

Wyoming County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan

Final Report, Volume One

October, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
Wyoming County's ADFP Plan Objectives.....	3
Key Challenges Facing Wyoming Agriculture	4
Recommendations Summary.....	6
AGRICULTURE GROWS WYOMING COUNTY'S ECONOMY	10
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	12
Plan Participants	13
SURVEY ANALYSIS	15
Ag Producers Survey	15
Agribusiness Survey	17
Rural Landowners Survey.....	19
Municipal Officials Survey	21
BUSINESS CLIMATE FOR FARMS.....	22
Agricultural Sector Overview.....	22
Wyoming County's Dairy Industry	23
Industry Trends	25
Competitive Advantages And Opportunities.....	25
Challenges Facing WC Agriculture	27
Ag Development Alternatives.....	28
LAND USE TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS.....	31
Population Change	31
Sprawl Without Growth: The Upstate Paradox.....	33
Farm Trends	35
Real Estate Market	36
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES	41
AG DEVELOPMENT AND FARMLAND PROTECTION TOOLS.....	43
RECOMMENDATIONS	49
Supporting the Business of Farming	49
Maintaining A Viable Agricultural Land Base	52
Keeping A Supportive Operating Environment For Farms	54
CONTACTS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE	58
VOLUME II CONTENTS.....	61

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture is a critical component of Wyoming County's economy and communities. Farms in Wyoming County annually sell almost \$180 million of farm products and help grow other local businesses. Wyoming County farms are rural manufacturers exporting their goods outside the county that return dollars to support other local businesses.

However, these farm businesses provide more than just jobs because they are the essence of our rural character and country lifestyle that many county residents and tourists appreciate. Cropland, pastures, woodlots, farmhouses and barns define our rural communities and the county's proud heritage.

Wyoming County's agricultural sector is far from a relic of past times and continues to have a strong future. The county is the nation's 21st largest producer of dairy products and by far the largest dairy-producing county in New York. It is the anchor for western New York's agricultural economy and the home to progressive farm operators and agribusinesses.

Wyoming County undertook the task of developing an agricultural development and farmland protection plan to ensure that farming and farmers would continue to play a strong role in the county's economy and communities. Like every industry, agriculture needs active support to remain viable, establish new market opportunities, and continue its competitiveness with a growing array of national and international rivals.

The county's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board sought to achieve the following objectives during the development of a county plan:

Wyoming County's ADFP Plan Objectives

1. Identify the nature and location of productive agricultural resources;
2. Evaluate the importance of productive agricultural land to the county's economy and landscape;
3. Determine the likelihood of productive agricultural land conversion to other uses and potential impacts on the county's agricultural sector;
4. Identify options to minimize the conversion of productive agricultural soils and support lands to non-agricultural uses;
5. Develop strategies to reduce future land use or farmer/non-farm neighbor conflicts;
6. Support the agricultural economic development recommendations outlined in Target Tomorrow;
7. Continue to build public support for Wyoming County's agricultural industry; and
8. Encourage town and village governments to consider future uses of land and how their local policies could support the retention of farms and agricultural land.

Public Participation

Engaging farmers, agribusiness leaders, local officials and other county residents was a high priority during the development of this plan. Surveys, public meetings and workshops, press releases, displays and presentations were used to engage the public in understanding the county's agricultural sector, identifying priority issues and evaluating strategies. In many ways, this planning process was as valuable as the final plan report because it has spurred thoughtful discussion and built relationships that will hopefully set the stage for implementing the plan's recommendations.

Key Challenges Facing Wyoming Agriculture

- ◆ **Maintaining/Enhancing Farm Profitability:** The health and future of this important economic sector depends on the profitability of WC farms. Without profitable farm businesses the local agricultural sector will suffer as will other local businesses and Wyoming County.
- ◆ **Competition From Lower Cost Regions:** The lack of diversity in the local agricultural economy makes it vulnerable to the up and down prices of the dairy market. A sustained period of low prices caused by competition from other lower cost milk producing regions (e.g. California and Arizona mega-dairies) could be devastating.
- ◆ **Limited Land Resources:** The availability of productive farm land is a major limiting factor for further growth of Wyoming County's dairy industry. Most of the land that could go into dairy farming is already being used, especially on the eastern side of the County where soils tend to be somewhat better.
- ◆ **Conflicts With Other Land Uses:** There are also limits to expansion of agriculture because of development within farm areas. As the County grows and farms also expand, more conflict is inevitable. Farm expansion will become more and more difficult.
- ◆ **Labor Availability:** Labor is in short supply and this shortage can threaten the ability of Wyoming County farmers to compete. Continued expansion will require large numbers of new employees who may not be available.
- ◆ **Small Dairy Viability:** Small and mid-sized dairy farms are still an important part of Wyoming County's dairy sector. Some regard small and mid-size farms as having poor long-term futures given the increasing concentration and scale in dairy farming, processing, and retailing. However, there are a number of viable strategies that smaller dairy farmers can use to be profitable and stay in business.
- ◆ **CAFO/Environmental Compliance:** Air and water quality regulations of concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) will continue to impact Wyoming County farms. The funds that are needed to pay for the necessary planning and improvements will be difficult for many farms to obtain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

High Priority

- ◆ Encourage infrastructure investments that support agricultural industry viability while not accelerating the conversion of farmland.
- ◆ Encourage Wyoming County Towns to actively develop and implement local plans and policies to support the business and land use needs of farms.
- ◆ Encourage the adoption, implementation and promotion of a Wyoming County right to farm law.

Medium Priority

- ◆ Promote workforce development opportunities for current and future farm workers and managers.
- ◆ Assist farmers in identifying and developing new market opportunities for agricultural products, farm by-products and compatible rural businesses.
- ◆ Support efforts to create a NYS program to reduce property taxes on productive farmland in exchange for term deed restrictions.
- ◆ Take a proactive approach to maintaining local support for agricultural districts.
- ◆ Take certain actions to promote understanding and appreciation of Wyoming County agriculture to the non-farm public

Low Priority

- ◆ Educate farmers and rural landowners about programs and strategies for reducing property and estate taxes, protecting farmland and conserving natural resources.
- ◆ Support efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to farmers to comply with concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) and other environmental regulations.

Recommendations Summary

Numerous agricultural economic development, public education, farmland protection and other strategies were considered during the development of this plan. Recommendations deemed most relevant and of the highest priority for Wyoming County were divided into three categories: supporting the business of farming, maintaining a viable agricultural land base, and keeping a supportive operating environment. These recommendations include:

RECOMMENDATION 1: ENCOURAGE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS THAT SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY VIABILITY WHILE NOT ACCELERATING THE CONVERSION OF FARMLAND.

Actions Needed

1. Conduct a survey of agricultural equipment use on county and town roads.
2. Encourage Wyoming County investment in the maintenance and improvement of roads, bridges, road ditching and other infrastructure in the high priority roadways identified in the agricultural equipment survey.
3. Work with the Wyoming County Highway Department, New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health and others to reduce conflicts between farm equipment and other vehicles in highest priority areas.
4. Work with Wyoming County towns, USDA Office for Rural Development, Erie, Genesee and Monroe Counties and others to focus new water and sewer infrastructure investment in existing villages and hamlets, and mitigate possible growth-inducing impacts of new infrastructure on farmland.
5. Encourage the use of appropriate mitigation measures if proposed infrastructure expansions, such as new state or federal roads, are likely to accelerate the conversion of farmland or negatively impact farm businesses.

Priority: High **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, Planning Dept., CCE

Budget: One time operating and staff costs of \$2,500 for agricultural equipment survey. On-going staff costs will likely be moderate.

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROMOTE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE FARM WORKERS AND MANAGERS.

Actions Needed

1. Encourage participation by local farmers and agribusiness professionals in business management and leadership development programs.
2. Support continued investment in youth workforce development programs focused on training young workers for careers in the agricultural sector.

3. Consider evaluating the feasibility of developing a Cornell University affiliated and agricultural industry supported Research and Teaching Center.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, CCE, Farm Bureau, B/E Council, Consultants

Budget: Moderate staff time for encouraging participation in the education programs and supporting local agricultural education programs. Approximately \$15,000 to \$30,000 is estimated to be needed for a feasibility study regarding the research and teaching center. \$3,000 to \$5,000 plus staff time for the development of a county-based or regional business management/leadership development program.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ASSIST FARMERS IN IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, FARM BY-PRODUCTS AND COMPATIBLE RURAL BUSINESSES.

Actions Needed

1. Evaluate the opportunities for development of storage, distribution and/or processing facilities for specialty dairy products, by-products from dairy production and other local agricultural products.
2. Encourage the continued development of renewable energy and bio-fuel production.
3. Provide grant-writing services to assist farmers and agribusinesses in obtaining funding to study and undertake market development opportunities.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC Chamber, IDA, CCE, Consultants

Budget: Staff costs will likely range from moderate to high depending upon the scale of projects undertaken. Outside consultants should be budgeted at \$5,000 (for grant-writing and grant administration) to \$25,000 (for feasibility studies, business plans and larger projects).

RECOMMENDATION 4: ENCOURAGE WYOMING COUNTY TOWNS TO ACTIVELY DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE BUSINESS AND LAND USE NEEDS OF FARMS.

Actions Needed

1. Conduct a bi-annual "Decision Makers Tour".
2. Conduct bi-annual training sessions for local officials about Planning for Agriculture at the town level.
3. Distribute a menu of sample town plans or policies that could be used by Wyoming County towns to support the county's agricultural industry.
4. Support efforts to provide funding for Wyoming County towns to develop comprehensive plans and other local policies aimed at supporting farm businesses and protecting farmland.

Priority: High **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, CCE, Planning Dept.

Budget: \$2,500 for staff and operating expenses for bi-annual workshops, on-going staff costs for outreach to towns about agricultural planning issues are moderate to medium. Decision makers' tour:

\$250 for refreshment, outreach, and handout costs for local official training; \$700 for breakfast and bus costs, \$1,500 for CCE staff costs.

RECOMMENDATION 5: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO CREATE A NYS PROGRAM TO REDUCE PROPERTY TAXES ON PRODUCTIVE FARMLAND IN EXCHANGE FOR TERM DEED RESTRICTIONS.

Actions Needed

1. Demonstrate the significance of the property tax burden to Wyoming County farmers and agricultural landowners.
2. Communicate with state legislators and New York Farm Bureau about the need for a new state program.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, WC Farm Bureau, CCE, Planning Dept.
Budget: Moderate staff time required for studying impacts of property taxes on Wyoming County farmers and distributing information.

RECOMMENDATION 6: EDUCATE FARMERS AND RURAL LANDOWNERS ABOUT PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PROPERTY AND ESTATE TAXES, PROTECTING FARMLAND AND CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES.

Actions Needed

1. Conduct workshops about farm estate planning.
2. Conduct workshops about conservation options for rural landowners.
3. Begin preparations for the future purchase of development rights in priority agricultural areas experiencing the greatest development pressure, if needed.

Priority: Low **Primary Responsibility:** WC CCE, Planning Dept., NRCS, SWCD
Budget: \$1,000 for staff and operating costs for a local workshop about conservation options for farmers and rural landowners.

RECOMMENDATION 7: ENCOURAGE THE ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION OF A WYOMING COUNTY RIGHT TO FARM LAW; AND TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO MAINTAINING LOCAL SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS.

Actions Needed

1. Urge the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors to pass a county Right to Farm law.
2. If passed, inform the public about the county's new right to farm law and the agricultural dispute resolution process it establishes.

Priority: High **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, Planning Dept.
Budget: Moderate staff time required for developing and implementing new county right to farm law. Costs for new road signs advertising county right to farm law.

3. Conduct a half-day farm tour for town and county officials in agricultural districts being renewed.
4. Have training sessions for local officials and farmers about agricultural districts

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, WC SWCD, Planning Dept.

Budget: \$1,000 for bus tour and materials. Moderate staff time for training and outreach, and for developing and implementing new county right to farm law.

RECOMMENDATION 8: PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF WYOMING COUNTY AGRICULTURE TO THE NON-FARM PUBLIC.

Medium Priority Actions Needed

1. Develop an outreach brochure for non-farm neighbors about farm practices.
2. Publicize the benefits of Wyoming County farms.

Lower Priority Actions Needed

3. Assemble a committee of farmers, farm organization representatives, and agribusiness representatives to develop an on-farm public agricultural event.
4. Support ongoing efforts by individual farms to host school and other organizations tours.

Primary Responsibility: WC CCE, SWCD, Planning Dept., AFPB

Budget: Moderate staff time for WC CCE, SWCD, and Planning & Development staff to attend meetings and distribute materials. Five hundred to two-thousand dollars for farm practice brochure design and printing. Moderate to medium CCE staff time to coordinate and lead the on-farm public event committee and plan the event. Medium staff time and \$500 to \$5,000 for an annual on-farm public event depending upon the number of attendees, amount of donations and volunteers, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 9: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS TO COMPLY WITH CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATION (CAFO) AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS.

Actions Needed

1. Provide technical assistance to farmers in the development and implementation of nutrient management plans required by CAFO standards.
2. Work with Wyoming County Farm Bureau, state and federal legislators and others to advocate for greater cost share funding and other incentives for farmers to meet environmental standards.

Priority: Low **Primary Responsibility:** WC SWCD, WC Farm Bureau

Budget: Medium to high staff time required for CAFO planning and implementation. Moderate staff time for educating state and federal officials.

AGRICULTURE GROWS WYOMING COUNTY'S ECONOMY

Spurring Economic Growth

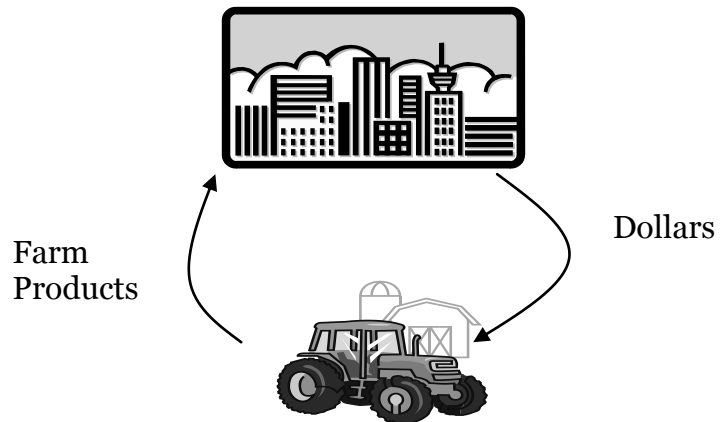
Farms are local businesses that provide jobs and spur economic growth. In 2002, Wyoming County's 767 farms sold over \$178 million in farm products. Most of these products are sent out of the county with dollars from their purchase returning. Some people call farms "rural manufacturers" as they produce food that can be exported to other areas and drive local economic activity.

Farms spend most of their money on local goods and services – supporting other local businesses and spurring economic activity. Local feed and seed providers, farm equipment dealers, trucking and transportation companies, banks, hardware stores, fuel and energy companies, food processors and other establishments benefit from doing business with local farms.

Wyoming County's agricultural industry is dominated by the dairy sector, which accounted for 72% of farm sales in 2002. A recent study by the Pennsylvania Center for Dairy Excellence indicated that the local economic impact per dairy cow is over \$6,600 per year. By these estimates, Wyoming County dairy farms annually contribute \$323 million to the local economy!

Providing Quality Jobs

Wyoming County farms are a dependable source of jobs for county residents. Agriculture supports jobs for a skilled workforce on farms as well as veterinarians, sales and service professionals, accountants, engineers, nutritionists and others. In 2002, farms provided 1,676 on-farm jobs which is about 14% of the private sector jobs in Wyoming County! Farms are also a stable source of income and employment. With proper support and investment, agriculture will continue to be a significant employer for years to come!



Supporting Local Businesses

Wyoming County farms annually spend millions of dollars on goods and services needed for the production of dairy and other farm products. In 2002, our farms spent almost \$152 million on expenses including:

- \$36 million for livestock feed
- \$25 million for farm labor
- \$16 million for fertilizers, seed and chemicals
- \$12 million for livestock
- \$9 million for fuel and utilities
- \$4 million in property taxes
- \$50 million in other expenditure

Investing For The Future

Farms are capital-intensive businesses requiring significant on-going investments to remain profitable and competitive in the global marketplace. In 2002, Wyoming County farms owned almost \$391 million in land and building assets – a 35% increase over the last decade. The county's farms also own machinery and equipment valued at over \$129 million. This combined investment of over \$500 million in farm assets is an indication of the commitment of the county's farmers to their businesses and the local economy.

Supporting The Local Tax Base

Wyoming County farms annually pay over \$4 million in property taxes to support local schools as well as town and county governments. These tax dollars help support public services that benefit all county residents. At the same time, farm and forestland require few services. The saying "cows and corn don't go to school" reflects the fact that while farmland doesn't pay as much in taxes as residences, it requires far less in services.

A recent study in the Town of Byron in Genesee County indicated that for every \$1.00 paid in property taxes on farm and forestland, \$0.49 was spent on providing services to farms and forests. By comparison, residences received an average of \$1.30 in services for every \$1.00 they paid in taxes. Thus, farmland provided a net "tax profit" to the town while residences created a net tax deficit.

Expanding Opportunities

Wyoming County's agricultural industry continues to grow. Farm sales grew by almost 70% between 1992 and 2002 with significant increases in the number of cows and milk produced within the county. Wyoming County is the anchor for agricultural production in Western New York – the largest agricultural region of the state.

The county is well poised to take advantage of its close proximity to urban markets on the East Coast. With milk production decreasing in the southeastern United States, there are continued business opportunities for Wyoming County farms. Entrepreneurial farmers are also working to find new markets for agricultural by-products, green energy and biofuels, and processed farm products.

DID YOU KNOW?

Wyoming County's agricultural industry is nationally recognized. The county is the 25th largest producer of dairy products nationwide. Each year, 1 billion pounds of milk are produced by the county's dairy farms.

That's enough milk to provide all of the residents of Philadelphia, Boston, Washington DC, Miami, Hartford, Buffalo, Albany and Syracuse with their fluid milk for one year! If Wyoming County residents kept this amount of milk in the county, it would take them 111 years to drink it all!

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Engaging the public has been a high priority in the development of the Wyoming County Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan. Input from farmers, agribusinesses, local officials and other county residents is critical for ensuring that the plan reflects the needs and priorities of the county's agricultural industry. Without including the experience and insight of these groups, this plan would have little chance for success.

Having farmers and other community members involved in the development of the plan also cultivates local "ownership" of the planning process. This buy-in to the planning process increases the likelihood that people will be satisfied with the final product and will support the next stage of the planning process – implementing the plans recommendations. County officials, farmers and others are more likely to commit the important personal, financial and political resources towards implementing the plan's recommendations if they have been involved throughout its development.

Public Participation Strategies

A variety of strategies have been used to encourage public participation in the development of this plan. These include Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Board meetings (which were open to the public and had an extensive invitation list), public workshops, surveys, presentations and displays, and press releases.



AFPB Meetings and Public Workshops

Wyoming County's AFPB held regular meetings during preparation of the plan to develop plan objectives, evaluate research findings, discuss possible plan recommendations and guide the development of the plan. Invitees to these meetings included AFPB Board Members, Town Supervisors, Wyoming County Farm Bureau Directors, Wyoming County Planning Board members and other interested farmers and county residents.

AFPB Meetings were held on:

December 18, 2003 at Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative Extension

March 24, 2004 at Wyoming County Business Center

June 15, 2004 at Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative Extension

October 27, 2004 at Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative Extension

Two public workshops were held to share information gathered as part of the planning process and receive input from a broader audience of farmers, local officials and the non-farm public. These

sessions gathered about 65 people from Wyoming County and were held on January 29, 2005 at Byrncliff Resort, Varysburg (9:30 am to 11:30 am) and Perry Fireman's Building (1:30 pm to 3:30 pm).

Surveys

Surveys were used extensively to gather information about Wyoming County's agricultural sector, identifying key issues facing the agricultural industry and prioritizing recommendations for the plan. Written surveys were sent to four groups:

Farmers:	377 Sent	137 Returned (36% Rate of Return)
Rural Landowners:	100 Sent	22 Returned (22% Rate of Return)
Agribusinesses:	172 Sent	53 Returned (30.8% Rate of Return)
Local Officials:	186 Sent	40 Returned (21.5% Rate of Return)

More detailed in-depth interviews were done with a smaller group of 30 farmers to elicit further detailed information and opinions.

Press Releases/Coverage

Press releases to local newspapers, agricultural publications and other media outlets were used to inform farmers and other local residents about the planning process and to solicit input into the development of the plan. Press releases were distributed in May 2004, September 2004 and _____ that resulted in several articles in Country Folks and The Daily News. (See attached releases) The January 29, 2005 public workshops also generated articles in The Daily News, Buffalo News, Perry Herald, and Arcade Herald.

Presentations and Displays

Presentations about the Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan and planning process were made to key audiences including Wyoming County's Board of Supervisors, Farm Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative Extension created a display and informational materials about the plan for the 2004 Wyoming County Fair. (See "Frequently Asked Questions" from the Wyoming County Fair in Volume II).

Plan Participants

The Wyoming County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board wants to thank all of the people that have taken the time to participate in AFPB meetings and public workshops as part of the development of the county's plan. These include:

Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board Directors

David Chamberlain, Chairman

Donald Pingrey, David Shearing, Russell Miller, Tom McCormick, Mark Merrill, Daryl Heiby, Steve Childs, Jason Murphy, Richard Dean, E. Joseph Gozelski, Richard Tindell

Wyoming County Farm Bureau

Greg Chamberlain, President; David Shearing, Vice President

James Herman, Paul Webster, Charlie Seewaldt, Tom Skeels, Daniel Swartz, Chester Meyer, Neal Cox, Brian Parker, Pete Broughton, John Rudgers, Milton Merle, Lisa Bowman, David Rayner, David Foote, Joshua Spencer, Matthew Shearing, Jamie Flint, Jodi Chamberlain, Elaine Boss

Supervisor's Agriculture & Planning Committees

A. Douglas Berwanger, Chairman

Howard Miller, John Knab, E. Joseph Gozelski, Committee Chairs

Kyle Glosser, James Fleischman, Ellen Grant, Anne Humphrey, Douglas Patti, Larry Rogers, Jean Totstline, John Copeland, Sally Meeder, Jerry Davis, Harold Bush

County Planning Board Members

W. Jerome Smith, Chairman

Dana Grover, David Dutton, Richard Eliasch, Thomas Ayers, Douglas Wolcott, Robert Kelley, Walter Stevens, David Reckahn, Arthur Klein, Norman George, Leslie Shearing, Mel Kensinger, Douglas Post, Richard Cordz

Wyoming County Cornell Cooperative Extension

Bruce Tillapaugh, Jason Murphy, Steve Childs

Wyoming County Soil & Water: Nancy Herman

American Farmland Trust: David Haight, Diane Held Phillips, Jerry Cosgrove, Kristen Ferguson

We also gratefully acknowledge the important contributions made by those who generously shared their time and ideas by attending meetings, completing surveys, or reviewing the draft plan.

Project funding was provided through a grant from NYS Agriculture & Markets and matching funds from the WC Board of Supervisors.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

Extensive survey work was done to gather information about Wyoming County's agricultural sector, identify key issues facing the agricultural industry, and developing and prioritizing plan recommendations. Written surveys were sent to four groups:

Farmers:	377 Sent	137 Returned	(36% Rate of Return)
Rural Landowners:	100 Sent	22 Returned	(22% Rate of Return)
Agribusinesses:	172 Sent	53 Returned	(30.8% Rate of Return)
Local Officials:	186 Sent	40 Returned	(21.5% Rate of Return)

More detailed in-depth interviews were done with a smaller group of 30 farmers to elicit further detailed information and opinions.

The following sections summarize the results from the various surveys. Complete survey reports are included in Volume II, Technical Appendix. The Farmer, Rural Landowners, and Agribusiness surveys were done by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wyoming County. The Local Officials survey was done by the WC Planning and Development Office.

Ag Producers Survey

Agricultural producers were surveyed to identify their concerns and opinions regarding farmland protection and agricultural economic development topics. The survey had three sections. The first section focused on business management, the second on the farm business environment, and the third on the agricultural land base.

There were 377 surveys mailed to Wyoming County farm producers. Of these, 137 were returned for a 36% response rate.

Profile of Responses

Seventy three percent of survey responses indicated their land was being actively farmed. Principal farm enterprises in the county include dairy and livestock production as well as cash crops such as hay/haylage, grains and vegetables. Other important crops include tree and small fruits, maple related products, christmas trees, equine, and horticulture specialties. Roughly 79% of those surveyed considered themselves full time farmers, with approximately 73% of their household income coming from farming. Surveys were received from every town in the county representing over 47,000 acres. These operations employed 389 people, full time, part time, and seasonally, not including the farm owner and spouse.

Farm Management

Most of the producers surveyed planned to continue in agriculture for more than 5 years. Only 2% planned to exit farming within the next year. Twenty seven percent planned to continue from one to five years. Thirty eight percent of the producers surveyed said they planned to continue to personally operate their farm for six to fifteen more years. Finally, 33% stated that they planned to operate the farm for more than fifteen years.

These operations tended to be sole proprietorships with a few partnerships, corporations, and Limited Liability Companies (question 9).

Overall, roughly 46% of producers surveyed stated that their operation had been somewhat profitable and 31% had been break even with only 4% responding that they were very profitable and roughly 19% responding that they were not profitable over the last 3 year period (question 10).

But the largest number of responses, 24%, stated that they planned to make no change in their operation during the next 5 years while approximately 19% planned to add livestock and 16% planned to acquire acreage. Only about 11% planned to diversify and only 12% planned major capital improvements. Very few planned to sell the whole farm 2%, or to retire, about 7% (question 11).

When asked about the business environment, producers gave a cautious but optimistic view of agriculture in the county. Producers identified the current strong agricultural infrastructure, land resources suited to agriculture, climate, and rural location as the most positive things about agriculture in the county (question 24). The producers in the survey also planned to continue in agriculture in the future, 37% greater than 6 years and 33% greater than 15 years (question 8). The majority of producers, 55%, also planned to transfer the farm to family members who plan to continue farming (question 20).

Farm Business Environment

The top three future difficulties cited by these producers were profitability, taxes and urbanization (question 23). Fifty-nine percent of producers cited increased farm profitability as the key to helping them keep their land in agriculture. Lower property taxes were cited by 24% of producers and 13% of the survey responses stated that having someone available to take over the farm would be the most helpful to keeping the land in agriculture (question 21).

Producers were pretty evenly split over concerns about availability of farm land to rent in the near future, with approximately 30% very, 27% somewhat, and 29% not too concerned about rental land availability. Only 15% were not at all concerned about the availability of rental land (question 12).

Forty-six percent of the producers surveyed believed that the community has a neutral perception of agriculture with 39% believing the communities perception was positive and only 15% of producers believing the communities perception was negative. However, 57% of producers thought that the community viewed agriculture as vital to the economy (questions 35,36).

Producers also were asked about their property concerns. The largest number of producers, 47%, cited property taxes as their number one concern. Vandalism and trespassing was the number two concern with 17% of the responses, and non farm neighbor conflict was the number three concern with 16% of the survey responses (question 38). Forty-three percent of producers surveyed reported an increase in development pressure while 57% had not seen an increase (question 39). However the majority of producers, 67%, considered retaining the land base very important for the viability of production agriculture in the county, and 57% considered the county governments role in pursuing farmland protection as very important (questions 40,41).

When asked about specific programs, producers who completed the surveys were very supportive of the agricultural district program and agricultural value assessment, with 95% participating in these two programs (questions 42, 43). However only 76% of those surveyed were participating in the Farmers school tax credit program. Of those who did not participate, the most cited reason was lack of information about the program.

Producers thought that state tax reduction programs and agricultural districts were effective tools for protecting farmland in the county. There were moderate levels of support for local right to farm laws, lease of development rights, and agricultural zoning (question 45). The respondents also cited productivity of the land for crop production as the most important factor for participating in land preservation programs. Willingness of participants and contiguous blocks of land were the second and third most important factors (question 46).

Producers cited the most positive things about agriculture in Wyoming County as the strong infrastructure (network of dealers and suppliers, goods and services), the quality of the land for agricultural production, the good climate and rainfall, and the rural nature of our location.

When producers were asked what things the county could do to retain and improve agriculture, reducing taxes was the number one response. Attracting processing operations was second and lowering farm assessments was tied with non farm public education for third.

Agribusiness Survey

There were 53 (30.8%) surveys returned out of 172 mailed out. One survey had unacceptable data, thus 52 surveys were tabulated for analysis.

Findings

A survey instrument was developed to access the perceptions of businesses in the county who serve agricultural clients. These included businesses from the feed, veterinary, chemical, equipment, construction, financial and insurance fields as well as many other types of businesses.

Businesses that responded to the survey were principally located in the towns of Arcade, Warsaw, Attica, Java, and Perry. No business responses were received from five towns: Covington, Genesee Falls, Middlebury, Orangeville, and Wethersfield.

The majority of agricultural businesses in the county are well-established with over 63 percent having been in businesses longer than 20 years. About 38 percent have even been in business longer than 40 years. This exhibits a long-standing commitment to the counties agricultural producers by the business sector.

These businesses are also major employers with 755 full time, 67 part time, and 39 seasonal employees. The majority of these positions are full time (88%).

When agribusinesses were asked about the importance of agriculture and local customers, forty-nine percent stated that farm customers were extremely valuable to their business. Another 31 percent viewed farm customers as quite valuable to the business, while 16 percent viewed farm customers as somewhat valuable and only 4 percent viewed them as not all that valuable to their business.

When asked about the percentage of customers from within the county, 12 percent stated zero to 25 percent, 31 percent of businesses stated 25 to 50 percent, 35 percent stated between 50 and 75 percent and 23 percent stated that Wyoming County customers make up between 75 and 100 percent of their customer base.

The Future

Agribusinesses reported on their plans for the future. Many of the businesses surveyed planned to make changes and investments in their operation in the next five years.

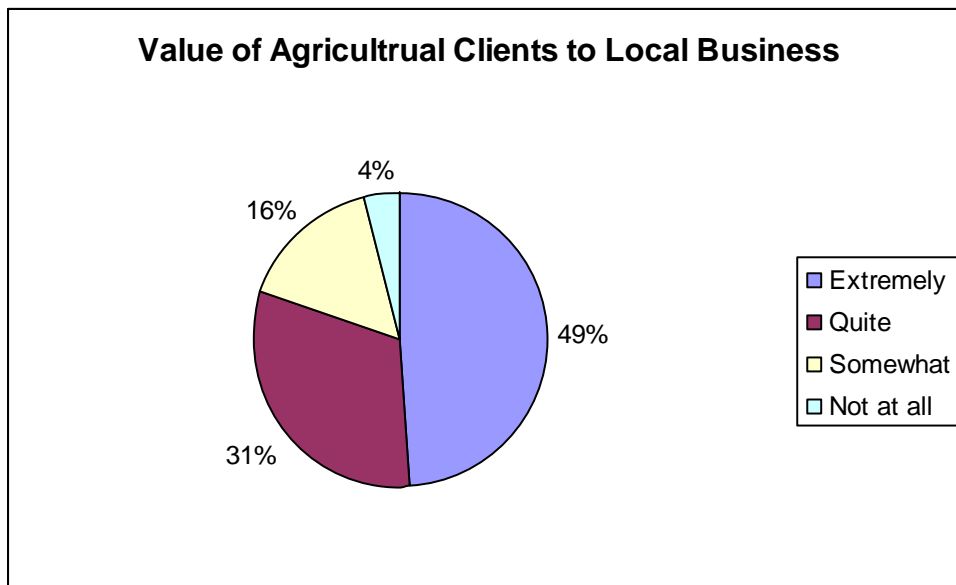
Thirty-seven percent planned to increase the size of their operation, twenty-two percent planned to increase their agricultural sales, and 25 percent planned to stay the same.

Some 37% planned to increase their operation and 22% planned to increase agricultural sales. Approximately 25% planned to stay the same.

In the next five years, the businesses surveyed plan to make modest investments in capital items such as land, machinery and buildings. Very few businesses planned to invest more than \$250,000 with the majority planning on investments under \$50,000.

When asked to rank the top three challenges facing businesses in the county, the top response was “High cost of doing business” with 27% of responses. Second highest ranked response was “Loss of farm clientele” with 18% of responses. The third most chosen response was “Government regulations” with 16%.

The majority of businesses viewed the protection of farmland as important to their success with over half stating it was very important (59%), and many considered it somewhat important (27%).



Businesses were asked to describe if several factors have increased, stayed the same, or decreased. These factors include number of customers, sales totals, dollar value of sales, and profits.

Sixty-nine percent of businesses surveyed thought that the future outlook for their business looked positive. Fourteen percent thought the outlook was very positive while 16 percent had a negative outlook and 2 percent had a very negative outlook for the future of their business.

The biggest help from agencies would come in the form of business or enterprise development with 29 percent of responses. Eleven percent also stated labor training would be the best help to them.

The businesses surveyed were asked about expanding their business. Thirty seven percent said it would take more customers for them to expand. Almost as many businesses, 31 percent said it would take better profit margins. Fewer said it would take favorable financing, 10 percent, available labor, 7 percent, trained salesmen or technicians, 7 percent, and only 4 percent stated other.

Customers from farms make up significant portions of the customer base for the businesses surveyed. Farm customers make up greater than 75% of customers for 38% of respondents. Another 13 % of those surveyed responded that 50 to 75% of their customer base is from farmers or farm businesses. Businesses were also asked about the percentage of their customer base that was from within the county. A large percentage (23%) indicated that 75 to 100% of their customers come from within the county. The largest response (35%) was that between 50 and 75% of customers come from within the county. This is not unexpected as several businesses in the county serve a large regional agricultural sector.

Similar regional businesses accounted for the largest source of competition for local businesses further enforcing the regional scope of the agricultural industry. Other businesses in the county made up the bulk of the remaining competition to local businesses with very few businesses feeling competition from national or internet based businesses.

The businesses surveyed considered farm customers important to their business with 31% indicating they were quite valuable and 49% indicating they were extremely valuable.

Rural Landowners Survey

Surveys were mailed to 100 rural landowners. Twenty-two of these surveys were returned for a response rate of 22%. Following is a summary of survey highlights.

Respondents owned land in every WC town except for the Towns of Arcade and Java. The average acreage owned per respondent was 160.6 acres.

The primary use of the respondent's land was for rental or lease to a farmer.

Increased farm profitability and lower property taxes were cited most often as factors to help keep land in agriculture.

The top three difficulties facing WC agriculture were:

- ◆ taxes,
- ◆ high operating costs and profitability,
- ◆ low prices.

The three most positive factors about WC agriculture were:

- ◆ natural resources like water, weather, soils and land,
- ◆ rural quality of life,
- ◆ skills and productive work ethics of farmers.

A strong majority of respondents felt that local, state, and federal actions/policies have generally had minor impacts on their land.

Most respondents felt that their towns performed okay at dealing with various farm issues.

The top three things that respondent's towns could do to assist agriculture are:

- ◆ minimize taxes,
- ◆ develop better ways to deal with conflicts between farms and non-farm neighbors,
- ◆ minimize regulations that restrict agriculture.

WC government was rated strongest on building a pro-business environment for agriculture and weakest on addressing impacts of non-farm growth on farms.

The top four things that WC government could do to assist agriculture are:

- ◆ limit taxes,
- ◆ improve promotion of agriculture and its products,
- ◆ lower fuel costs and keep best land in farming.

The top three obstacles facing WC farms are:

- ◆ high cost of doing business in NYS,
- ◆ poor prices for products,
- ◆ taxes.

Most respondents felt their local community had a positive attitude towards agriculture and farmers. Most respondents also felt that their community perceives agriculture as a vital economic segment.

Most respondents expect to continue working their farmland or rent it to other farmers for the next five years.

The top property concerns are:

- ◆ property taxes,
- ◆ vandalism and trespassing.

When asked if there was an increase in development over the last five years, nine responded yes while twelve responded no.

The effects of development pressure were:

- ◆ loss of farming,
- ◆ increased traffic,
- ◆ increased taxes because of new demand for community services.

All respondents agreed that retention of the agricultural land base was important. Most respondents thought it was important that county government have an active role in protecting farm land from development.

The majority of respondents do not participate in the NYS Farmers' School Tax Credit Program. Lack of information was the biggest reason given.

The top four programs that could be an effective tool for protecting WC farmland were:

- ◆ NYS tax reductions,
- ◆ NYS agricultural districts,
- ◆ local right to farm laws,
- ◆ agricultural zoning that limits the right to construct new buildings in priority farming areas.

Municipal Officials Survey

This survey was mailed to 186 municipal officials. Forty-one surveys were returned for a response rate of 22%. Respondents were not asked to identify themselves, however, we do know that surveys were returned from the following communities:

Town of Eagle, Town of Java, Town of Warsaw, Town of Covington, Town of Sheldon, Village of Silver Springs, Town and Village of Castile, Town of Pike, Town of Orangeville, Town and Village of Arcade, and Town of Perry.

Most survey responders appeared to understand the importance of agriculture to their community. The economic impacts of agriculture were rated the highest with 79% of responders saying it was very important. The environmental qualities and quality of life benefits provided by farms received somewhat lower ratings.

The top five key agricultural issues identified by survey responders were:

- ◆ Road maintenance and improvements
- ◆ Manure management and odors
- ◆ Farm economics
- ◆ Various land development/use and zoning issues
- ◆ Taxes

Most survey respondents (94.9%) said there was moderate to no development pressure in their communities.

Most survey responders (88.9%) felt their communities were very or somewhat successful in supporting the business and land use needs of farms.

Somewhat more survey responders were not aware of any recent conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors (56.5%), than those we were aware of recent conflicts (43.6%). The vast majority of conflicts are associated with manure management and/or spreading.

Survey responses to question 6 varied from being proactive (“I would evaluate the complaint then meet with both parties to resolve the issue before it got out of hand.”) to more reactive (“Learn to live with it.”) The variety of responses indicated that there may be a need to develop a more formal mechanism to deal with future problems and conflicts.

Most survey responders did not specify any recent action that their town has taken that affected the local agricultural industry.

The top five issues that town or village officials want more information or assistance about were:

- ◆ Local right to farm laws
- ◆ Key issues facing WC agriculture
- ◆ Tax programs for farmland owners and the fiscal impacts of farmland on local property taxes
- ◆ Addressing farmer/non-farm neighbor conflicts
- ◆ NYS Agricultural Districts and how they relate to local laws and land use planning.

BUSINESS CLIMATE FOR FARMS

Farming is big business in Wyoming County and supporting this important economic sector is a top priority. Farming and agricultural services employ over 1,000 workers which ranks third among all NYS counties.

One of the primary contributing factors to farmland protection is good management combined with long-term business planning. Good management yields higher productivity that makes land more valuable for farming and helps to preserve it. Farms can and do succeed where high levels of management skills exist. The high quality soil resources in Wyoming County are also an important factor.

Farm investment and upgrading under good management are one of the keys to success. Dairy farms may be the best example. To be competitive and compensate for increasingly narrow margins some dairy farms are expanding and modernizing to take advantage of economies of scale or pursuing alternate methods of doing business (e.g., intensive grazing, on-farm processing, etc.). Each of these strategies requires increasingly professional business management skills. When they are pursued successfully, farming is protected as an economic use of the land and the farmland itself is protected.

Farms need to evolve or adapt with changing market conditions. They also need to be mainstreamed into the county's economy by integrating agricultural policy with economic development efforts. Good farm managers and profitable agricultural operations can stimulate further agricultural development.

Agricultural Sector Overview

Wyoming County's agriculture is somewhat diverse in the variety of products grown but is highly dominated by its large dairy sector.

Market Value of Agriculture Products Sold, 1992-2002							
Product	1992 (\$)	% of Total	1997 (\$)	% of Total	2002 (\$)	% of Total	% Change 92-02
Dairy	82,858,000	78.9%	110,208,000	81.8%	128,456,000	72.2%	55.0%
Cattle/Calves	9,931,000	9.5%	9,959,000	7.4%	18,148,000	10.2%	82.7%
Other Crops/Hay/Silage	7,374,000	7.0%	8,744,000	6.4%	7,468,000	4.2%	1.3%
Grain	2,067,000	2.0%	2,473,000	1.8%	4,249,000	2.4%	105.6%
Vegetables/Potatoes	1,882,000	1.8%	2,186,000	1.6%	18,300,000	10.3%	*
Other Livestock	916,000	0.9%	1,084,000	0.8%	408,000	0.2%	-55.5%
Totals	105,029,992	100.0%	136,874,000	100.0%	178,004,000	100.0%	69.5%

There has generally been growth across the entire sector over the last decade. Most of this growth has been well above the rate of inflation and reflects true economic gains. The 1992-02 gain in dairy-related sales alone (\$45.6 million) is more than the total dairy sales of most New York State counties. Wyoming County's the second highest agricultural producer in the State, according to the Department of Agriculture and Markets, with estimated 2003 sales of \$178,311,000.

* Note: Much of the text in this section is from material prepared by Shepstone Management for Target Tomorrow, and a report prepared by The Saratoga Associates, A Study of Strategies For The Protection Of NY Farmland.

While this raises the issue of whether the County's agricultural economy is too reliant on the dairy sector, the data indicates that virtually all agricultural segments have expanded on a long term basis. Dairy has produced the largest sales gains, carrying others along with it.

The rate of growth in total agricultural receipts for Wyoming County, up 69.5% between 1992 and 2002, far outpaces New York State, up 19% for the same period.

A number of specialization opportunities have also developed in connection with Wyoming County's dairy industry. There is already significant marketing of "high-bred" cattle from local farmers. Both domestic and international ethnic markets for these cattle exist with much additional potential. There are also cattle being sold to Maryland and buyers elsewhere for genetic/pharmaceutical research and product designs. Heifer-raising is also growing as a specialization option. Similar opportunities exist in maintaining dry cows and raising "wet calves."

There is also some potential for selling hay to larger farms, particularly large bales. However, Wyoming County is not especially competitive as a hay producer. This is due to weather constraints and the inability to achieve the very high quality demanded for export out of the region.

Potato farms have consolidated over the years and those remaining are cost-competitive commodity producers for the potato chip market. The industry should survive well, provided Herr's and Wise continues to need chip potatoes from the area. Soils are not especially good for table stock varieties of potatoes but potato farmers are attempting to diversify more, particularly with regard to rotational crops. Snap peas, hay, corn and other vegetables are being grown under contract and there is considerable interest in making more effective use of farmland resources. A problem for growers is the lack of any price competition among potato buyers. Another challenge for potato farms are changing eating trends which has reduced demand and prices.

Niche opportunities being explored by area farmers include cheeses, maple syrup and some agricultural tourism. Agricultural tourism includes foreign and school visitors to the larger dairy farms. Profits from such tourism have been very limited, however. Better marketing will be needed to support the growth of these opportunities. There is no local technical assistance for farmers in developing agricultural tourism or specialty product markets.

Wyoming County's Dairy Industry

Wyoming County's dairy success story is quite remarkable. There are now 95,386 cows in the County and it is also the top New York State producer of silage corn, and is ranked 8th out of 2,307 corn silage-producing counties throughout the nation. This corn silage is virtually all purchased or used locally by the dairy industry.

This status reflects a focus on agriculture as a business. Many of the area's dairy farmers choose dairying as an economic alternative to cash crops. They approached it as a business opportunity and invested in expansion and modernization that have produced a dynamic agricultural economic sector envied by other counties.

Growth of this magnitude, while much of the agricultural sector elsewhere in the Northeast has been stagnant or declining, is explained by the individual actions of local farmers who have introduced economies of scale through expansion and employed various new technologies.

There has been a continuing transition of cash crop farms to dairy farms and growth in the size of those farms. Numbers of dairy farms decreased 37.7% countywide between 1992 and 2002. The 218 dairies recorded in 2002, however, had an average of 225 cows each, up from 108 in 1992, an increase of 108.3%. Over half of the cows in Wyoming County are on the 25 farms with 500 or more cows.

There is potential for still further growth in this segment of the economy. The available land base is a limiting factor because much of the best available farmland has already been put into dairy use. Significant opportunities remain to increase production by adding cows, especially if better manure management technologies can be employed. There is also additional land available in the North-Central area of the County that can still be converted to dairying.

The potential is evidenced by the increase in Wyoming County farms with \$500,000 or more in sales. Census of Agriculture data for 1992-2002 indicates these farms increased by 78.6% over the decade, from 42 to 75, despite low milk prices during this period. However, the number of smaller farms with sales of less than \$100,000 still comprise 73.1% of total farms.

Average farm sales (dairy and non-dairy) have also increased substantially countywide, growing from \$142,701 in 1992 to \$232,078 in 2002, a gain of 62.6% that closely matches the increases in dairy earnings. Given changes in dairy numbers, farm consolidations account for perhaps half this growth with expansions of existing farms representing the remainder.

While very low milk prices in 2002/03 caused great financial stress, the very strong rebound in 2004 with record high prices in the second quarter provided badly needed recovery. According to Mark Stephenson at Cornell University, 2005 should be another excellent milk price year.

Small Dairy Viability

Small and mid-sized dairy farms are still an important part of Wyoming County's dairy sector. About 60% of WC farms have less than 180 acres. These farms are a vital part of the County's economic base.

The debate about dairy farm viability and the prospects for small and mid-size dairy farms have long been at issue. Some regard small and mid-size farms as having poor long-term futures in the context of increasing concentration and scale in dairy farming, processing, and retailing. In such a view, small and mid-size farms cannot compete with large farms because they typically cannot generate the economies of scale needed. Larger farms may get volume discounts on purchased inputs and may also use technologies that enable greater labor efficiency. Some regulations for control of environmental pollution at the watershed level require even small farms to install expensive mitigation practices that could put them out of business.

But at the same time that some are challenging the viability of smaller dairy farms, others point to the continuing success of well-managed smaller farms and those with innovative marketing practices. Many smaller dairies do provide an adequate livelihood and high quality of life for farm families. Some of these farmers use cost reduction practices like management intensive rotational grazing, and some have cost of production structures that are on par with larger enterprises.

Other farmers have found appropriate diversification strategies that enable profitable use of family labor and on-farm resources. Some have turned to niche marketing of products to compensate for missing economies of scale that are possessed by competitors. Others help stabilize the farm

business through income and benefits from off-farm work by a family member or operator that provide resources for family living, farm enterprise investment, and insurance against low milk prices.

In summary, it appears that there are a number of opportunities for smaller dairy operators to remain viable by bringing together strategies that make effective use of farm household labor and resources, cost control measures, diversification options, and marketing innovations.

Industry Trends

There are, in addition to farm consolidation and growing herd sizes, some significant major trends in agriculture and dairying that will impact Wyoming County. These include changes in the way milk is priced, vertical integration of the industry, growing sophistication in marketing and development of new niche markets.

The changes in milk pricing formulae to a system of component pricing more related to fluctuating market conditions, have generally been advantageous to Wyoming County. Some farmers have also started utilizing futures trading and forward pricing to lock in their milk prices and feed costs and thereby better control their cash flows. This objective has become ever more important as there has been extreme volatility in recent milk pricing.

Vertical integration of all agricultural sectors is likely to continue. Large reliable milk processors are needed by retailers such as Wal-Mart and this has caused those processors to seek out large dependable suppliers of milk, thereby encouraging cooperative consolidation and reliance upon larger dairy farms. New alliances among farm cooperatives, processors and retailers are taking place to ensure the availability of supplies and to increase efficiencies. Wyoming County will be affected by these changes.

The adaptation to consumer wants and development of new and innovative products can dramatically impact sales of milk and dairy products. Paradoxically, consolidation and vertical integration within the industry also opens niche-marketing opportunities for smaller companies.

Consolidation in the supermarket industry largely killed off the general stores and small food markets at one point. They have, nonetheless, re-emerged with a vengeance in the form of the ubiquitous convenience store and specialty food shops because these offer services, products and quality not offered in larger stores.

Competitive Advantages And Opportunities

The following are some of the competitive advantages and opportunities possessed by the Wyoming County agricultural sector.

The business-like attitude of Wyoming County farmers has enabled its agricultural industry to grow and expand. This willingness to look at farm enterprise from the perspective of business plan objectives is an essential ingredient to future success. Dairy and non-dairy farmers of all sizes have to work together in strategic alliances. These arrangements have helped each to specialize and stay competitive. Individual farmers have used tools such as dairy futures trading, biotechnology and the latest milking equipment to be profitable.

Soils are excellent for growing corn and other grain. Very few counties in the U.S. grow more acres of corn silage than Wyoming County. This ability to generate low cost, high quality feed

sources for total mixed rations is a foundation of the County's ability to accommodate a large dairy industry.

The status of Wyoming County as the dairy center of New York State, and a major dairy center of the Northeast, provides a critical mass of both farmers and farm suppliers. This ensures availability of competitively priced farm inputs. It also facilitates the strategic alliances that allow each partner to specialize and increase profit margins.

There is, for example, a constant and growing demand for "wet calf" raising and heifer-growing. Some cooperatives have identified this as a profitable business for themselves but smaller farm owners can easily get into the market as an alternative to milking cows. The profit margins are not large but the labor requirements are quite often limited and can be combined with other jobs to allow the farmer to retain his or her property and cover the land carrying costs. Quality providers who regularly deliver healthy animals on schedule can also receive premium prices.

The sheer volume of farm activity in Wyoming County also presents opportunities to develop other agricultural businesses. For example, there is significant demand for quality-bred cattle for export. This can generate much additional income for the farm while also allowing focus on breeding programs that will improve the herd from a production standpoint. Agricultural tourism has some potential to support additional on-farm profit centers.

Wyoming County is proximate to the bulk of the U.S. and Canadian urban populations, offering a ready market for any agricultural product the area is capable of producing. There is also significant growth in demand for organic and natural products in these markets. Organic dairies have been successful and there are now supplies of organic foodstuffs available regionally that make it much more feasible to get into this market. Specialty cheeses are also in demand among ethnic communities migrating into the Northeast. There are opportunities for enterprising small to medium-sized dairy owners to establish their own on-farm processing facilities to sell to these markets.

There is also potential to develop other non-dairy specialty products including new varieties of locally grown vegetables and meats produced without the use of antibiotics or hormones. Soils will support the raising of many of these vegetables and the County already includes a significant sheep industry.

Wyoming County's large volume dairy farms are capable of producing milk at costs per hundredweight that enable them to both survive and prosper. This allows access to capital and provides incentives for further expansion and modernization. Changes in Federal milk pricing formulae, particularly multiple component pricing, have favored farmers who manage effectively and can compete. Wyoming County's farmers are equipped to take advantage of this system and add \$0.75 to \$1.00 to their price per hundredweight. They also have access to a number of processors from whom they can secure quality and volume premiums and with whom they can negotiate hauling rates and pricing.

New York State has some of the most aggressive programs in the country that protect the right to farm and provide tax relief, and Cornell University is a recognized leader in agricultural research. Both factors provide important support for Wyoming County agriculture.

Developing biotechnology has impacted the Wyoming County agricultural sector and will continue to affect the way farmers do business. Such opportunities exist in genetically engineering various crops to help produce pharmaceuticals. Research in this "biofarming" field is rapidly expanding and it is now thought possible, for example, to produce blood clot dissolving drugs

from corn. An alternative technique is to breed these characteristics into milk producing animals. Wyoming County could be a perfect laboratory to explore both options and generate new lines of farm business.

Challenges Facing WC Agriculture

Maintaining/Enhancing Farm Profitability: The health and future of this important economic sector depends on the profitability of WC farms. Without profitable farm businesses the local agricultural sector will suffer as will other local businesses and Wyoming County.

Competition From Lower Cost Regions: The lack of diversity in the local agricultural economy makes it vulnerable to the up and down prices of the dairy market. During normal short-term periods of low pricing, this may have little impact on the Wyoming County dairy industry due to the high level of businesses management found here. However, a sustained period of low prices caused by competition from other lower cost milk producing regions (e.g., California and Arizona mega-dairies) could be devastating to the local economy.

The negative impacts of New York State's generally high taxes, utility costs and land prices compared to Pacific and Southern regions where weather lowers the costs of building and cropping, cheap hydroelectric power is available in more places, taxes are lower, and land is inexpensive, is a significant challenge.

The economies of scale that have fueled Wyoming County's 's dairy industry expansion are also subject to the laws of diminishing returns. The marginal benefits of increased size will decrease at some point. Fixed costs can only be spread so far and once full capacity of the items they represent is reached, additional investment is required. The practical limits of expansion for Wyoming County farmers cannot be precisely known and it appears they have not yet been reached. Nevertheless, for each individual dairy there is a point at which further growth will no longer pay back the benefits required to finance it. This factor could limit the ability of local farmers to compete over the long-term with other regions offering inexpensive land combined with lower operating costs.

Limited Land Resources: The available land base is now the major limiting factor for further growth of Wyoming County's dairy industry. There are some areas in the north-central area of the County still available and cash-crop farms that could be converted to dairy farms, but the bulk of land that could go into dairy farming has already been put to this use, particularly in the land competitive eastern side of the County where soils tend to be somewhat better.

The land base is also limited without improved manure management systems that will permit nutrients to be exported from the area. Acreage available to grow additional corn silage is the other restricting factor. Expansions may have to rely not only upon utilization of the remaining acreages available in certain parts of the County but also employment of technologies that will permit more intensive use of existing acreages everywhere in the County (e.g. composting systems that will allow manure to be exported, manure digesters).

Conflicts With Other Land Uses: There are also limits to expansion of the agricultural sector inherent in the density of development within farm areas. While Wyoming County is distinctly rural in character, it is not without new development. By comparison with some of the western states, Wyoming County includes far more farm neighbors, each of whom poses a potential conflict over noise, odors and farm traffic. As the area grows and farms also expand, more conflict is inevitable. Farm expansion becomes more and more difficult in such circumstances. Local zoning regulations do

not restrict scattered site residential development in agricultural areas. Over time this type of development can create serious problems.

Labor Availability: Labor is in short supply nearly everywhere but the agricultural sector is particularly hard hit because its tight profit margins limit the ability to offer competitive pay rates for what is often less than appealing work. The supply of workers tends to be "poor quality, un-trainable, lacking in ambition and without needed skills," according to some farmers. Immigrant labor has become a necessity and works well from the standpoint of addressing these issues but raises a host of new ones related to housing, health care, etc. Some farms are already large enough to have their own human resources staff. Nevertheless, many farmers are not trained labor managers.

Depletion of the labor supply available to accommodate farm expansions would threaten the ability of Wyoming County farmers to compete. Continued expansion will demand similarly large numbers of new employees who may not be available.

CAFO/Environmental Compliance: Air and water quality regulations pertaining to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) will continue to impact Wyoming County. All 300+ cow dairy farms are subject to detailed manure management planning requirements. There is not nearly enough money available to pay for the necessary planning and improvements. This burden could lead to the demise of several farms if additional help beyond the existing efforts is not made available on both fronts. Some farmers feel that consumers demanding CAFO improvements and phosphorous reductions should help pay for them.

Ag Development Alternatives

Added-Value Processing: Adding value to farm products before they leave the County is also a method increasingly being used by farmers and others to increase profitability. There are various international and other firms marketing on-farm equipment that can put a dairy farmer in the business of producing yogurt, ice cream, butter and other added value products. With proper marketing and access to the relatively close Buffalo, Rochester and New York City markets, this holds promise for smaller dairy farmers as a means of gaining more control over pricing and their own incomes.

There are also organic dairies now in the area and more farms in transition to organic, attracted by the \$20 plus/cwt. price and free milk hauling. Transition has been made practical by the availability of organic grain from regional cash crop farmers who could not afford to fertilize over the last several years, thereby building the market at both ends.

Promotion Of Strategic Alliances: The greatest opportunity for dairy industry expansion appears to be in strategic alliances between dairy and cash crop farmers. More crop farmers are diversifying into production of field crops and dairy-related enterprises to complement their field rotation programs and make better use of their land resources. Without such alliances farmers will only be able to expand in many cases by importing forages.

Some small farmers can prosper through alliances with one another and larger operators where equipment and services are shared as individual farms specialize. Some farmers are already renting fields to others and then buying back the final products for their own use. Others are purchasing TMR (Total Mixed Ration) from their neighbors.

Forage growing also offers opportunities. It requires a large land base which often becomes available when smaller dairy farms leave the business. The best opportunities exist where alliances between vegetable growers and dairy farmers are made. The former can rent land from the latter and sell products back to the dairy farms. This arrangement has worked very well with some medium-sized operations. Custom harvesting is another niche possibility. Timeliness is an issue but can be overcome with good management.

Development Of Niche Markets And Diversification: Farm diversification offers some opportunities to earn higher margins from small crops and enterprises. Dependence on the market price of a single commodity can be dangerous, but diversity can help to spread the risk and allow a farmer to address niche opportunities. This is why many small farmers are now diversifying into new niche products with higher profit margins. A corollary is more and more emphasis on direct marketing of farm products. Farm stands have gained greatly in popularity. Farmers markets can become important tourist attractions, providing opportunities for local farmers to earn extra income. A surprising number of Western and Central New York farmers already depend on direct marketing for much of their income by selling farm products to the New York City markets and over the internet. Wyoming County also has access to the Buffalo and Rochester markets.

Other possible opportunities are available in the County that would need incentive programs, innovative financing and promotion of research and testing. These include cranberries (being done in Oswego County), windmills, woody bio-mass, corn for ethanol and similar ventures. Internet marketing also offers potential, particularly with regard to specialty cheeses, yogurts, organic products and the like produced on-farm or in small facilities. These are, however, difficult to finance and there are regulatory obstacles. There could also be a real opportunity to develop a "composting cooperative" selling bagged cow manure, methanol, or pelletized organic fertilizer such as is done by an Erie County poultry farmer. This would also address a serious problem with manure disposal.

Green-labeling of farm products is another trend. It can include organic products, fresh produce, pastured poultry, natural beef or firewood taken from forests managed under environmentally friendly conditions. There are examples and/or opportunities for each of these in Wyoming County. One of the challenges is to avoid diluting the value of the green label by employment of lax standards, balancing this concern against setting standards so high that small farmers cannot participate. The "Pride of New York" program appears much more workable and is now being used by hundreds of producers.

A good example of very specific green-labeling is the Chesapeake Milk program launched successfully by Penn State University, EPA, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and others. It labels milk, produced under water quality programs designed to protect the Bay, with an environmental certification and then adds a 5¢ per half-gallon premium onto the price. That premium is then returned to participating farmers as a profit share and for use in covering the costs of environmental improvements.

Futures Trading: The Dairy Futures Program has produced mixed results but it is a tool to hedge milk prices. Kraft is trying to do long-term contracts that allows their company to hedge the futures market. There is similar interest across the corporate side of the dairy industry but only limited interest to date in the farm community. Some Wyoming County farmers (both potato and dairy) have used the program effectively, however, and there is considerable interest locally in using forward pricing to control feed costs and milk prices. Farmers need to know their production costs to be successful at it and if they operate with this kind of knowledge, such programs can greatly help in evening out cash flows. Much more education on this issue is needed within the farm community and there are experienced traders available locally who could help explain how the system works.

Promotion Of Low Cost Input Options: Cost-reducing measures such as intensive grazing are very feasible and there are many income enhancing possibilities for small farmers using such practices. While intensive grazing is not for everyone, it has the potential to dramatically increase the profitability of small to medium sized dairy farms. It is a concept well worth exploring.

There are also many opportunities for small farmers to link with larger farmers in a satellite or alliance arrangements where both can lower their costs together. Smaller operations can thereby combine grazing with winter feeding of supplements and actually operate as seasonal farms.

LAND USE TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Introduction

Wyoming County's agricultural industry is a major economic stimulus and important employment sector. Agriculture is also the dominant land use in the county with 72% of its land base in New York State Agricultural Districts and roughly 55% of the County's land in active agricultural use or ownership.

The county's agricultural land base is a critical strategic asset for its land intensive farm businesses. This report section analyzes land use trends for Wyoming County and makes projections about future land use change and their implications for the county's agricultural industry. The following topics are reviewed in this report section.

- ◆ Population Change
 - Sprawl Without Growth: The Upstate Paradox
- ◆ Farm Trends
- ◆ Real Estate Market
 - Current Housing Characteristics
 - Real Estate Sales: 1993-2002
 - Realtor and Banker Interviews
 - Infrastructure Assessment
- ◆ Summary

Population Change

Wyoming County is one of the more "rural" counties in the nine county Genesee Finger Lakes region. As noted in Table 1 and Figure 1, Wyoming County has the 3rd lowest overall population and the 2nd lowest population density in the region. The county also had the 3rd smallest increase in population density between 1990 and 2000 after Seneca County (which lost population during the period) and Genesee County.

Table 1 Population Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau

	Area (Sq mi)	Population		Population Density Per Square Mile			
		1990	2000	1990	2000	Total Change	Percent Change
Genesee County	494.1	60,060	60,370	121.6	122.1	0.5	0.5%
Livingston County	632.2	62,372	64,328	98.7	101.8	3.1	3.1%
Monroe County	659.3	713,968	735,343	1,082.9	1,115.3	32.4	3.0%
Ontario County	644.4	95,101	100,224	147.6	155.5	8.1	5.4%
Orleans County	391.4	41,846	44,171	106.9	112.9	6.0	5.6%
Seneca County	324.9	33,683	33,342	103.7	102.6	-1.1	-1.0%
Wayne County	604.2	89,123	93,765	147.5	155.2	7.7	5.2%
Wyoming County	593	42,507	43,424	71.7	73.2	1.5	2.2%
Yates County	338.2	22,810	24,621	67.4	72.8	5.4	7.9%

Figure 1 Population Density Per Square Mile, Genesee Finger Lakes Region

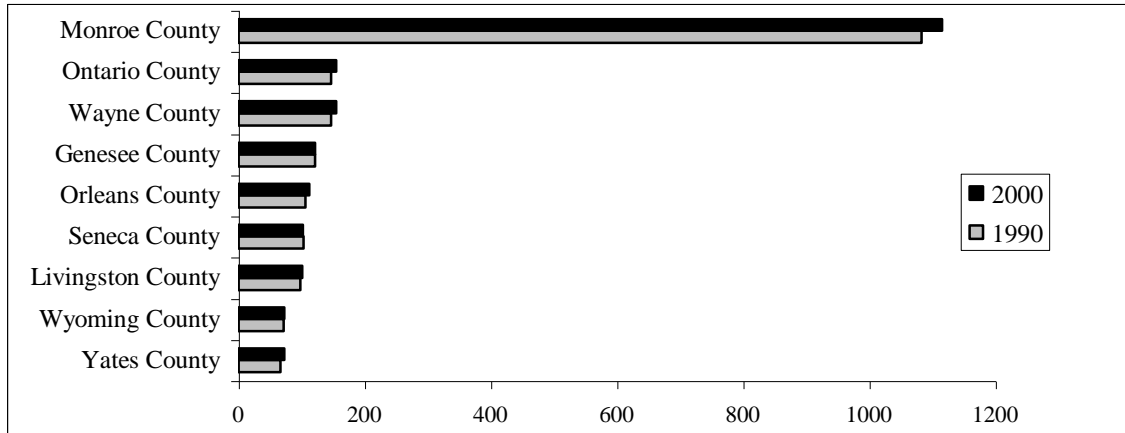
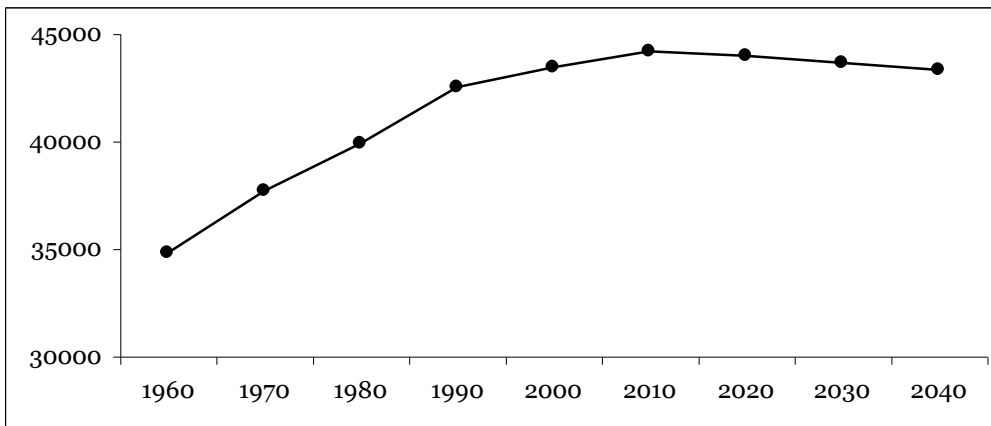


Figure 2 Wyoming County Population 1960-2040, Genesee Finger Lakes RPC



Wyoming County’s population grew by approximately 25% between 1960 and 2000 from 34,793 to 43,424 residents. The county’s population growth rate was highest during the period between 1960 and 1970 (8% growth) and 1980 and 1990 (6.5% growth) and slowed considerably during the 1990s (2% growth).

The county’s population growth is projected to continue its slower growth until the total population reaches a peak of 44,165 people in 2010. Population levels in the county are then projected to decrease between 2010 and 2040 by 876 people (2% loss). This trend is expected to be caused by net out-migration patterns and lower birth rates (Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council, December 2003).

Population trends have differed considerably in various parts of the county. The Town of Arcade grew significantly starting in the 1960s into the 1990s with decennial growth rates of 15.6%, 54.5%, 11.75% and 16.2% respectively. This growth is due in part to the Town's inexpensive electric power, which has spurred residential, commercial and industrial development. The Towns of Bennington and Castile experienced high population growth rates during the 1960s (28.3% and 61% respectively) and have experienced slower but generally higher than county average growth rates since that time.

By comparison, several Wyoming County towns, such as Gainesville, Genesee Falls, Middlebury and Perry have experienced very slight population increases between 1960 and 2000. However, these fairly static overall population levels during this forty-year period fail to capture considerable fluctuations in decennial growth rates. For example, the Town of Genesee Falls grew by 0% in the 1960s and 39.3% in the 1970s but decreased by 11.8% and 5.7% in the 1980s and 1990s – leaving an overall population change from 1960 to 2000 of 63 people (16% overall increase).

Population projections for 2000 to 2040 indicate very small population gains or small population losses for Wyoming County towns and villages. The only towns projected to experience sustained population gains during the period are the towns of Arcade, Bennington, Castile and Orangeville with overall population growth of 7.9%, 5.7%, 3.4% and 3.5% respectively.

Sprawl Without Growth: The Upstate Paradox

Cornell University's Dr. Rolf Pendall and the Brookings Institution recently completed a study titled "Sprawl Without Growth: The Upstate Paradox" that analyzed development and population trends in Upstate New York during the 1980s and 1990s. The study found that despite very slow population growth between 1982 and 1997 in Upstate New York (2.6% increase for the period), 425,000 acres of farm and forestland in the region were developed. While Western New York "sprawled less" than other parts of Upstate during the period, 33,000 acres of farm and forestland were developed during the period despite a loss of 64,500 people. The study reinforced findings from other research that population spread – not population growth – is driving the loss of farmland in Upstate New York.

One measure of development patterns is the number of housing units per square mile. As Figure 3 demonstrates, the number of housing units per square mile differs considerably among Wyoming County towns¹. The towns of Castile, Bennington, Java, Arcade, Warsaw and Sheldon had over 20 housing units per square mile in 2000. This contrasts with more rural communities such as Pike, Middlebury, Wethersfield and Genesee Falls that had fewer than 13 housing units per square mile. Between 1980 and 2000, the most significant increases in housing unit density were seen in Castile (71%), Arcade (61%), Wethersfield (60%), Orangeville (56%), Pike (51%), Covington (40%), Bennington (38%) and Java (34%).

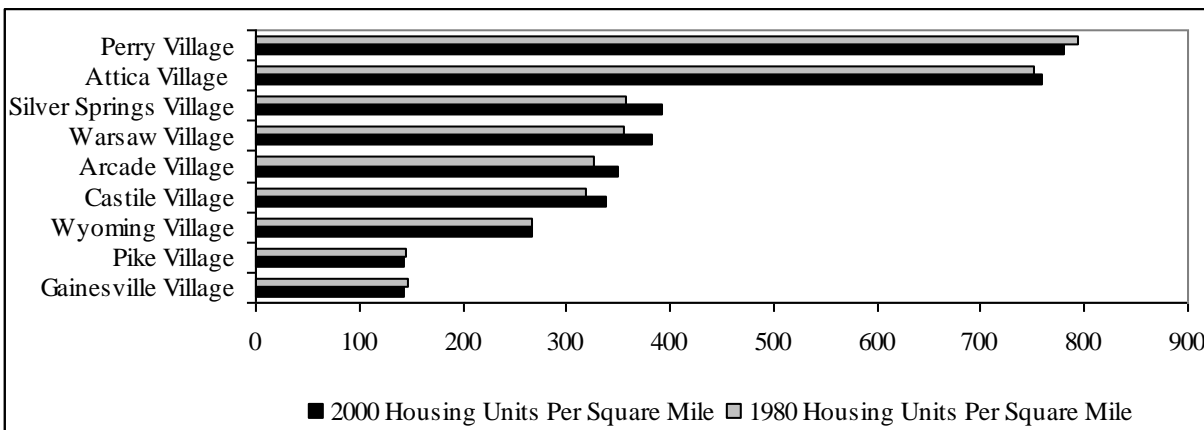
¹ Note that Figure 3 does not include village housing units in these estimates.

Figure 3 Housing Units Per Square Mile, WC Towns (Excluding Villages), US Census Bureau



As expected, Wyoming County villages have much higher housing unit densities when compared with surrounding towns as noted in Figure 4. Maintaining or increasing densities in villages and hamlets (compared with surrounding towns) is important for the retention of Wyoming County’s agricultural land base. Most Wyoming County villages were able to maintain their housing unit density during the period of 1980-2000.

Figure 4 Housing Units Per Square Mile, Wyoming County Villages



Farm Trends

In 2002, approximately 55% (207,900 acres) of Wyoming County's 379,507 acres were estimated to be in farm ownership or use.² The county ranked 3rd in the region in the percent of the county's land base in farms as noted in Figure 5. Between 1987 and 2002, Wyoming County land in farms decreased by roughly 5.6% – significantly lower than the roughly 9% loss statewide during the period.

As outlined in Table 2, land in farms includes cropland (70%), pastureland (5%), woodland on farms (16%) and house lots, ponds, etc. (9%). In 2002, approximately 24.1% of the county's land in farms was rented from non-farm owners. If we assume that most of this rented land was cropland, rented land would constitute over 1/3 of the cropland in Wyoming County in 2002.

Figure 5 2002 Percent of County Land Base in Farms

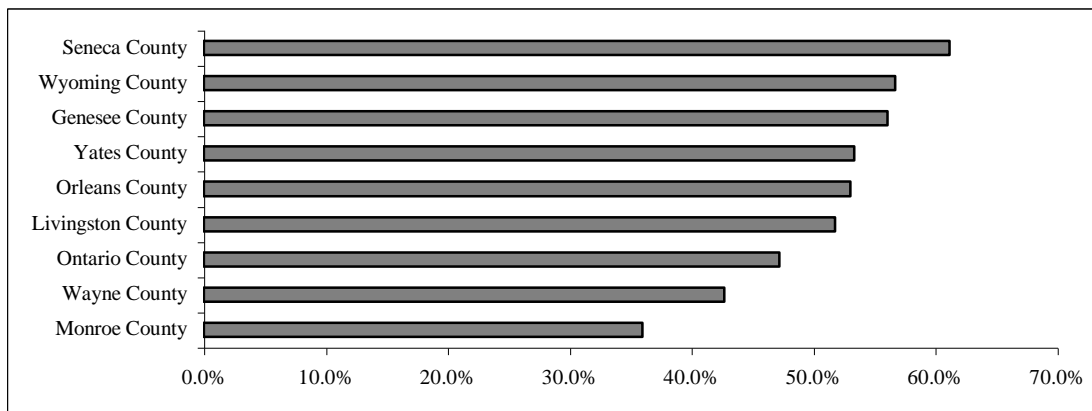


Table 2 Farmland Acres from 2002, 1997, 1992, and 1987 USDA Census of Agriculture

	2002	1997	1992	1987
Cropland, Acres	151,257	136,047	150,557	153,586
Pastureland³	11,912	10,159	10,714	11,554
Woodland on Farms	32,712	31,724	33,761	38,328
Land in House Lots, Ponds, Roads, Wasteland, etc.	19,436	16,972	14,857	16,724
Total Land in Farms	215,317	194,902	209,889	220,192
Proportion of County in Farms	55%	51%	55%	58%
Value of Land and Buildings Per Acre	\$1,341	\$1,099	\$1,008	\$751
Rented Land in Farms, Acres	51,790	43,878	40,955	38,390

In general, the stability of Wyoming County's agricultural land base is consistent with other counties in the region. Genesee and Orleans counties had smaller percentage decreases of cropland and land in farms from 1987 to 1997 than Wyoming while Livingston County had greater reductions.

² As noted in *Target Tomorrow*, there is a discrepancy among estimates of Land in Farms for Wyoming County. This statistic is from New York's Agricultural Statistics Service 2002 estimates which are substantially higher than the 1997 Census of Agriculture statistics produced by the U.S. Dept of Agriculture.

³ Includes pastureland other than cropland or woodland pastured. Total amount of pastureland for Wyoming County was 23,105, 25,827, 30,142 and 34,182 acres for 2002, 1997, 1992, and 1987 respectively.

Table 3 Farmland Acres from 1997 and 2002 USDA Census of Agriculture

	Wyoming		Genesee		Livingston		Orleans	
	2002	Change 97 - 02	2002	Change 97 - 02	2002	Change 97 - 02	2002	Change 97 - 02
Cropland	151,257	11.2%	142,178	-0.4%	154,705	0.4%	108,502	-10.8%
Pastureland⁴	11,912	17.3%	5,504	-50.9%	10,873	-54.1%	2,648	-68.1%
Woodland on Farms	32,712	3.1%	20,338	49.2%	28,428	14.8%	14,682	27.8%
Land in House Lots, Ponds, Roads, Wasteland	19,436	14.5%	9,350	-4.2%	15,490	33.1%	7,115	-14.1%
Total Land in Farms	215,317	10.5%	177,370	3.8%	209,496	6.1%	132,947	-7.3%
Proportion of Area in Farms	55%	4%	56%	2%	52%	3%	53%	-4%
Value of Land and Buildings Per Acre	\$1,341	22.0%	\$1,395	28.6%	\$1,461	33.9%	\$1,241	15.3%
Rented Land in Farms	51,790	18.0%	44,228	-12.9%	49,163	-9.3%	37,664	-14.5%

Wyoming County’s agricultural industry is heavily dominated by the dairy and livestock sector. The county’s low population density is a benefit to the livestock sector as it helps to reduce conflicts between dairy farmers and non-farm neighbors. As noted in Table 4, Wyoming County has the highest number of cows or calves per person and the highest number of cows and calves per square mile among the nine county Genesee Finger Lakes Region. These statistics reflect the potential for future conflict if poorly planned development accelerates in the county’s agricultural areas.

Table 4 Cows/Calves, 2002 Agriculture Census, 2000 Census Population

County	Cows and Calves	Cows / Calves Per Person	Cows / Calves Per Mile ²
Genesee	46,825	0.8	95
Livingston	41,539	0.6	66
Monroe	6,307	0.0	10
Ontario	35,727	0.3	55
Orleans	8,315	0.2	21
Seneca	19,744	0.6	61
Wayne	18,449	0.2	31
Wyoming	95,386	2.2	161
Yates	22,910	0.9	68

Real Estate Market

Current Housing Characteristics

As noted in Table 5, Wyoming County had almost 17,000 housing units in 2000, making it fourth lowest among the nine Genesee Finger Lakes Counties in total housing units. This housing base represents a roughly 7% increase in overall housing units from 1990 to 2000. Almost 15,000 or

⁴ Includes pastureland other than cropland or woodland. Total amount of pastureland for Wyoming County was 23,105, 25,827, 30,142 and 34,182 acres for 2002, 1997, 1992, and 1987 respectively.

88% of these housing units are owner occupied with approximately 7.4% of the remaining units used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

Table 5 Housing Units Per County, US Census Bureau

	Housing Units		Total	Percent
	1990	2000	Change	Change
Genesee County	22,596	24,190	1,594	7.0%
Livingston County	23,084	24,023	939	4.0%
Monroe County	285,524	304,388	18,864	6.6%
Ontario County	38,947	42,647	3,700	9.5%
Orleans County	16,345	17,347	1,002	6.1%
Seneca County	14,314	14,794	480	3.4%
Wayne County	35,188	38,767	3,579	10.2%
Wyoming County	15,848	16,940	1,092	6.9%
Yates County	11,629	12,064	435	3.7%

According to the 2000 Census, roughly 11% of Wyoming County's current housing stock was built during the 1990s, 8% was built during the 1980s, 12% was constructed during the 1970s and 69% was built prior to 1970. The census further indicated that 210 housing units were for sale and an additional 262 units were for rent in Wyoming County in 2000 (2.8% of the overall number of housing units in the county).

Real Estate Sales 1993-2002 (See Volume II for Sales Summary)

Wyoming County's overall real estate market generally stayed between \$31 and \$36 million in annual sales between 1994 and 2002, while the annual acreage sold fluctuated between 5500 and almost 9000 acres per year during the period. These contrast sharply with the roughly 4,000 acres and \$20 million sold in 1993.

The residential market has grown steadily in price since 1993 with the average single family home selling for \$53,136 in 1993 and rising to \$78,673 by 2002. Generally, sales of developed property (combined residential, commercial and industrial sales) have been between 350 and 400 sales per year from 1994 to 2002 – a sharp increase from 1993.

Agricultural sale prices per acre have grown over the last three years and may reflect greater demand by dairy producers for land used for feed production as well as manure management. Overall agricultural sales peaked during the 1994-1999 period with roughly 40 to 75 sales and 2,900 to 3,700 acres per year.

The value of other rural land (defined as non-developed, non-agricultural land) has generally been higher per acre than agricultural land with sale prices ranging generally from \$1,100 to \$1,600 per acre. Overall sales remain strong for other rural land with almost \$3.5 million and 2257 acres in sales in 2002.

The towns of Arcade, Bennington and Castile had some of the stronger real estate markets between 1993-2002. In 2002, Arcade had almost 1/6 of the combined "developed" land sales, while Bennington generally averaged between 1/6 and 1/8 of the total "other rural" land sales in the county during the period.

By comparison, Castile, while having a slightly lower number of “other rural” land sales than Bennington, has had “other rural” and “agricultural” land prices per acre significantly higher than overall county averages – possibly reflecting a strong market for agricultural and other rural land in the town. The towns of Perry and Covington have also had agricultural land prices that were generally higher than overall county averages.

Wyoming County currently has approximately 171,000 acres of undeveloped land. While the predicted development rate of this critical land base remains low in comparison to most New York counties, Wyoming County’s agricultural land could still be threatened by residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Realtor and Banker Interviews

Six realtors and bankers were interviewed in February 2004 about their perspectives on land trends and values in Wyoming County. Interviewees represented the following businesses:

Amy B. Mattoon Real Estate, Linsey Real Estate, WNY Metro Zientek Realty and Zientek Appraisals, The Bank of Castile, Wyoming County Bank, and Farm Credit of Western New York

There was general consensus among interviewees on some key land trends in the county:

- ◆ Residential development is spotty with the highest concentration being on the western side of the county where residents can easily commute to Buffalo and where the least amount of high quality agricultural land is located. There is also some building of new homes occurring in both the Attica and Arcade areas.
- ◆ Commercial development has occurred in the Warsaw area and in the Arcade area, in part fueled by availability of low-cost electricity in Arcade. One interviewee noted that the lack of public water and sewer in the county has limited commercial development. Another noted that the lack of any Empire Zone designations in the county has stunted commercial development.
- ◆ Agricultural sales occur but the majority of these sales are between individual farmers without involvement of a realtor. There is reluctance within the farm community to sell small parcels of agricultural land to interested buyers to build new homes. One interviewee noted that the “buyer today is not necessarily the owner tomorrow” and that farmers see this as a concern with non-farm neighbor relations.
- ◆ Mention was also made that due to the relatively low development pressure in Wyoming County, land values are not high enough yet to encourage the sale of land parcels by farmers. The Perry/Castile dairy area was cited as maintaining strong agricultural land prices despite the past two years of stress within the dairy industry – this due to the competition for land needed to meet Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation requirements.
- ◆ Commercial, residential, and agricultural land values have risen steadily and the expectation among the realtors and lenders was for that to continue. One interviewee noted that if a few of the large dairy operations in the county were to go out of business, it would definitely soften the real estate market because there is not the level of competing use for commercial or housing developments that exist in some other areas of the state.

There were a few distinct opinions expressed that were not necessarily representative of the whole group’s thoughts:

- ◆ One interviewee noted that the removal of hedgerows in farm fields to increase parcel size, as farms and machinery increase in size, is significantly changing the agricultural landscape in the county.
- ◆ Another interviewee expressed the sentiment that it would be useful to have public water throughout the entire county to provide good, quality water to all residents and to avoid conflict with farmers.

Infrastructure Assessment

Infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer, electric, gas and telecommunication services are both critical to the success of the agricultural sector and can also play a role in its demise. Agricultural businesses, both farms and support services, depend upon a reliable stream of goods and services to operate efficiently. Farms are often very energy intensive and require significant amounts of electricity and fossil fuels. Thus, the availability and price of these resources can significantly influence farm profitability.

Additionally, farms depend upon safe and well-maintained roadways to move equipment, receive goods and services and ship farm products. Dairy farms in particular need year-round road access so milk trucks can easily pick up and transport milk to processing facilities.

At the same time, infrastructure – particularly roads, water and sewer – often accelerates new development in rural areas. Without appropriate land use planning, infrastructure extensions can occur in a fiscally inefficient and haphazard manner and spur scattered new development in agricultural areas.

According to *Target Tomorrow*, infrastructure expansion in Wyoming County is desirable to attract new commercial and industrial development to the county. “Lack of adequate infrastructure is probably the single most important factor limiting potential economic development in Wyoming County...”. There is a need for a systematic approach to the development and management of infrastructure that will allow Wyoming County businesses to remain competitive in this increasingly technology-driven economy.

The towns of Bennington and Covington “are likely to experience major infrastructure (water, transportation) improvements...in the next several years” according to *Target Tomorrow*. The Town of Perry is expected to site a new business park - most likely near the former Champion plant at the northeast corner of the Village of Perry.

New York’s Department of Transportation is undertaking a study of the Route 63 corridor that traverses parts of the Town of Covington. The study’s purpose is to evaluate tractor-trailer traffic along Route 63 which is being used as a bypass from the Mount Morris exit of I-390 to the Batavia exit at I-90 to Canada. Some of the possible outcomes being evaluated as part of this study include the construction of major new roadways through the northeast section of Wyoming County including the towns of Covington, Perry and Castile.

As noted in *Target Tomorrow*, “Agriculture is Wyoming County’s niche. The County needs to consider the impacts on agriculture from all other economic development activities and adopt the concept inherent in the Hippocratic oath medical doctors take – ‘first, do no harm’.” This statement captures the challenge of developing appropriate infrastructure to support current or future residential,

commercial and industrial uses while not having a significant negative impact on the county's agricultural land base and industry.

Summary

This analysis of land use trends and projections found the following issues to be of particular importance to Wyoming County's agricultural industry:

Wyoming County's significant agricultural land base is a substantial competitive advantage and an overall asset to its agricultural industry. Significant acreage of productive farmland has allowed for expansion of the dairy sector as well as supported other vegetable and field crop operations. The rural nature of the county's land base is likely to be a benefit to farm businesses – particularly livestock operations – as it helps reduce conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.

Understanding land use trends in the county is important to the future health of Wyoming County's agricultural sector. As noted in *Target Tomorrow*, "The land base is now the major limiting factor for future growth of Wyoming County's dairy industry...". Changes in the county's agricultural land base will likely impact all sectors of the agricultural industry and the industry's ability to adapt and change to new market conditions.

Slow but steady land use change is projected for Wyoming County. It is expected that this growth will be concentrated in the western and northeastern parts of Wyoming County including:

- Town and Village of Arcade
- Bennington
- Castile
- Covington
- Village of Perry
- Town and Village of Warsaw

The rate and type of development that occurs in these communities will be influenced by broader economic factors as well as local land use policies and decisions made about new infrastructure – particularly roads, water and sewer. The northeast section of the county – including the Towns of Covington, Perry and Castile – are of particular importance for attention from an agricultural perspective due to the high concentration of farm businesses and better quality agricultural soils combined with the potential for new public infrastructure and ensuing commercial, industrial and residential development.

Current competition for land between farming and non-farm uses has not caused agricultural land prices to increase beyond farmers' ability to purchase new property. As noted in the realtor and banker interviews as well as the analysis of real estate sales from 1993 to 2002, non-farm development has not escalated land prices beyond farmers' ability to pay for additional land – unlike other parts of New York. These conditions are favorable for the health of the county's agricultural industry as affordable land is an important asset for expanding farm businesses and can help facilitate intergenerational farm transfers.

Lower density rural residential development expected to occur in Wyoming County can still have a significant negative impact on farm businesses – particularly large livestock operations. Poorly planned, scattered residential development can bring new non-farm neighbors to the doorstep of farm businesses. These new neighbors may be unfamiliar with modern agricultural practices and can generate time consuming and potentially expensive conflicts.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Wyoming County has excellent soils overall for agricultural purposes. The majority of the County consists of generally deep, moderate to well-drained glacial till soils characterized by low to medium lime. Glacial outwash and lake sediment soils are also found. The major soil associations suitable for farming are shown in the following exhibit:

Major Soil Associations Suitable for Farming

Association	% of County	Suitability for Farming	Area of County
Erie-Langford	16.6	Trefoil, Field Corn, Dairy	Western
Conesus-Lansing	10	Dry Beans, Field Corn, Winter Grains	Eastern
Bath-Valois	9.7	Potatoes, Dairy	Southcentral/Eastern
Bath-Mardin	9.5	Potatoes, Cash Crops	Northerncentral/Eastern
Chenango-Howard-Castile	7.8	Potatoes, Cash Grain Crops	Along Major Streams

Source: Shepstone Management

These major soil associations represent 53.6% of the County and there are several smaller associations also suitable for high levels of crop management and cultivation. They work well for dry beans, field corn, potatoes and winter grain crops. They do not, except for a few individual soils, support legumes or other deep-rooted grasses nearly as well. Weather is also a constraint.

Overall, the County is very well suited to both cash crops and large-scale dairying that relies upon locally produced silage and grains as opposed to pasture and hay. The eastern portion has somewhat better soils but the County as a whole enjoys significant advantages in terms of soils and capacity to grow a variety of crops. There are large areas of Capability Class I and II soils with only moderate to slight limitations for cultivation. This is atypical of most of New York State and the Northeast, although Western New York is better situated than the remainder of the State in this regard.

Protecting Productive Farmlands

Productive agricultural land is a limited and irreplaceable natural resource. Farmland also provides many important less tangible benefits such as scenic views, open space, rural character, and environmental conservation.

Despite all these benefits, Wyoming County farmlands are at risk. Agricultural land is desirable for building and development because it tends to be flat, well drained and generally has more value for development purposes than for continued farming use.

A summary of land use trends and projections that was prepared for this report (pg. 40) found the following important issues that impact Wyoming County's agricultural industry.

- ◆ Wyoming County’s significant agricultural land base is a substantial competitive advantage and an overall asset to its agricultural industry. Significant acreage of productive farmland has allowed for expansion of the dairy sector as well as supported other vegetable and field crop operations.
- ◆ Understanding land use trends in the county is important to the future health of Wyoming County’s agricultural sector. As noted in *Target Tomorrow*, “The land base is now the major limiting factor for future growth of Wyoming County’s dairy industry...”.
- ◆ Slow but steady land use change is projected for Wyoming County. It is expected that this growth will be concentrated in selected areas of Wyoming County including:
 - Town and Village of Arcade
 - Bennington
 - Castile
 - Covington
 - Village of Perry
 - Town and Village of Warsaw
- ◆ The rate and type of development that occurs in these communities will be influenced by broader economic factors as well as local land use policies and decisions made about new infrastructure – particularly roads, water and sewer. The northeast section of the county – including the Towns of Covington, Perry and Castile – are of particular importance for attention from an agricultural perspective due to the high concentration of farm businesses and better quality agricultural soils combined with the potential for new public infrastructure and ensuing commercial, industrial and residential development.
- ◆ Current competition for land between farming and non-farm uses has not caused agricultural land prices to increase beyond farmers’ ability to purchase new property. As noted in the realtor and banker interviews as well as the analysis of real estate sales from 1993 to 2002, non-farm development has generally not escalated land prices beyond farmers’ ability to pay for additional land.
- ◆ Lower density rural residential development that is expected to occur in Wyoming County can still have a significant negative impact on farm businesses – particularly large livestock operations. Poorly planned, scattered residential development can bring new non-farm neighbors to the doorstep of farm businesses.

The following maps show the county’s primary infrastructure, soil resources, and agricultural districts. One of the primary goals of this plan was to develop and implement measures that will result in better protection of productive farmlands in county agricultural districts. Town specific maps will be provided to each town to provide them with better, more useable information that can be used when decisions are made about their future development, and the regulation and use of land resources.

AG DEVELOPMENT AND FARMLAND PROTECTION TOOLS

Numerous strategies and recommendations were discussed, researched and evaluated during the development of Wyoming County's Agricultural Development and Farmland Protection Plan. The following section provides an overview of some of the tools deemed most suited to the needs and interests of Wyoming County's agricultural industry as well as an assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of each of these tools.

Agricultural Districts⁵

New York's Agricultural Districts Law (Article 25-AA of NYS Agriculture and Markets Law) was enacted in 1971 to help keep farmland in active agricultural production. An agricultural district can be developed when a group of interested landowners – who collectively own at least 500 acres – submit a proposal to their county requesting the formation of a district. By 2001, 343 county-level agricultural districts had been formed, encompassing nearly 22,000 farms and more than 8.5 million acres of land.

Farmers and rural landowners enrolled in state-certified agricultural districts receive important “right to farm” protections. These protections include:

Definition of Agriculture: Provides authority to the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) to determine whether land uses/practices are agricultural in nature.

Local Ordinance Provision: Provides protection against local laws that unreasonably restrict farm operations. Under this authority, NYSDAM has pro-actively worked with local governments from enacting unreasonably restrictive local laws and guarded farmers from unreasonably restrictive zoning codes and ordinances regarding farm worker housing, manure management and other farm practices.

Agricultural Data Statements: Requires filing of agricultural data statements for land use determinations within 500 feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district. The statement requires an assessment of possible impacts on nearby farm operations and must be reviewed by identified neighboring farm operations but does not require further review by the county AFPB or NYSDAM.

Notice of Intent: Requires analysis of proposed public projects that may impact farms in agricultural districts. An agricultural impact statement must be filed before public funds are spent on non-farm projects in an agricultural district. These statements describe short and long-term impacts of the project on agriculture, alternatives to the proposed projects and possible mitigation measures. Once completed, preliminary notice of intent filings and full agricultural impact statements must be reviewed by NYSDAM and the county AFPB.

Sound Agricultural Practices: Offers limited protection from private nuisance claims. Provides authority for NYSDAM to review specific cases to determine whether a farmer is conducting an agricultural practice that is deemed “sound”. A farmer can use NYSDAM findings in their defense against most private nuisance actions. Four basic questions guide the determination of whether a practice is sound. Is the practice legal?, does the practice cause personal or property damage?, is the practice effective?, and is the practice necessary?

⁵ From *Action Guide: Agricultural and Farmland Protection for New York* by American Farmland Trust.

Disclosure Notices: Requires a landowner in an agricultural district to provide a prospective buyer with a disclosure notice prior to signing a purchase contract. The notice advises property buyers about the sights, sounds, smells and other aspects of modern agricultural practices before they purchase property in a farming area.

In addition to these right to farm protections, the Agricultural Districts law also provides Ad Valorem limitations for land used for agricultural production within an agricultural district. This provision limits the taxation of farmland for certain municipal improvements such as sewer, water, lighting, non-farm drainage, solid waste disposal or other landfill operations. Land used for agricultural production within an agricultural district can only be taxed if the fees were imposed prior to the formation of the district or unless farm structures benefit directly from the improvement district. A one-half acre lot around any dwelling or non-farm structure is subject to applicable fees as well.

Benefits of Agricultural Districts are: Voluntary program popular with farmers, helps support a favorable operating environment for farms, and helps stabilize large blocks of land to keep farming viable.

Drawbacks of Agricultural Districts are: Will not prevent conversion of enrolled land, many provisions are reactive rather than proactive, and non-farm support for agricultural districts may erode as right to farm protections are exercised.

Infrastructure Planning

Planning the location and scale of infrastructure such as water and sewer lines, roads, electricity and telecommunications can have important influences on farm viability and farmland protection. On the one hand, farms need access to affordable electricity as well as sound roads and bridges to operate efficiently and profitably. At the same time, water and sewer lines, roads and other infrastructure can encourage non-farm development that can conflict with farm operations.

Planning the scale and location of new or expanding infrastructure can help steer non-farm development into hamlets and villages while limiting encroachment into nearby farming areas. Infrastructure planning can also help ensure farm access to affordable electricity, the development and maintenance of roads and bridges that can handle tractor trailers and large farm machinery, maintenance of road ditching and drainage systems and other infrastructure that supports the agricultural industry.

Benefits of infrastructure planning are: Can support farm business viability and farmland protection, non-regulatory approach for steering development away from farmland, and fiscally responsible approach to community development.

Drawbacks of infrastructure planning are: Will not prevent development that does not need public infrastructure, planning may be comprised by infrastructure extensions for "health and safety", and requires on-going political commitment to be effective.

Local Right to Farm Laws

Right-to-farm laws are intended to prevent farmer/non-farm neighbor conflicts and discourage neighbors from suing farmers. These local laws can augment New York State Agricultural Districts Law by helping farmers using sound management practices to prevail in private nuisance lawsuits. Usually, these local laws document the importance of farming to the town or county and put non-farm rural residents on notice that generally accepted agricultural practices are reasonable activities to expect in farming areas.

Local right-to-farm laws can also serve additional purposes. They provide farm families with a psychological sense of security that farming is a valued and accepted activity in their communities. Additionally, local right to farm laws can establish dispute resolution processes to mediate disputes and avoid expensive legal battles.

Benefits of Right to Farm Laws are: Helps maintain a supportive operating environment, clear public statement in support of agriculture that can guide future town policies and decisions, complement to New York State Agricultural Districts Law, and relatively inexpensive.

Drawbacks of Right to Farm Laws are: May have limited impact unless law and dispute resolution process are widely promoted and does not prevent farmland conversion.

Market Development

Wyoming County's agricultural industry is dominated by products sold to commodity or wholesale markets. This is due in part to the small size of the county's population, the types of agricultural products produced within the county and the scale of commodities produced. For example, in 2002, \$128.5 million of the county's \$178 million in agricultural sales were in the sale of milk and other dairy products from cows (72% of the total). It is difficult to impact markets for dairy products at the local level due to the scale and structure of milk markets in the United States.

While it is often difficult to impact commodity markets locally, it is possible to identify and develop markets for agricultural by-products or niche products. Agricultural product markets that have been identified by the Wyoming County Chamber as having potential include:

- ◆ Dairy beef
- ◆ Dairy heifer exports
- ◆ Specialty cultured dairy products
- ◆ Electricity generation
- ◆ Biofuels
- ◆ Milk refining
- ◆ Custom hay production
- ◆ Shelf stable maple cream

Access to new markets for these or other agricultural products can provide opportunities for new farm operations, provide an alternative income stream for existing dairy farms to balance against recent instability in dairy markets and support the overall viability of the county's agricultural sector.

Benefits of market development are: Supports continued viability of the agricultural industry and can provide income stream to counterbalance turbulent dairy markets.

Drawbacks of market development are: Can require significant personnel and capital investments, no guaranteed return on investments, and new market opportunities may benefit only a small number of producers.

Municipal Planning for Agriculture

Municipal land use planning can have significant impacts on the retention of farmland in agricultural use and the operations of farm businesses. When planning for agriculture, municipalities strive to proactively address the business and land use needs of local farms. Through comprehensive plans, zoning and subdivision ordinances and other tools, communities can promote the importance of agriculture, help retain a supportive operating environment for farms, limit the conversion of a town's best farmland and limit the scale of new development and its impact on nearby farms.

However, municipal land use planning can be controversial as it requires a balancing of community interests with private property rights. This balance can be difficult to achieve as it differs depending upon a farmer/landowner's plans and priorities, the viability of the local agricultural industry and other community priorities.

Many communities talk about supporting farms and maintaining rural character but plan for residences, non-farm commercial businesses and industries. These communities are not planning for agriculture and their actions will not provide much-needed assistance to local farms.

Benefits of planning for agriculture are: Inexpensive way to protect large areas of farmland, can help reduce conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors, and can be implemented fairly quickly.

Drawbacks of planning for agriculture are: Not a permanent solution – can be changed fairly quickly, can create controversy over balance between community interests and private property rights, and can reduce land values.

Public Education/Farm Tours

Public on-farm events for local government officials and the non-farm public often are the sole opportunity for these audiences to visit a working farm. At one time many people were related to or had a close friend who was a farmer. Now, few people have any direct tie to those working in production agriculture. Encouraging people to visit working farms, with close guidance from the farm owner, can help reduce farm-neighbor conflicts by offering the rationale for standard farm practices, some of which can irritate the public.

Genesee County sponsors a Local Decision Makers Tour each fall, designed to transport county and town government officials to two to three farms and/or agribusinesses. Business owners explain the workings of their farm and highlight any unique or new practices or technologies. Tour participants have the opportunity to ask specific questions of the owner, so they can be better informed and better able to respond to farm-neighbor concerns from their constituents.

For eight years, Erie County held the Erie County Family, Food, and Farm Tour to educate the public about production agriculture and to promote local food consumption. Participants were bussed to two to three farms for tours of the operations. A variety of agricultural businesses were visited over the years in order to showcase the diversity of local farms and farm products. Issues specific to the type of business visited were addressed in the hopes that a better-informed public will be less likely to complain about standard farm operating practices.

Benefits of public education events are: Builds public understanding of farm practices, cultivates positive relationships between farmers and non-farmers, helps prevent expensive farmer/non-farm neighbor conflicts, and builds positive feelings within the farm community.

Drawbacks of public education events are: Liability risk for participating farmers, hard to evaluate impacts of events, and requires significant commitment of time and resource.

Purchase of Development Rights

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) is a voluntary farmland protection technique that pays landowners for permanently protecting their land for agricultural use. Landowners are paid to place permanent deed restrictions – called conservation easements – on their property that limit subdivision, development and other uses of the property that may be incompatible with agriculture. The land

remains in private ownership and on the tax rolls and can be used for farming, forestry, recreation and other uses compatible with farming.

New York established its Farmland Protection Program in 1996 to provide grants to eligible towns and counties with farmland protection plans to purchase conservation easements on farmland. The program pays for up to 75% of the cost to complete the transaction. Each year, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets requests proposals from interested towns and counties. Priority is given to projects that preserve viable agricultural land, are located in areas of high development pressure and buffer a public natural resource. Since 1996, \$63 million has been allocated to protect roughly 28,000 acres of farmland across New York.

Benefits of PDR are: Permanently protects farmland, voluntary, provides financially competitive alternative to development, and helps keep farmland affordable to farmers.

Drawbacks of PDR are: Expensive, may not provide enough incentive for farmers in rural areas, may not protect large blocks of farmland, and requires on-going monitoring and enforcement.

Lease of Development Rights

Similar to PDR programs, lease of development rights (LDR) programs will provide an incentive to place a deed restriction that limits non-farm development on eligible property. Whereas PDR programs require permanent conservation easements, LDR programs involve term agreements.

The most common LDR programs in New York are at the municipal level and provide a reduction in property tax assessment in exchange for a term restriction of 5-25 years. The degree of assessment reduction increases with the length of the term. Another alternative approach can be found in California where farms receive property tax relief (funded by the state) in exchange for term deed restrictions signed with their local government.

Benefits of LDR are: Voluntary, offers term restriction which is often more popular with farmers than permanent restrictions, can stabilize larger blocks of land, and complements PDR projects.

Drawbacks of LDR are: Incentive may not be great enough to attract interest of commercial farmers, does not permanently protect land, and requires on-going monitoring and enforcement costs

Tax Relief

Property tax relief is an important issue for farmers. Farm businesses need land to operate and property taxes on farmland often are a significant expense. Thus, high property taxes can hurt overall farm profitability. At the same time, farmland tends to pay more in property taxes than it requires in public services. The saying "cows and corn don't go to school" represents the notion that while farmland may provide less tax revenue than a residential subdivision, it requires far less in public services. Thus, farmland provides a net tax profit to a community while residences often require more services than they pay in taxes.

New York has several tax reduction programs aimed at farmers and rural landowners. These include:

- Agricultural assessment
- Farm building exemptions
- Farmers' school tax credit
- Replanted or expanded orchards and vineyards

- Forest land exemption
- Sales tax exemption

Some New York towns have tried to further reduce taxes for farmers and rural landowners by offering further reductions in property tax assessments in exchange for term deed restrictions, using agricultural assessment values for fire, ambulance and other service districts and developing additional farm building exemptions.

Benefits of tax relief are: Reduces farm business expenses, encourages the retention of land in active farm use, and benefits a wide range of farmers/rural landowners.

Drawbacks of tax relief are: Expensive, can encourage land speculation if not combined with meaningful penalties, and does not ensure long-term protection of farmland.

Workforce Development

Agricultural businesses, like other businesses, depend upon access to a dependable, skilled workforce. Farms also require workers with a strong work ethic that are willing to work for wages that farm businesses can afford. Workers are often required to operate heavy machinery, understand herdsmanship and milking techniques and have other advanced skills.

Traditionally, secondary schools have trained a local workforce for farm businesses through vocational education programs. However, many of these programs have been reduced in size or eliminated. At the same time, vegetable, fruit and a growing number of dairy operations rely on immigrant workers, which have their own training needs including language training.

Local workforce development efforts often focus on preparing students for agricultural careers, providing training to existing farm employees and addressing the educational needs of immigrant farm labor (and the farm managers that will oversee them).

Benefits of workforce development are: Helps ensure supply of needed farm employees, and supports farm profitability by reducing farm business expenses.

Drawbacks of workforce development are: Requires on-going education investments that can be expensive and no guarantee that trained workers will work on local farms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting the Business of Farming

Agriculture is one of Wyoming County's principal economic engines. In 2002, roughly 1 in 10 private sector jobs in the county were located on farms. That year Wyoming County farms sold over \$178 million in farm products which is the second highest amount in New York. Farms also spent almost \$152 million operating their farms. A substantial portion of this stays in Wyoming County and supports other local businesses.

The health and future of this important industry depends upon the continued profitability of local farms. Without profitable farm businesses, the local agricultural sector would suffer as would other local businesses and the Wyoming County economy.

Maintaining a viable agricultural industry is a complex undertaking as the sector is comprised of many farm commodities, farm sizes and farm operations which have varying circumstances and needs. A wide range of factors including commodity prices, taxes, weather, labor, regulations and electric/fuel costs influence farm profitability. Lastly, farm prices for commodities such as dairy are largely influenced by national or global policies and markets, making the ability to influence farm prices for these products at the county level difficult.

Despite these challenges, there is optimism for the future of Wyoming County's agricultural economy. The county is the 25th largest dairy producer in the nation and produces about 9% of all milk in New York. The county's concentration of talented producers, high quality agricultural soils and other supportive business conditions are competitive advantages that can be capitalized upon. Strategic county actions to sustain supportive business conditions, cultivate a talented workforce for local farms and agribusinesses and develop new market opportunities for farmers can support this strong future. Many of the following recommendations will require cooperative action and efforts by local and county governments, farm and non-farm residents, and ag related organizations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: ENCOURAGE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS THAT SUPPORT THE VIABILITY OF THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY WHILE NOT ACCELERATING THE CONVERSION OF FARMLAND.

Actions Needed

- 1. Conduct a survey of agricultural equipment use on county and town roads.** Use the results, in conjunction with information from Wyoming County and Town Highway Departments, to prioritize the roads and bridges that need the most improvement and maintenance and identify areas with the highest potential for conflict between farm equipment and other vehicles.
- 2. Encourage Wyoming County investment in maintenance and improvements of roads, bridges, road ditching and other infrastructure in the high priority roadways identified in the agricultural equipment survey.** Regular investment in transportation infrastructure will support movement of farm equipment, transport of agricultural products to processing facilities and markets and the distribution of goods and services to farms and agribusinesses.
- 3. Work with the Wyoming County Highway Department, New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health and others to reduce conflicts between farm equipment and other vehicles in highest priority areas.** Possible actions include placing farm equipment signs warning

motorists to watch for farm equipment along roads in heavy agricultural areas. (See enclosed information from NYCAMH in the Appendix)

4. Work with Wyoming County towns, USDA Office for Rural Development, Erie, Genesee and Monroe Counties and others to focus new water and sewer infrastructure investment in existing villages and hamlets and mitigate possible growth-inducing impacts of new infrastructure on farmland. Focusing infrastructure in these areas will encourage new residential and commercial development in Wyoming County villages and hamlets and help discourage possible conflicts between farmers and new rural non-farm neighbors. Entities considering extensions of new water lines should be strongly encouraged to adopt lateral restriction policies for lines extended through Agricultural Districts to further reduce farmland conversion and farmer/neighbor conflicts.

5. Encourage the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures if infrastructure expansions, such as new state or federal roads that are likely to accelerate the conversion of farmland or negatively impact farm businesses, are proposed for Wyoming County. Appropriate mitigation measures could include siting new roadways in a manner that minimizes the conversion of prime or statewide important farmland, the creation of overpasses or underpasses for farm equipment to cross new roadways bisecting farmland and providing funding for the purchase of development rights on productive farmland near new roadway interchanges.

Priority: High **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, Planning Dept., CCE

Budget: One time operating and staff costs of \$2,500 for agricultural equipment survey. On-going staff costs will likely be moderate.

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROMOTE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE FARM WORKERS AND MANAGERS.

Actions Needed

1. Encourage participation by local farmers and agribusiness professionals in business management and leadership development programs. Work with Wyoming County Farm Bureau, Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce, Genesee Community College and other local agricultural and business groups from Wyoming and neighboring counties to encourage farmers and agribusiness professionals to participate in county-based, regional, statewide or national education programs such as LEAD New York, Cornell Dairy Executives Program, and The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP). County funds should be allocated to provide scholarships to individuals participating in these programs. Alternatively, consider developing or participating in new county-based or regional programs.

2. Support continued investment in youth workforce development programs focused on training young workers for careers in the agricultural sector. Encourage continued investment in agricultural education programs such as vocational agricultural programs at local high schools or training by Genesee Community College and other organizations. Provide paid, on-farm internships for high school and college students.

3. Consider evaluating the feasibility of developing a Cornell University affiliated and agricultural industry supported Research and Teaching Center. This facility could be a focal point for research regarding the dairy sector and would encourage greater connections between Cornell University, Genesee Community College and Wyoming County and support new agribusiness development within the county. Additionally, this center could serve broader workforce development

needs including bilingual education classes regarding herdsmanship, AI, milking techniques, short courses for crop scouts, and other aspects of farm management.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, CCE, Farm Bureau, B/E Council, Consultants

Budget: Moderate staff time for encouraging participation in the education programs and supporting local agricultural education programs. Approximately \$15,000 to \$30,000 is estimated to be needed for a feasibility study regarding the research and teaching center. \$3,000 to \$5,000 plus staff time for the development of a county-based or regional business management/leadership development program.

RECOMMENDATION 3: ASSIST FARMERS IN IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, FARM BY-PRODUCTS AND COMPATIBLE RURAL BUSINESSES.

Actions Needed

1. **Evaluate the opportunities for and help develop storage, distribution and/or processing facilities for specialty dairy products, by-products from dairy production and other local agricultural products.** Emphasis should be placed on the identification of market opportunities with the greatest potential benefit to Wyoming County farms and agribusinesses, with subsequent refinement and feasibility analysis of identified opportunities. Assistance should also be provided for securing financing, siting and other aspects of new farm and agribusiness ventures.

Possible market opportunities identified by the WC Chamber of Commerce and others include but are not limited to:

- dairy beef,
- dairy heifer exports,
- organic or niche cheese or cultured milk products,
- potato and vegetable distribution,
- maple products,
- custom hay production
- potato dehydration from cull potatoes.

2. **Encourage the continued development of renewable energy and bio-fuel production.** These emerging technologies could serve as important alternative income-generating opportunities for farmers and rural landowners. Market opportunities in this area could include methane digesters, wind turbines and ethanol production. Efforts should be made to educate Wyoming County farmers about available markets and technology through newsletters and other written materials, workshops and tours.

3. **Provide grant-writing services to assist farmers and agribusinesses in obtaining funding to study and undertake market development opportunities.** Numerous state and federal grant programs provide funds that could be used to support local agricultural economic development initiatives (See enclosed materials from the GROW New York program and NYSERDA). Targeted investments in grant-writing and project management can assist in the cultivation of new business opportunities for Wyoming County farms and agri-businesses.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC Chamber, IDA, CCE, Consultants

Budget: Staff costs will likely range from moderate to high depending upon the scale of projects undertaken. Outside consultants should be budgeted at \$5,000 (for grant-writing and grant administration) to \$25,000 (for feasibility studies, business plans and larger projects).

Maintaining A Viable Agricultural Land Base

Agriculture is the dominant land use in Wyoming County with 72% of the county's land base in New York State Agricultural Districts and approximately 55% (207,900 acres) estimated to be in farm ownership in 2002. A vast majority of this land base contains soils that are highly productive for agricultural use. 315,780 acres of land (83% of the county) are designated either "prime", "prime where drained" or "farmland of statewide importance" by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This agricultural land base is a critical strategic asset for Wyoming County's agricultural sector. Significant acreage of productive farmland has allowed for expansion of the dairy sector as well as supported other vegetable and field crop operations. The rural nature of the county's land base is also a benefit to farm businesses – particularly livestock operations- as it helps reduce conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.

While slow but steady growth that is concentrated in the western and northeastern parts of the county – is projected for Wyoming County, it is critical that steps be taken to ensure that new development does not hurt the continued health of the agricultural industry. Poorly planned and regulated development can lead to the permanent conversion of highly productive farmland to other uses, increase the likelihood of expensive conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors, and reduce the affordability of land for new or expanding farm operations.

The county's rural nature provides an opportunity to proactively address these issues. Efforts to maintain a viable agricultural land base will have important impacts upon the future viability of Wyoming County's agricultural industry.

RECOMMENDATION 4: ENCOURAGE WYOMING COUNTY TOWNS TO ACTIVELY DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE BUSINESS AND LAND USE NEEDS OF FARMS.

Actions Needed

1. **Conduct a bi-annual "Decision Makers Tour"**. Invite all local and county officials and decision makers to an agriculture tour. Begin with a continental breakfast (obtain donations of locally produced foods, if possible). Have a brief introductory program. This could include a short presentation on a new technology or new program affecting local agriculture. Visit two or three farms and/or agribusinesses. Finish the program by noon.

2. **Conduct bi-annual training sessions for local officials about Planning for Agriculture at the town level.** These sessions should describe for town officials why they need to take local action to support farms and local options for protecting farmland and supporting farm businesses. These training sessions could be conducted in collaboration with Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council, neighboring counties and/or American Farmland Trust. Specific topics could include:

- ◆ Local right to farm law
- ◆ Agricultural District law requirements including ag data statements
- ◆ Local Laws and Agricultural Districts – How Do They Relate?

- ◆ State and local tax programs for farmers and rural landowners
- ◆ Avoiding local codes that restrict farm businesses
- ◆ Farm labor, housing and other emerging farm issues

3. Distribute a menu of sample town plans or policies that could be used by Wyoming County towns to support the county’s agricultural industry. Wyoming County can play an important role in land use planning within the county by being an active resource for its town governments. Distributing sample policies and plans can help interested Wyoming County towns in proactively supporting their local farms and addressing other community needs.

4. Support efforts to provide funding for Wyoming County towns to develop comprehensive plans and other local policies aimed at supporting farm businesses and protecting farmland. The rural towns of Wyoming County have few professional planning staff to assist them in managing new development to ensure that it is compatible with the agricultural industry. Funding to hire consultants for developing comprehensive plans, farmland protection plans or other local policies can play a critical role in assisting towns in supporting the agricultural industry and proactively addressing their community interests.

5. Support town planning efforts that encourage residential development in non-agricultural areas, and work to redevelop brownfield sites.

Priority: High **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, CCE, Planning Dept.

Budget: \$2,500 for staff and operating expenses for bi-annual workshops, on-going staff costs for outreach to towns about agricultural planning issues are moderate to medium. Decision makers’ tour: \$250 for refreshment, outreach, and handout costs for local official training; \$700 for breakfast and bus costs, \$1,500 for CCE staff costs.

RECOMMENDATION 5: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO CREATE A NEW STATE PROGRAM AIMED AT REDUCING PROPERTY TAXES ON PRODUCTIVE FARMLAND IN EXCHANGE FOR TERM DEED RESTRICTIONS.

Actions Needed

1. Demonstrate the significance of the property tax burden to Wyoming County farmers and agricultural landowners. Use information from the Office of Real Property Tax Services, Dairy Farm Business Summary and other sources to document the impacts of property taxes on Wyoming County farms.

2. Communicate with state legislators and New York Farm Bureau about the need for a new state program. Have a coalition of farmers and town and county officials meet with these representatives to explain the significance of the property tax burden on local farmers and agricultural landowners and to request legislation to enhance the Agricultural District property tax savings. Make the connection between property tax savings in exchange for a term deed restriction that will assist in stabilizing the agricultural land base.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, WC Farm Bureau, CCE, Planning Dept.

Budget: Moderate staff time required for studying impacts of property taxes on Wyoming County farmers and distributing information.

RECOMMENDATION 6: EDUCATE FARMERS AND RURAL LANDOWNERS ABOUT PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PROPERTY AND ESTATE TAXES, PROTECTING FARMLAND AND CONSERVING NATURAL RESOURCES.

Actions Needed

- 1. Conduct workshops about farm estate planning.** Work with Western New York Land Conservancy, Genesee Valley Conservancy, New York FarmLink and others to educate farmers about the importance of estate planning, strategies for facilitating intergenerational farm transfers and the possible role of conservation options in meeting estate planning objectives.
- 2. Conduct workshops about conservation options for rural landowners.** Work with Genesee Valley Conservancy, Western New York Land Conservancy, USDA NRCS, New York's Office of Real Property Services and others to share information about New York's agricultural assessment and forestry assessment programs, conservation easements and federal agricultural conservation programs such as the Grassland Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. As rental landowners own about 20% of Wyoming County's land in farms, these sessions are an important part of efforts for encouraging the retention of rented land in active agricultural use.
- 3. Prepare to Purchase Development Rights in priority agricultural areas experiencing the greatest development pressure.** Provide information to farmers and rural landowners about New York's Farmland Protection Program and USDA's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. Respond to inquiries from interested landowners and support competitive applications to these programs.

Priority: Low **Primary Responsibility:** WC CCE, Planning Dept., NRCS, SWCD
Budget: \$1,000 for staff and operating costs for a local workshop about conservation options for farmers and rural landowners.

Keeping A Supportive Operating Environment For Farms

Farm businesses can be hampered by time-consuming and expensive conflicts with non-farm neighbors and local officials. Such conflicts usually stem from disagreements about farm practices such as manure spreading and pesticide applications, the siting of farm worker housing or the noise levels of farm machinery. At a minimum, these conflicts require a farmer's time and may damage a farm's reputation. At worst, such conflicts can lead to expensive lawsuits that drain resources from a farm's bottom line.

New York's agricultural industry has long recognized the importance of establishing "right to farm" protections for farmers as a way of reducing the likelihood and impact of such conflicts. In 1971, New York State's Agricultural Districts law, Article 25AA, set forth the concept of agricultural districts as a means of protecting the state's farmland. In 1992, the legislation was amended to offer expanded right to farm protections to farmers operating in state-certified agricultural districts. These protections include:

- **Definition of Agriculture:** Gives the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets the authority to determine whether a practice is agricultural in nature.
- **Sound Agricultural Practice Designations:** Helps protect farmers against private nuisance lawsuits.

- **Local Ordinance Provision:** Protects against local ordinances deemed unreasonably restrictive of farm operations in agricultural districts.
- **Notice of Intent:** Requires additional planning measures for proposed public projects in agricultural districts.
- **Disclosure Notices:** Informs property buyers about farming practices before they purchase property in an agricultural district.

Maintaining the important right to farm protections provided by the Agricultural Districts Law and complimenting them with other proactive measures is of critical importance for Wyoming County's agricultural industry. The county's high concentration of livestock – with almost two cows per county resident and twice as many cows per square mile as neighboring counties – creates an environment with significant potential for farmer/non-farm neighbor conflict.

This potential for conflict is magnified by the fact that fewer people in today's society have direct connections to farms. While Wyoming County residents are more likely to have a direct connection to farms than residents of nearby counties such as Erie or Monroe, the general public continues to be less and less knowledgeable about modern agricultural practices and the nation's food system. Efforts to educate non-farm residents about local farms and farm practices, and mitigate disputes before they escalate into serious conflicts will pay significant dividends for Wyoming County farmers.

The protections provided by the Agricultural District law should not be taken for granted. As these protections are exercised, there may be an erosion of local support for agricultural districts among non-farmer residents and local officials. Proactive measures are needed to build understanding about the protections provided by agricultural districts, the importance of these protections and the need to maintain the integrity of agricultural districts in the county.

RECOMMENDATION 7: ENCOURAGE THE ADOPTION, IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION OF WYOMING COUNTY RIGHT TO FARM LAW; TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO MAINTAINING LOCAL SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS.

Actions Needed

1. **Urge the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors to pass a county Right to Farm law.** A county right to farm law would be an important statement in support of the county's agricultural sector. It would also be an important compliment to the Agricultural Districts law by establishing a local agricultural dispute resolution process.
2. **Inform the public about the county's new right to farm law and the agricultural dispute resolution process it establishes.** Once passed, efforts should be made to inform the public about the new law and dispute resolution process via informational materials at county and town offices as well as signs placed on county roads. Consider working with the New York State Agricultural Mediation Program or New York's FarmNet Program as partners in settling local disputes before they become serious conflicts.

Priority: High **Primary Responsibility:** WC AFPB, Planning Dept.

Budget: Moderate staff time for developing and implementing new county right to farm law. Costs for new road signs advertising county right to farm law.

3. **Conduct a half-day farm tour for town and county officials in agricultural districts being renewed.** Have town governments provide a bus and lunch for those attending the tour. Provide

attendees with a map of the agricultural district with farm visit locations identified on the map and a list of any relevant agricultural issues in the district. Choose farm visit sites to highlight the diversity of agriculture in the particular district – varying commodities, farm size, management practices, and development pressures.

4. Conduct trainings for local officials and farmers about agricultural districts. Invite representatives from New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York Farm Bureau or other organizations to conduct presentations about the Agricultural Districts Law and the protections it provides to farmers. Such sessions could either be integrated into an agricultural district tour or be part of a broader session about Planning for Agriculture. Alternatively, a separate session could be conducted solely about agricultural districts.

Priority: Medium **Primary Responsibility:** WC SWCD, Planning Dept.

Budget: \$1,000 for bus tour and materials. Moderate staff time for training and outreach.

RECOMMENDATION 8: PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF WYOMING COUNTY AGRICULTURE TO THE NON-FARM PUBLIC.

Medium Priority Actions Needed

1. Develop an outreach brochure for non-farm neighbors about farm practices.

Possible topics could be: why farmers spread manure; what standards or legal requirements apply; what you can expect from farmers and what you should do if you have questions or concerns. Additionally, this publication should mention a new county Right to Farm law if one should be passed. The brochures should be made available at all agricultural agency and organization offices as well as county and town offices.

2. Publicize the benefits of Wyoming County farms. Have appropriate sections of the AFPP and other outreach materials available at public offices. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, NRCS, FSA, and Planning and Development should have publications designed for county residents available for distribution. Topics to be included in the materials include:

- Economic Impacts of Wyoming County Agriculture
- Property Tax Benefits of Local Farms (Summarizing Cost of Community Service Studies)
- The Role of Local Farms in Providing Rural Character and Environmental Benefits
- Maps Depicting Location of Productive Agricultural Soils, Agricultural Districts and Other Agricultural Features
- Strategies for Supporting Farms at the Local Level

Lower Priority Actions Needed

3. Assemble a committee of farmers, farm organization representatives, and agribusiness representatives to develop an on-farm public agricultural event. Plan an event appropriate to meet Wyoming County's needs by evaluating models used in other areas of the state such as: Saratoga County's Sundae on the Farm; Erie County's Family, Food, and Farm Tour; Genesee County's Local Decision Maker's Tour and others. Promote local agricultural products, educate the public about agricultural practices and the need for farmland protection. Obtain donations of local food products and money from agricultural organizations and businesses and from county government.

4. Support ongoing efforts by individual farms to host school and other organizations tours.

Provide written resources to farms and facilitate sharing opportunities among farmers to improve existing farm tours.

Priority: Medium to low **Primary Responsibility:** WC CCE, SWCD, Planning Dept., AFPB

Budget: Moderate staff time for WC CCE, SWCD, and Planning & Development staff to attend meetings and distribute materials. \$500 - \$2,000 for farm practice brochure design and printing. Moderate to medium CCE staff time to coordinate and lead the on-farm public event committee and plan the event. Medium staff time and \$500 to \$5,000 for an annual on-farm public event depending upon the number of attendees, amount of donations and volunteers, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 9: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS TO COMPLY WITH CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATION (CAFO) AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS.

1. Provide technical assistance to farmers in the development and implementation of nutrient management plans required by CAFO standards. Assist farmers in understanding CAFO requirements, developing nutrient management plans and obtaining implementation cost-share funds from the New York State Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution and Abatement Program (ANSPAP), USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other public programs.

2. Work with Wyoming County Farm Bureau, state and federal legislators and others to advocate for greater cost share funding and other incentives for farmers to meet environmental standards. Educate state and federal legislators about the challenges posed by increasing environmental standards and the need for appropriate incentives for farmers to meet these requirements. Possible incentives could include: greater cost-share funding for programs like ANSPAP and EQIP, refundable state or federal income tax credits for environmental infrastructure investments by farmers, and expanded access to public funding for methane digesters and other renewable energy generation facilities.

Priority: Low **Primary Responsibility:** WC SWCD, WC Farm Bureau

Budget: Medium to high staff time required for CAFO planning and implementation. Moderate staff time for educating state and federal policymakers.

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Wyoming County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

6470 Route 20A, Suite 4, Perry, NY 14530-9796

Phone: (585) 237-4110

Fax: (585) 237-4113

E-mail: wcplandv@rochester.rr.com

As a result of state legislation enacted in 1992, the AFPB was formed by the county to replace county agricultural districting advisory committees. The role of the board has been expanded beyond its original agricultural district advisory role. AFPB's review notice of intent filings and make recommendations about the effects of proposed actions involving public funds or public acquisitions of farmland in agricultural districts. They can also develop and approve county agricultural and farmland protection plans and apply for implementation funds.

Wyoming County Farm Bureau

41 Liberty Street, Batavia, NY 14020

Phone: (585) 343-3489

Fax: (585) 343-8179

Toll-free: 1-877-383-7663

E-mail: nywny@fb.com

Web: www.nyfb.org

Wyoming County Farm Bureau is a private, non-partisan, volunteer organization that serves as an advocate for agricultural and rural interests. As part of the state (New York Farm Bureau) and national (American Farm Bureau Federation) organizations, WCFB has a unique ability to represent these interests at the local, state and national levels. All levels of Farm Bureau have representatives and/or committees that specialize in various commodities and agricultural issues. A growing number of other member services include insurance and worker's compensation.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wyoming County

401 N. Main Street, Warsaw, NY 14569

Phone: (585) 786-2251

Fax: (585) 786-5148

E-mail: wyo@cornell.edu

Web: www.cce.cornell.edu/wyoming

From beginning farmer through specialized established businesses, information based on worldwide research and experience is provided to enable farms to grow and compete in a global economy. Recognizing that farms do not have unlimited assets, specialists work with the farmer to develop a strategic plan tailored to meeting the goals of the business within the constraints of their resources. From buffalo to begonias, corn to organic carrots, greenhouses to grass hay, links with Cornell and other universities are utilized to provide local information to grow local farm businesses.

Wyoming County Planning & Development

6470 Route 20A, Suite 4, Perry, NY 14530-9796

Phone: (585) 237-4110

Fax: (585) 237-4113

E-mail: wcplandv@rochester.rr.com

Planning & Development's mission is to improve the quality of life for all county residents by providing planning assistance to help ensure that the county's future development is consistent with community

character and goals, and encouraging beneficial development and growth by working cooperatively with county and local development groups. The Department provides staff assistance to the WC Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and works with the WC Soil and Water Conservation District to review county agricultural districts.

Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District

31 Duncan Street Extension, Warsaw, NY 14569

Phone: (585) 786-5070

Fax: (585) 786-0381

E-mail: wcswcd@wycol.com

Provides services not available from other sources such as recommendations and advice on solving conservation problems; DEC Protected Wetlands and Protected Stream maps; Soil Group worksheets (needed to complete agricultural assessment forms); Environmental Protection Fund Water Quality grants; tile design and layout; approved tile outlet pipes and animal guards; geotextile for barnyards; stream crossings and farm roads; critical area & road bank seedings; tree and shrub sale; trout and bass sale.

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

31 Duncan Street Extension, Warsaw, NY 14569

Phone: (585) 786-3118

Fax: (585) 786-8544

Web: www.usda.gov

FSA administers farm commodity, crop insurance, credit, environmental, conservation, and emergency assistance programs for farmers and ranchers. FSA makes direct and guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans to family-size farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)

31 Duncan Street Extension, Warsaw, NY 14569

Phone: (585) 786-5070

Fax: (585) 786-0381

Web: www.usda.gov

NRCS offers landowners and farm operators financial, technical, and educational assistance to implement conservation practices. Using the technical assistance provided by NRCS, farmers and landowners can apply practices that reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance cropland, wetlands and wildlife habitat. Programs include:

Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235

Phone: 1-800-554-4501

Web: www.agmkt.state.ny.us

The Department of Agriculture and Markets is charged with fostering a competitive and safe New York State food and agriculture industry for the benefit of producers and consumers. The department's major responsibilities include encouraging the growth and economic health of the state's agricultural land and food industry and conducting various inspections and testing programs to enforce laws on

food safety, animal and plant health and accuracy of labeling. The department also acts to preserve the use of agricultural resources and improve soil and water quality, and operates the annual State Fair with the Industrial Exhibit Authority. The New York State Farmland Protection Program application and funding process is a department responsibility.

American Farmland Trust

6 Franklin Square, Suite E, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Phone: (518) 581-0078

Fax: (518) 581-0079

E-mail: dhaight@farmland.org

Web: www.farmland.org

American Farmland Trust is the largest private, nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the nation's strategic agricultural resources. Its activities include public education, technical assistance, policy research and development, and direct land protection projects. AFT's Northeast Regional Office is located in Saratoga Springs, New York.

VOLUME II CONTENTS

If you want a copy of Volume II, please contact the WC Planning & Development Department at 585-237-4110 or wcplandv@rochester.rr.com.

Why Save Farmland? Fact Sheet, American Farmland Trust
2002, 1997 Census of WC Agriculture
Ag Producers Survey, prepared by WC Cornell Cooperative Extension
Ag Business Survey, prepared by WC Cornell Cooperative Extension
Rural Landowners Survey, prepared by WC Cornell Cooperative Extension
Municipal Officials Survey, prepared by WC Planning & Development
AFP Plan Workshops, 1/29/2005 Summary, prepared by WC Planning & Development
Sample Right to Farm Laws, St. Lawrence and Steuben Counties