at 610 458-5700.

Chester County mushroom industry has \$2.17 billion impact on local economy

*Penn State University report released today
at Chester County Economic Development Council event*

EXTON _ The Chester County mushroom industry is an economic force in the community in terms of its longevity, the tenure of employees and community investment, according to a Penn State University report.

“Long hailed for its mushroom production efficiency, these enterprises have a \$2.17 billion impact on the local economy and generate substantial employment opportunities and tax contributions to the community,” said the report by Dr. Spiro E. Stefanou, professor of agricultural economics at Penn State.

Stefanou took part today in a Chester County Economic Development Council breakfast briefing on Agriculture, Food Processing and Energy Related Opportunities in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Also taking part in the event were speakers John M. Rhodes of Moran, Stahl and Boyer and John Whims of Informa Economics.

Stefanou’s report was prepared for the Community Awareness Committee of the American Mushroom Institute.

The report said, “Pennsylvania mushroom production activities are essential to both the state’s agricultural economy as its largest cash crop as well as a leader in United States mushroom production. Chester County mushroom producers are Pennsylvania’s and the nation’s leaders. The most recent census reports available (2002) indicate Chester County accounts for 81 percent of Pennsylvania mushroom farms, 67 percent of Pennsylvania production and 37 percent of total United States production.”

County mushroom farms average being in business more than 37 years under the same management with a third of employees working for more than a decade. The farms average 66 employees with annual sales of \$16.3 million. The average salary of an employee is \$27,419, which is 83 percent of the industry average. Employee benefits and workers compensation adds \$3,242 per worker. The total payroll is \$2.03 million with \$1.275 million spent on contract services, transportation, administration, professional fees and insurance.

The report also said the employment impact accounts for 9,520 jobs with value-added activity approaching \$2.17 billion. The mushroom industry also accounts for \$2.7 million in school tax revenue.

Also at today's meeting Rhoads and Whims reviewed their report on agriculture, food processing and energy-related industries in Southeast Pennsylvania, including Chester County.

The report made recommendations to area farms, including mushroom farms. The report suggested increasing the amount of organic foods grown and becoming more energy efficient.

The Chester County Economic Development Council is a private, non-profit economic development organization that has been nurturing economic growth in Chester County and the surrounding region for more than 45 years. The Council's portfolio of business growth services includes: low-interest financing, small business lending, workforce training, retention and expansion, customized international business assistance, land and building site selection, brownfields consultation and remediation, urban redevelopment, and agricultural economic development. The Council also offers state-of-the art conference and training facilities at its brand new facility in Eagleview. For more information, see www.cceconomicdevelopment.com.