

# **Herkimer County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan**

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## 1. Introduction

According to the New York State Agricultural Services in 2000, there were 710 farms and 154,200 farmed acres in Herkimer County accounting for 16.55% of the total land area. This farmland includes 95,600 acres in cropland, 19,800 acres in permanent pasture, and 28,200 acres in woodland (plus 12,500 acres in other categories).<sup>1</sup> Farming activities are located almost exclusively within the southern portion of Herkimer County where conditions are most conducive to farming and there is an abundance of prime soils (see map). It is important to note that a significant portion of the county is located within the Adirondack Park (555,690 out of 931,923 total acres) where the majority of land is forested with little agricultural activity. Approximately 41% of the total acreage of all lands south of the Adirondack Park is in farmland.

Herkimer County: 2000 New York Agricultural Statistics  
Highlights

- 710 Farms
- 154,200 Acres in farms

1997 Census of Agriculture  
Highlights

- \$45,824,000 in net sales
- Six-hundred and thirty workers with a payroll of \$2,640,000
- Forty-six percent of the County's farms involved dairy cattle and milk production.

### 1.a Summary

- Data Sources

Two main data sources were used in the development of tables and charts in this report – the five-year census conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture and the annual New York State Agricultural Statistics Report.

- Farmland loss and the market value of agricultural products

Herkimer County is becoming less competitive in agriculture when compared to New York State overall. Among counties in the region, Herkimer saw the most significant amount of farmland loss between 1992 and 1997 (13% reduction) and has a comparatively low average market value of agricultural products sold per farm.

- Farms industries

Dairy farming is the dominant agricultural activity in Herkimer County. The 1997 Census reported a total of 583 farms of which 46% or 267 farms involved dairy cattle and milk production.

- Farm Size

In 1997, the highest percentage of farms (25%) had between 260 and 499 acres. However, these middle-sized farms are representing less and less of the county's agriculture – between 1987 and 1997 there was a 25% decrease in the number of farms with 260 to 499 acres. The only growth has been in those between 10 and 69 acres.

- Sales

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<sup>1</sup> New York Agricultural Statistics Service, 2000 – 2001.

Approximately 46% of Herkimer County farms had \$50,000 and higher in net sales in 1997 and accounted for almost all of the total sales (93%). The remaining, less profitable farms may be more susceptible to development pressures.

- Labor

Mid-sized employers (3 to 9 employees) account for over 68% of all farm jobs.

- Expenses

The average per farm expense of \$58,681 in 1997 represents a 19.46% increase since 1987.

- Agricultural Sales

There was a 3.26% reduction in total agricultural sales between 1987 and 1997 (\$47,370,000 to \$45,824,000).

- Field Crops

In 1997, Hay, Silage & Field Seeds was the largest sector of the field crops industry with \$1,496,000 in sales on 164 farms, a 60% increase over 1987.

- Livestock (excluding dairy)

In 1997, 460 farms were involved with livestock and netted a total of \$4,458,000 in sales (9.8% of the County's total agricultural sales).

- Dairy Industry

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, dairy products produced over \$37 million in sales, accounting for approximately 82.4% of the total agricultural sales in that year

Between 1987 and 1997 there was a 14% reduction in the number of cattle and calves, a 21.78% reduction in the

number of milk cows (from 24,958 to 19,522), and a significant reduction in the number of farms with less than 200 cows. Meanwhile, farms with more than 200 cows grew by almost 40% from 23 farms in 1987 to 32 farms in 1997, including one farm with over 500 milk cows

The actual volume of dairy products sold between 1982 and 1997 reduced by a total of 8.34%.

Milk production per cow is up since 1990 by about 11% and average sales per dairy farm increased 41% from \$99,111 in 1987 to \$139,258 in 1997. However, due to the reduction in cows overall milk production is down almost 13% since 1990.

- Economic Multipliers

Employment multipliers calculate the residual effects that industries have on an economy. In New York State, Dairy Processing multipliers have been calculated at 5.72. Suggesting that for every new job in that sector, an additional four and three quarter jobs are created in supporting industries.

### *A Note about the Data Sources*

*For the most part, two data sources were used in the development of tables and charts in this report – the five-year census conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture and the annual New York State Agricultural Statistics Report. Both data sources are essential to the understanding of agricultural trends, issues and concerns and each has strong and weak points. Primarily, the census and state data sources use different definitions for farms and farmland and have different data collection methods. Consequently, the five-year Census routinely undercounts farms and underestimates the acreage of land in farms. While the New York Agricultural Statistics report is generally considered more accurate than the USDA Census counts in these areas, the census tables provide additional detail regarding sales, income, and farm expenses that are not available from the New York State source. These tables are essential for making comparisons, understanding the economic impacts of farming and conducting farmland planning. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, unless specifically noted, the tables and figures in this report are extracted from the five-year US Census. Where both data sources are used, trend lines may be comparable. However, comparisons should not be made between the actual numbers from each source.*

## **1.b Quick State Comparison**

General agriculture statistics regarding farmland loss and sales of agricultural products for Herkimer County do not compare favorably with the New York State figures presented in table 1. Between 1992 and 1997, Herkimer County lost land at a rate substantially higher than the NYS as a whole (Herkimer loss was 13%, NYS was under 3%). Even more significant is that the market value of agricultural products sold in Herkimer has decreased by almost 10% while there has been an 8% increase for NYS as a whole during the same five-year period. According to the data in table 1 Herkimer County is becoming less competitive in agriculture when compared to New York State overall.

Table 1: Comparison of Herkimer County Agriculture with New York State

	1992	1997	Percent Change, 1992 to 1997
Land in Farms NYS	7,458,015	7,254,470	-2.73%
Land in Farms Herkimer	163,072	141,847	-13.02%
Average Size of Farms NYS	231	228	-1.30%
Average Size of Farms Herkimer	256	243	-5.08%
Market Value of Ag. Products Sold NYS	\$2,622,001,000	\$2,834,512,000	8.10%
Market Value of Ag. Products Sold Herkimer	\$50,672,000	\$45,824,000	-9.57%
Market Value of Ag. Products Sold, Avg. per farm NYS	\$81,161	\$89,256	9.97%
Market Value of Ag. Products Sold, Avg. per farm Herkimer	\$79,673	\$78,600	-1.35%

### 1.b.1 Rankings in New York State in Agriculture: Herkimer County

When compared to the state, the market values of agricultural sales in Herkimer County rank near the middle in terms of sales and farming. While dairy is the focus of Herkimer County's agriculture, the \$37,739,000 in sales of dairy products ranked only 16<sup>th</sup> in New York State and 110<sup>th</sup> in the country.

Table 2. Rankings of Herkimer County Agriculture (US Census 1997)

Item	Value	NY State Rank	US Rank
Market Value of all Agricultural Products Sold	\$45,824,000	29	1,290
Livestock	\$42,196,000	20	629
All Crops	\$3,628,000	44	2,277
Top Five Commodities: Values of Sales			
Dairy Products	\$37,739,000	16	110
Cattle & Calves	\$3,972,000	20	1,642
Hay, Silage & Field Seeds	\$1,496,000	25	577
Nursery and Greenhouse Crops	\$802,000	45	1,080
Vegetables, Sweet Corn & Melons	\$478,000	37	762

Source: Census of Agriculture, 1997

For comparison purposes, New York State Agricultural Statistics data for the State overall and Herkimer County was tabulated (see table 3, next page). According to this data source both the state and county have seen no change in the number of farms and much less moderate losses in land in farms and cropland than calculated in the USDA figures. The NYS data source shows a less severe situation in terms of farm and farmland loss in Herkimer County.

Table 3. Farms, Land in Farms, and Cropland: Herkimer County and New York State

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Change 1991 to 2000
Number of farms: Herkimer	710	750	760	745	725	710	700	710	730	710	0.00%
Number of farms: NYS	38,000	38,000	38,500	38,500	38,000	38,000	38,000	38,000	39,000	38,000	0.00%
Land in farms: Herkimer	171,300	179,300	177,100	168,200	163,500	157,100	152,400	154,600	156,100	154,200	-9.98%
Land in farms: NYS (1,000s of acres)	8,300	8,200	8,100	7,900	7,900	7,800	7,800	7,800	7,800	7,700	-7.23%
Total cropland: Herkimer	107,200	106,300	105,000	101,500	99,500	97,400	95,200	97,600	95,600	97,700	-8.86%
Total cropland: NYS (1,000s of acres)	5,270	5,140	5,080	5,000	5,000	4,980	4,980	4,980	5,030	4,960	-5.88%

Source: New York State Agricultural Statistics Service: 2000 – 2001

## 2. Loss of Farms and Farmland

One of the biggest issues facing farming is the loss of farmland and operating farms. Overall, New York State has seen a continual decline in the number of farms over the past 50 years. One report<sup>2</sup> estimates that since 1950 to the late 1990s nine million acres of farmland have been lost. These lands have either reverted to natural forest cover or have been converted to residential, commercial and transportation uses. However, the loss of farmland statewide has not resulted in farm output decreases due to the substantial gains in land and labor productivity.

According to the 2000 US Census, between 1990 and 2000 Herkimer County lost 2% of its population. Even though Herkimer County has not seen a population increase or a high degree of development, the county has not been shielded from the loss of farmland. In fact, over the past 15 years the county lost farmland at a rate faster than New York State.

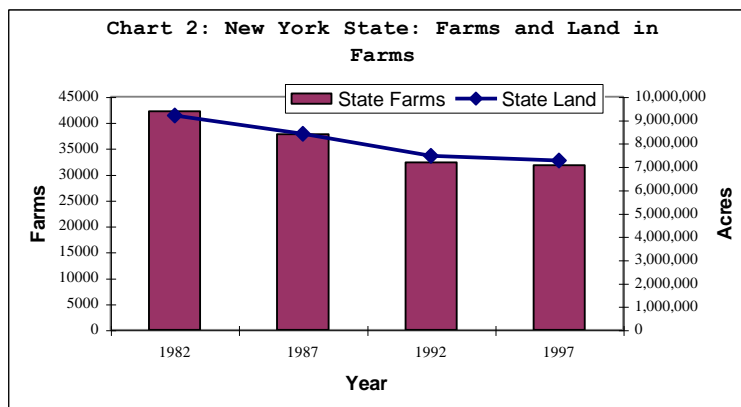
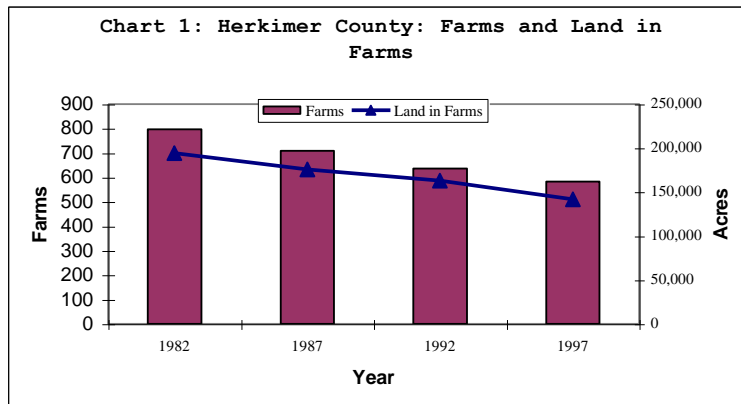


Chart 1 demonstrates that since 1982 Herkimer County has lost almost 27% of its farms (213 farms) and 27% of its land in farms (52,616 acres). During the same period, New York State (chart 2) lost a similar percentage of farms (25%) and farmland acreage (21%). However, during the last five-year period (1992-1997) statewide trends slowed significantly (1.7% loss in farms and a 2.7% loss in farmland acreage) while there was no such stabilization of farmland loss in Herkimer County (8% loss of farms and 13% loss of farmland acreage between 1992 and 1997).

### 2.a Farmland Loss in the Region

It is likely that development trends are quite different in the Mohawk Valley than other parts of the state. Therefore, five additional counties were examined to get a closer look at local issues regarding the loss of farmland and agricultural sales. Table 4 compares Herkimer County to Madison, Montgomery, Fulton, Otsego, and Oneida Counties as well

<sup>2</sup> "Agriculture-Based Economic Development: Trends and Prospects for New York" by Nelson L. Bills



as New York State. Overall, Herkimer County saw the most extreme amount of farmland loss between 1992 and 1997 (13% reduction). Furthermore, Herkimer has a lower average market value of agricultural products sold per farm than all counties with the exception of Fulton and Otsego. Although development pressures in Herkimer County are not a major factor contributing to farmland loss, when development pressures do grow, the result is invariably loss of farms and farmland acres. On the positive side, there has been a lot of interest from newcomers to the area in buying existing farms or starting new farms in the County.

Table 4: Selected County Comparisons

	Land in farms (acres)		% Change 1992-97	Average farm size (acres)	Market value of agricultural products sold (1997)	
	1992	1997			Total	Avg. per farm
Madison County	195,626	185,924	-4.96%	269	\$65,690,000	\$94,928
Montgomery County	138,822	134,940	-2.80%	249	\$48,723,000	\$89,894
Fulton County	35,343	34,291	-2.98%	195	\$9,625,000	\$54,686
Otsego County	218,306	206,985	-5.19%	239	\$51,612,000	\$59,666
Oneida County	242,637	216,094	-10.94%	233	\$74,056,000	\$79,802
Herkimer County	163,072	141,847	-13.02%	243	\$45,824,000	\$78,600
New York State	7,458,015	7,254,470	-2.73%	228	\$2,834,512,000	\$89,256

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 1997

### 3. Herkimer County's Farms

#### 3.a Agricultural Industries

Dairy farming is the dominant agricultural activity in Herkimer County. The 1997 Census reported that 46%, or 267 farms, were involved in dairy cattle and milk production. 2000 statistics show 730 total farms. While no other farming sector is currently as significant as to the county, Herkimer boasts a fairly wide variety of agriculture operations and activities. In addition to farms focused on dairy cattle and milk production, other strong sectors include beef cattle and farms that produce hay. Table 5a details Herkimer County farms by farm type (1997 Census data). Please note that these numbers do not total 583 due to multiple farming activities occurring simultaneously on individual farms.

Table 5a. Herkimer County Farms by Farm Type

1997 Herkimer County Farms by Farm Type	Number of Farms
Dairy cattle and milk production	267
Other crop farming	100
Hay/all other crop farming	100
Beef cattle ranching and farming	91
Animal aqua-culture/other animal production	28
Oilseed and grain farming	26
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture production	26
Vegetable and melon farming	13
Poultry and egg production	8
Fruit and tree nut farming	7
Cattle feedlots	6
Sheep and goat farming	6
Hog and pig farming	5

Source: 1997 Census of Agriculture

According to the New York Agricultural Statistics of 2000-2002, there were 710 farms in Herkimer County in 2000. The rate of change between 1999 and 2000 (about 3% loss of farms and 1% loss of farmland) is consistent with losses at the state level. Herkimer County lost about 14% of cattle and 13.5% of milk cows between 1999 and 2000. At the same time, New York State as a whole lost 5% of cattle and 4.2% of milk cows. Although Herkimer lost a significant number of milk cows, average production per cow increased, and total milk production stayed relatively stable and decreased only 1.5%.

Table 5b. Herkimer County Farm Statistics, 1999-2000

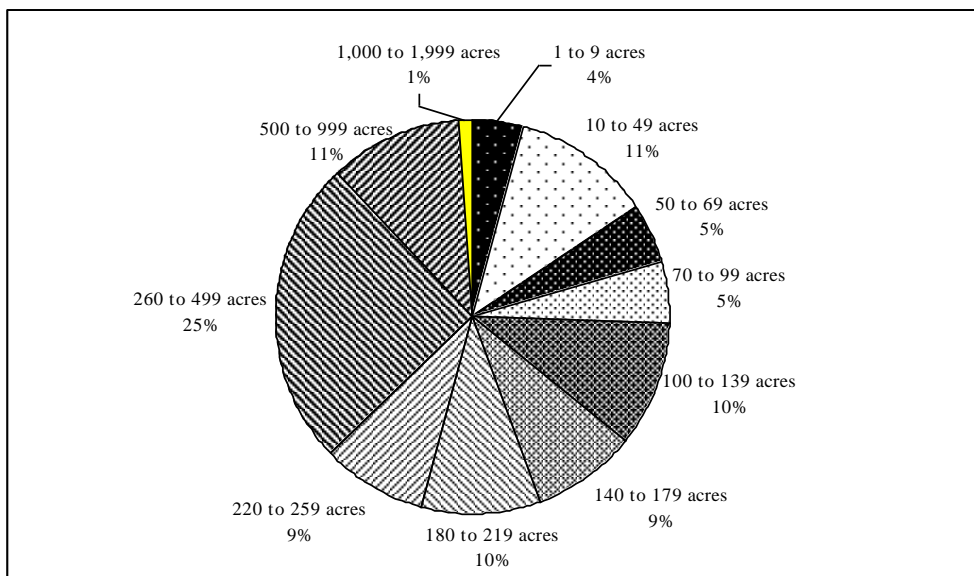
	1999	2000
Number of Farms	730	710
Land in Farms	156,100	154,200
Cropland	95,600	97,700
Permanent Pasture	19,800	19,500
Cash Receipts - Total	\$52,351,000	\$48,415,000

Cash Receipts - Dairy	\$45,082,000	\$39,929,000
Cash Receipts - Livestock	\$48,729,000	\$44,579,000

### 3.b Farm Size

In 1997, the highest percentage of farms (25%) was in the 260 to 499 acre size range (see chart 3) and the average farm was approximately 243 acres, down slightly from an average of 248 acres in 1987. The New York State average as of 1997 was 228 acres, down from 231 in 1987.

Average Farm Size  
Herkimer County: 243 Acres  
New York State: 228 Acres  
Source: US Census 1997

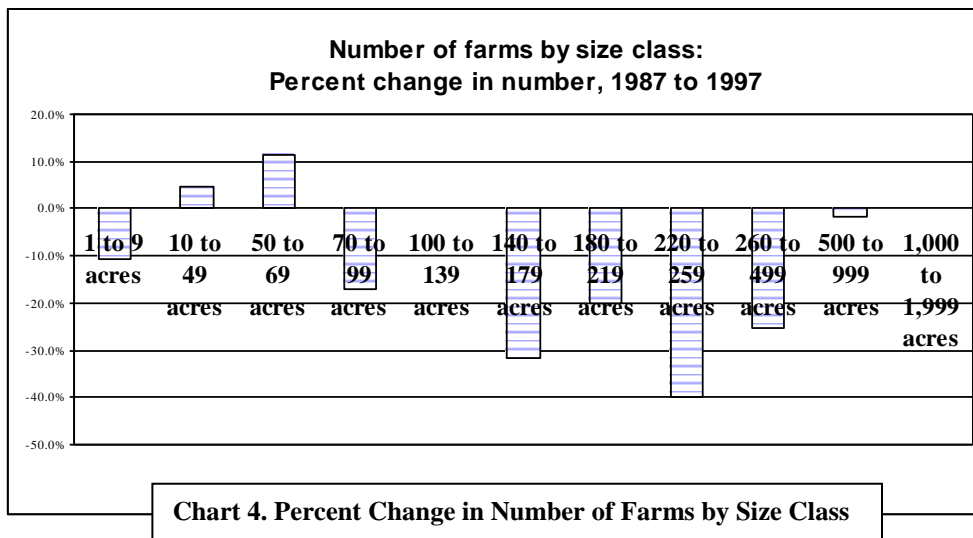


**Chart 3. Percent of Farms by Size Classes (US Census, 1997)**

Between 1987 and 1997 Herkimer County saw a reduction in the number of farms in all size categories with the exception of those between 10 and 69 acres (see chart 4). Middle-sized farms, while still a substantial portion of the county's agriculture, are representing less and less of the number of farms. For example, those farms between 220 and 259 acres had the highest losses in numbers, a 40% reduction during the ten-year span. Table 6 below examines the percentage of farms within each size class over the same time period. Smaller farms are representing a larger portion of the county's farms while mid-sized farms are being phased out. Most likely they are being subdivided into smaller farms, residential uses, being abandoned and subsequently returned to forestland, or consolidated into the few "mega-agribusinesses." It is unlikely that the mid-sized farms are expanding or purchasing additional farmland and moving into larger size classifications since there have been no new farms over 500 acres since 1987.

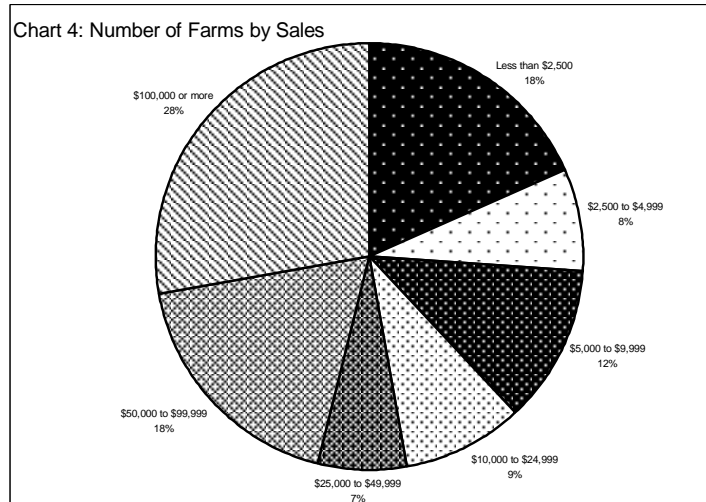
**Table 6: Percent of Farms by Size Class, 1987 to 1997**

	1987	1992	1997
1 to 9 acres	4%	4%	4%
10 to 49 acres	9%	11%	11%
50 to 69 acres	4%	4%	5%
70 to 99 acres	5%	4%	5%
100 to 139 acres	8%	8%	10%
140 to 179 acres	10%	11%	9%
180 to 219 acres	10%	11%	10%
220 to 259 acres	12%	10%	9%
260 to 499 acres	28%	26%	25%
500 to 999 acres	9%	10%	11%
1,000 to 1,999 acres	1%	1%	1%
2,000 acres or more	0%	0%	0%



### 3.c Agricultural Sales

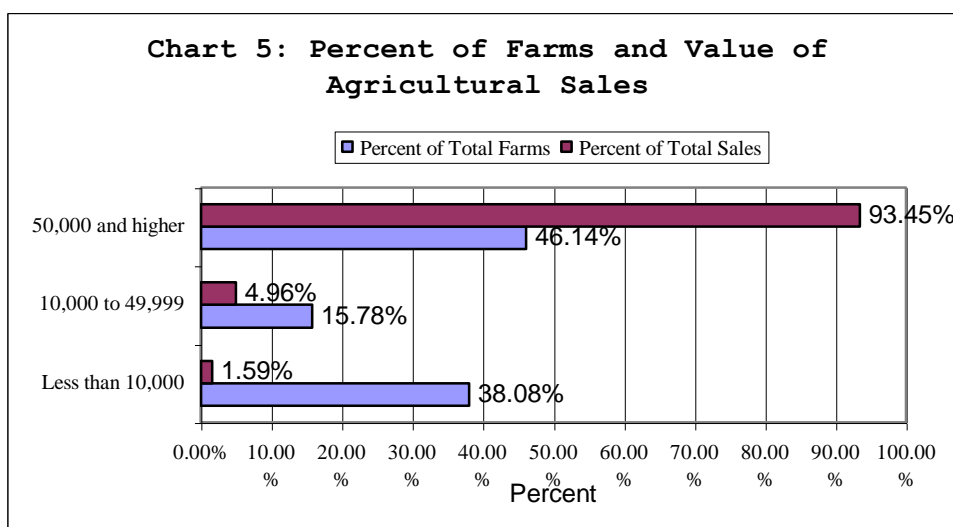
More than half of farms in Herkimer County (62%) have sales of \$10,000 or higher. However, a substantial number of the farms (18%) have sales below \$2,500 and an additional 20% of farms have sales between \$2,500 and \$9,999. Thus it is likely that at



least 38% of farms in the County are made up of part-time and “hobby” farms where agriculture is not the primary income of the operator or owner. There may be a number of these small farms that are owned or operated by retired farmers who sell hay, beef or heifers for added income.

Most of the county’s agricultural sales come from about half of its farms (see chart 5). Approximately 46% of

Herkimer County farms had \$50,000 and higher in net sales in 1997 and they accounted for almost all of the total sales (93%). Meanwhile, 16% of the county’s farms earned between \$10,000 and \$49,999 in net sales and accounted for about 5% of total agricultural sales. Finally, those very small farms, about 38% of all farms in the county, contributed less than 2% of total sales. When the smaller two categories are combined, approximately 54% of the county’s farms contribute only 7% of the overall sales. According to this data over half of the county’s farms are not generating significant income and it can be assumed that they would most likely be the first to fall to the pressures of suburbanization and land development.



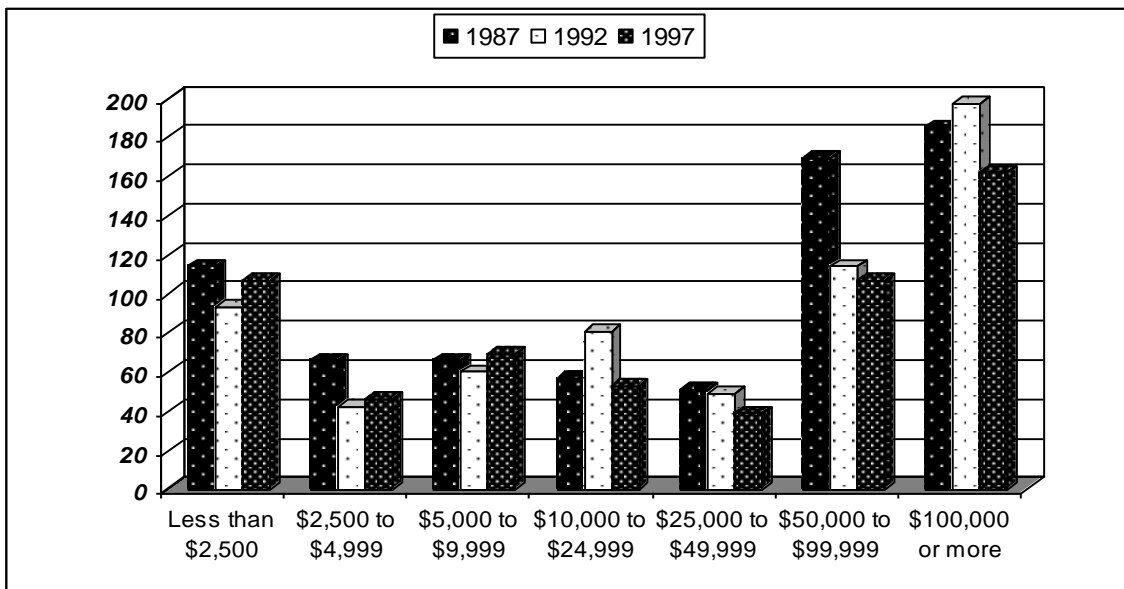


Chart 6: Number of Farms by Net Sales, 1987 - 1997

The previous chart (Chart 5) demonstrated the importance of farms earning over \$50,000 in net sales to the county's agricultural sales. These farms contribute directly to the economy through employment, sales and production and are the main agribusiness farms in the county. However, Herkimer is becoming home to fewer of these productive farms each year. Since 1987 there have been substantial reductions in the number of farms earning between \$50,000 and \$99,999 and those above \$100,000 (Chart 6). In contrast, there have only been slight losses (and increases in some cases) in the number of farms earning less than \$50,000 in net sales. The smaller, less profitable farms can not take advantage of the economies of scale that increase efficiency and production to the extent of those larger agricultural businesses, they typically do not have a significant number of employees and the primary farm operators often must take on alternative employment activities. As mentioned earlier, the less profitable farms may be more susceptible to development pressures and conversion to alternate uses.

Table 7 reveals other important information about the agricultural economy in Herkimer. In this longer-term look, farms in the County did increase their market value and the market value of land and buildings. Sales of livestock and their products, including dairy, also increased. Total cash receipts for dairy was \$39,929,000 in 2000. However, net cash return decreased by 26%, farms with net gains decreased by almost 39% and farms with net losses increased by 22%. Cash receipts for vegetables, "other" livestock and poultry, and greenhouse and nursery crops increased between 1999 and 2000. Vegetable cash receipts grew at the highest rate (26%). Overall, cash receipts for livestock and dairy decreased by about (8.5% and 11%, respectively.)

Table 7: Comparison of Market Value and Net Cash Returns in Herkimer County, 1987 to 1997

	1987	1992	1997	Percent change 1987 to 1997
Net cash return from ag sales for farm unit average per farm	\$17,577	\$17,737	\$12,999	-26.05%
Market value of agricultural products sold, total sales, average per farm	\$66,906	\$79,673	\$78,600	17.48%
Estimated market value of land and buildings	\$173,202	\$203,039	\$206,707	19.34%
Sales by commodity or commodity group: Livestock, poultry/their products, and dairy products	\$40,933	\$42,414	\$37,739	-7.80%
Farms with net gains	460	387	282	-38.70%
Farms with net losses	248	249	303	22.18%

### 3.d Farm Labor

According to the 1997 census of agriculture, 220 farms had hired labor in addition to their principal operators. These farms accounted for 630 employees with a \$2,640,000 in annual payroll. As farms went out of business, there was a 32% reduction in farm employment between 1992 and 1997. This is in response to the loss of farmland (21,225 acres) and loss of farms (53 farms). Fifty-one of the 53 farm losses were in operations over 50 acres. According to the 2000 United States Census, 854 people (aged over 16 years) were employed in the agriculture and forestry industry.

Table 8: Hired Farm Labor (On Farms with Workers) - US Census 1997 (Does not include owner-operators.)

	Number of Farms	Total Number of Workers
Farms with 1 worker	82	82
Farms with 2 workers	35	70
Farms with 3 or 4 workers	75	269
Farms with 5 to 9 workers	25	160
Farms with 10 workers or more	3	49

Only three farms employ 10 workers or more but account for almost 8% of the County's total farm employment. Mid-sized employers (3 to 9 employees) account for over 68% of all farm jobs.

### 3.e Farm Expenditures

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the total farm production expenses were down 1.29% from 1987 to \$34,328,000 with an average per farm expense of \$58,681 (up 19.46%). While the expenses per farm increased between 1987 and 1997, the net cash return from agricultural sales per farm has dropped 26.05% in the same time period. However, during the last 5-year period (1992-1997) the average production expenses per farm declined 3% (compared to a 4% increase for New York State overall). This most recent figure indicates that costs for producing milk and other agricultural products in Herkimer County decreased slightly.



#### 4. Agricultural Sector Breakdown

The sale of dairy products is by far the most important economic contributor to farming in Herkimer County. According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, dairy products produced over \$37 million in sales, accounting for approximately 82.4% of the total agricultural sales in that year and 89.4% of all livestock sales. However, these figures represent a reduction of almost 8% in the sale of dairy products since 1987 when sales totaled \$40,933,000 (see table 10 for comparisons). In total, the 1997 Census showed the Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold in Herkimer County reached almost \$46 million.

Table 9: Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold - 1997  
(Source: US Census data)

Agricultural Product	1997 Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold	Percent of Overall Category	Percent of Total	Number of Farms
All Crops				
Grains	\$597,000	16.5%	1.3%	46
Hay, Silage & Field Seeds	\$1,496,000	41.2%	3.3%	164
Vegetables, Sweet Corn & Melons	\$478,000	13.2%	1.0%	23
Fruits, Nuts & Berries	\$54,000	1.5%	0.1%	10
Nursery and Greenhouse Crops	\$802,000	22.1%	1.8%	32
Other Crops	\$200,000	5.5%	0.4%	15
<b>Total Crops</b>	<b>\$3,628,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>232</b>
Livestock				
Dairy Products	\$37,739,000	89.4%	82.4%	271
Poultry	\$61,000	0.1%	0.1%	15
Cattle & Calves	\$3,972,000	9.4%	8.7%	388
Hogs & Pigs	\$34,000	0.1%	0.1%	14
Sheep, Lambs & Wool	\$41,000	0.1%	0.1%	15
Other Livestock	\$350,000	0.8%	0.8%	28
<b>Total Livestock</b>	<b>\$42,196,000</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>92.1%</b>	<b>567</b>
<b>Total For All Agriculture</b>	<b>\$45,824,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>583</b>

Agriculture contributes significantly to Herkimer County's economy. Sales of agricultural products enable farmers to farm and therefore keep farmland productive, maintain rural character and conserve open space. Enabling farms to be profitable is an essential component of farmland protection. Currently however, farms in Herkimer County are becoming less profitable and more difficult to sustain. Overall, Table 9 shows there was a 3.26% reduction in total agricultural sales between 1987 and 1997 (\$47,370,000 to \$45,824,000). Reductions in sales occurred in grains (-19.32%), dairy products (-7.80%), cattle and calves (-1.51%), and hogs and pigs (-54.05%) while gains were seen in hay, silage, and field seeds (+60.34), vegetables, sweet corn, and melons (+276.38%), nursery and greenhouse crops (+161.24%), and other livestock (+614.29%).

Table 10. Market Value of Agricultural Sales 1987 – 1997

	1987	1992	1997	Percent Change 1987 to 1997
<b>All Crops</b>	<b>\$2,131,000</b>	<b>\$3,347,000</b>	<b>\$3,628,000</b>	<b>70.25%</b>
Grains	\$740,000	\$666,000	\$597,000	-19.32%
Hay, Silage & Field Seeds	\$933,000	\$1,661,000	\$1,496,000	60.34%
Vegetables, Sweet Corn & Melons	\$127,000	\$207,000	\$478,000	276.38%
Fruits, Nuts and Berries	(D)	(D)	\$54,000	N/A
Nursery and Greenhouse Crops	\$307,000	\$761,000	\$802,000	161.24%
Other Crops	(D)	(D)	\$200,000	N/A
<b>All Livestock</b>	<b>\$45,239,000</b>	<b>\$47,326,000</b>	<b>\$42,196,000</b>	<b>-6.73%</b>
Dairy Products	\$40,933,000	\$42,414,000	\$37,739,000	-7.80%
Poultry	(D)	(D)	\$61,000	N/A
Cattle & Calves	\$4,033,000	\$4,555,000	\$3,972,000	-1.51%
Hogs & Pigs	\$74,000	\$117,000	\$34,000	-54.05%
Sheep, Lambs & Wool	(D)	(D)	\$41,000	N/A
Other Livestock	\$49,000	\$133,000	\$350,000	614.29%
<b>All Products</b>	<b>\$47,370,000</b>	<b>\$50,672,000</b>	<b>\$45,824,000</b>	<b>-3.26%</b>

Source: Agricultural Census, 1997

(D): Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual farms

N/A: Not Available

#### 4.a Agricultural Sector Focus: Field Crops

The Field Crop sector includes Grains, Hay, Silage, and Field Seeds, Vegetables, Sweet Corn and Melons, Fruits, Nuts and Berries, Nursery and Greenhouse Crops and those labeled Other. According to the 1997 US Census of Agriculture, there were 232 farms with field crops in Herkimer County (down from 1987) and a 15% reduction in harvested cropland between 1987 and 1997. In terms of sales, the largest segment of this industry in 1997 was Hay, Silage & Field Seeds with \$1,496,000 in sales on 164 farms, a 60% increase over 1987.

The fastest growing sector of the field crops industry between 1987 and 1997 was vegetables, sweet corn and melons. Although this farming activity occurred on only 23 farms and accounted for a modest 1% of the County's total agricultural sales, sales of vegetables, sweet corn and melons grew 276% between 1987 and 1997 (\$127,000 to \$478,000).

#### 4.b Agricultural Sector Focus: Livestock – excluding dairy

The livestock industry includes cattle and calves, poultry, hogs and pigs, sheep, lambs and wool, and other livestock. In 1997, 460 farms were involved with livestock and

netted a total of \$4,458,000 in sales (9.8% of the County's total agricultural sales). The largest sub-sector of this activity was cattle and calves with \$4,033,000 in sales. However, this represents a 1.5% reduction in sales between 1987 and 1997. The fastest growing segment of the livestock sector occurred in the category of "Other Livestock" at 614%<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4.c Agricultural Sector Focus: Dairy Industry and Milk Farms

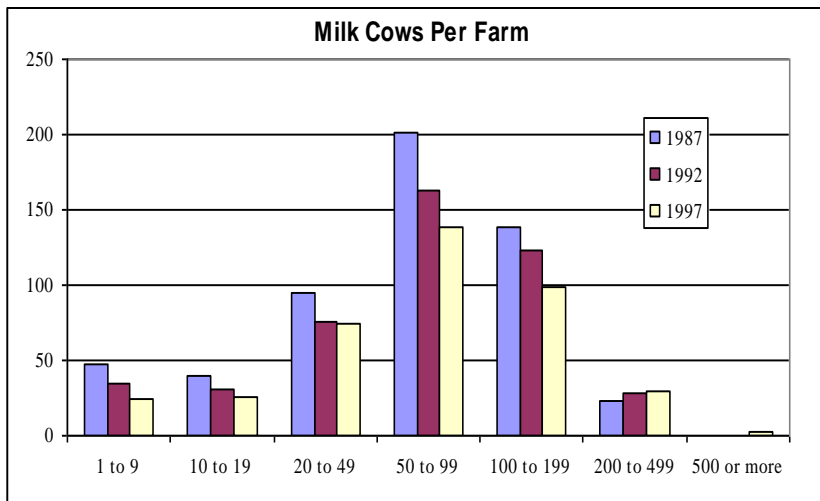


Chart 7. Changes in the Number of Milk Cows per Farm, 1987 - 1997

Dairy farmers face an economic climate where production costs are increasing and one of the few ways to stay profitable is to increase herd sizes. Thus the pattern emerges where dairy farms with small herds tend to go out of business while farms with larger herds are adding even more animals. Overall, between 1987 and 1997 there was a 14%

reduction in the number of cattle and calves, a 21.78% reduction in the number of milk cows (from 24,958 to 19,522), and a significant reduction in the number of farms with less than 200 cows. Meanwhile, farms with more than 200 cows grew by almost 40% from 23 farms in 1987 to 32 farms in 1997, including one farm with over 500 milk cows. This follows the industry-wide trend of larger dairy farms. Chart 7 illustrates the changes in the number of milk cows per farm between the years 1987 and 1997.

Dairy Sales: Chart 8 compares the decreasing number of milk cows and dairy products sold. While the county's fewer milk cows are becoming more productive (see Chart 9) the actual volume of dairy products sold between 1982 and 1997 has reduced by a total of 8.34%. This dramatic reduction in dairy sales is extremely significant due to the fact that such a large portion of Herkimer County's agriculture is focused on dairy and milk products.

<sup>3</sup> USDA does not define "Other Livestock"

#### 4.c.1 Milk Production

Improvements in dairy farming technologies have helped farmers achieve more from less numbers. In fact, milk production per cow is up since 1990 by about 11% and average sales per dairy farm have increased substantially from \$99,111 in 1987 to \$139,258 in 1997 – a 41% increase. However, even with the increased production per cow, due to the significant reduction in the number of cows noted above (Chart 8) overall production is down almost 13% since 1990. On a positive note, the trend of decreased milk production seems to have leveled off and stabilized since 1996. Please note that Chart 9 uses New York State Agricultural Statistics data and while the figures do not correlate exactly with the US Census figures, the trend lines demonstrated are significant and complement the analysis.

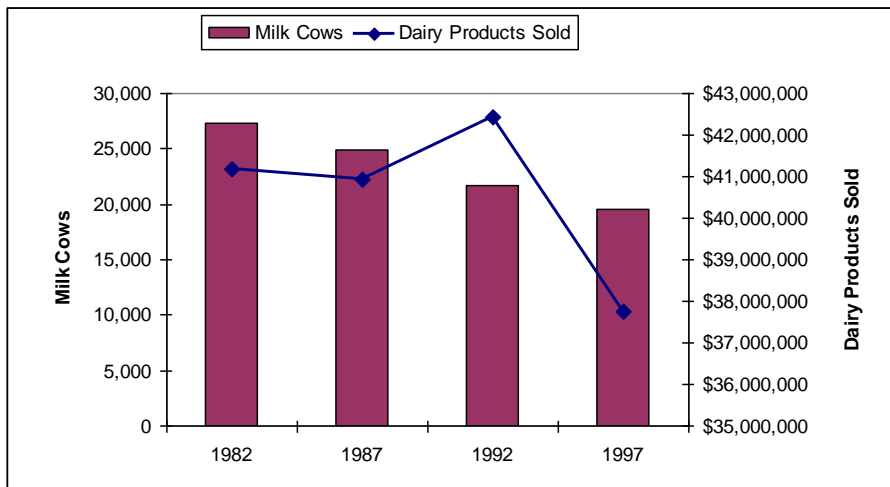


Chart 8. Milk Cows Compared to Dairy Products Sold, 1982-1997. Source: Census 1997

In summary, the largest dairy farms – while most likely not increasing in acreage – are adding cows (as mentioned earlier there was 40% increase in farms with more than 200 cows between 1987 and 1997), increasing production and following the trends of consolidation and larger dairy farming operations. However, middle and smaller sized farms are either going out of business, or reducing the number of cows for dairy production.

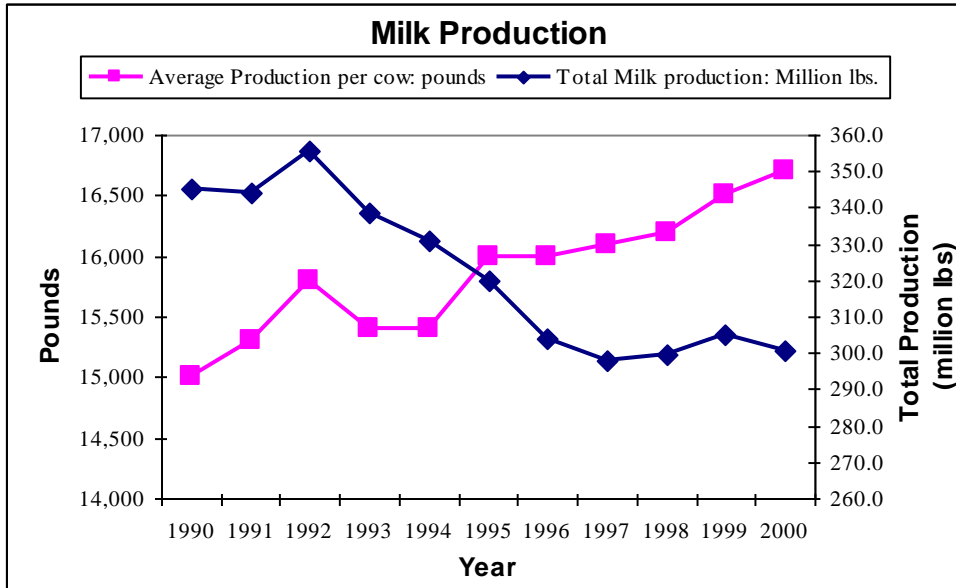


Chart 9. Milk Production Characteristics, 1990 – 2000. Source: Agricultural Statistics.

## 5 The Economics of Herkimer County Agriculture

### 5.a Statewide Impact of the Agricultural Industry

A recent study, “Agriculture-Based Economic Development: Trends and Prospects for New York” by Nelson L. Bills addressed the impact of New York State’s agriculture on the economy. According to the report, in 1996 New York’s agriculture and food sectors (farms, agricultural services, and food manufacturing) generated \$23.2 billion in gross output. In addition to sales, the study also investigated the impacts farming exerts on the economy through “forward linkages” (costs and sales in transportation, wholesaling, retailing, and food services) and “backward linkages” through the calculation of economic multipliers.

The report’s analysis of employment multipliers found that “food manufacturing exerts one of the highest employment multiplier effects of any industry in the state.” For example, an employment multiplier of 4 means that “for every new job created in food manufacturing, an additional three jobs are supported in industries and sectors structurally linked to the food manufacturing sector.” When the food manufacturing sector was separated into different components, *dairy processing* multipliers reached 5.72. This suggests that for every new job in that sector, additional four and three quarters are created in supporting industries.

Chart 10: Employment Multipliers for Selected Industrial Sectors, New York. Source: Agriculture-Based Economic Development: Trends and Prospects for New York by Nelson L. Bills

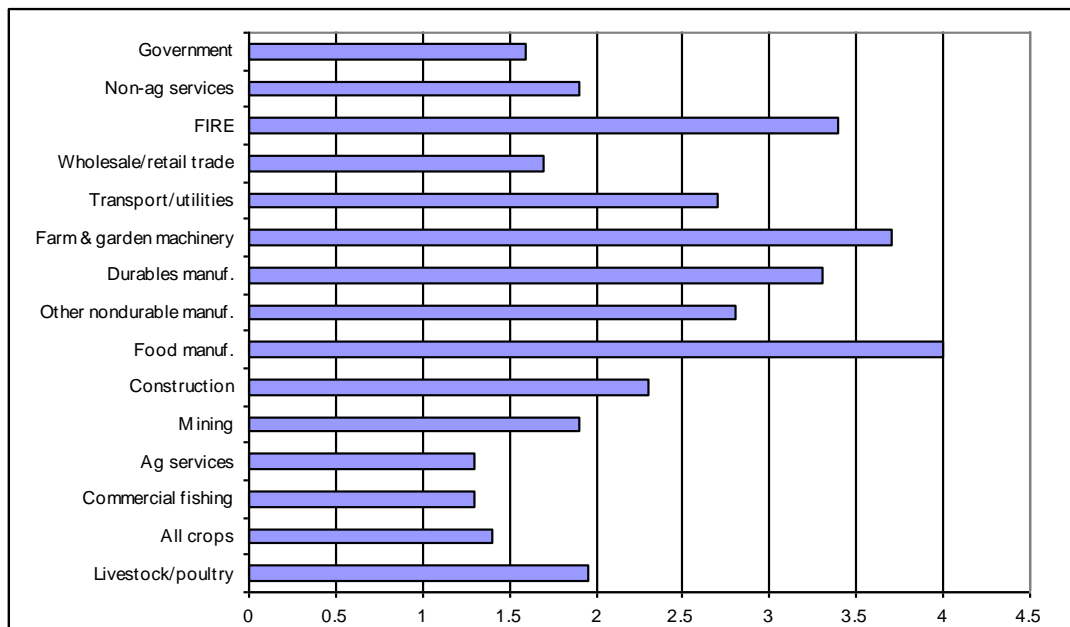
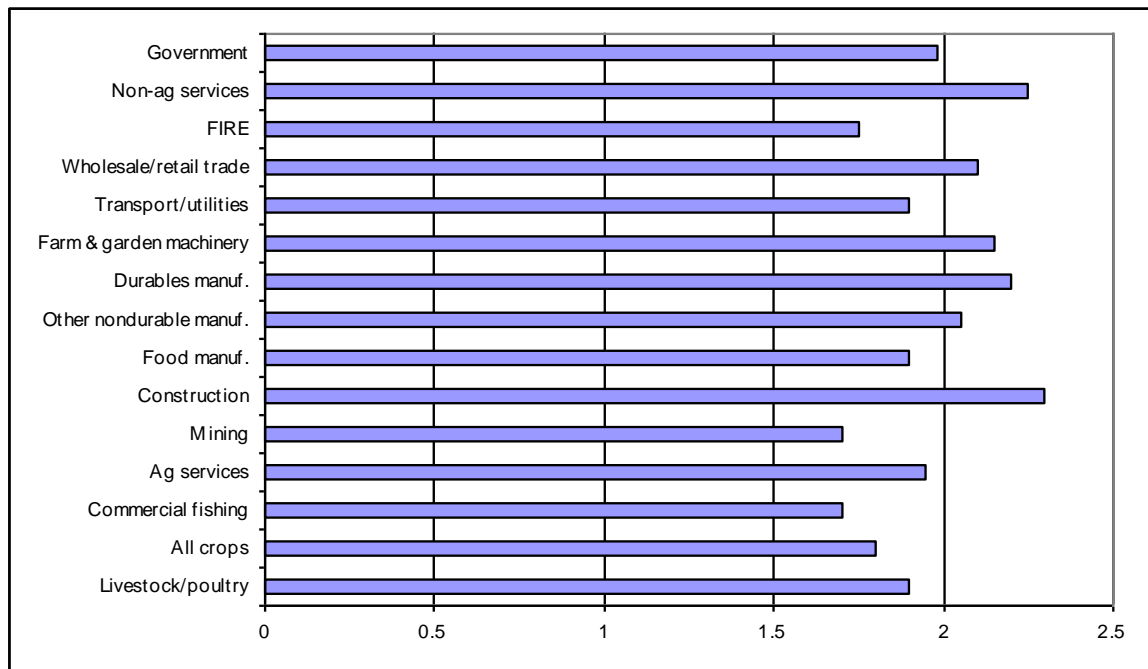


Table 11: Dis-aggregated employment multipliers for selected food manufacturing sectors, New York, 1996. Source: Agriculture-Based Economic Development: Trends and Prospects for New York by Nelson L. Bills

Sector	Employment Multiplier
Meat processing	2.72
Dairy processing	5.72
Canned fruits and vegetables	3.14
Dehydrated food products	2.16
Pickles, sauces, and salad dressings	3.66
Frozen fruits, juices and vegetables	3.1
Food grain processing	5.46
Dog, cat and other pet food	4.91
Prepared livestock/poultry feeds	4.52
Bakery, confections, nuts	2.75
Beverages	5.49
Fish and seafood products	2.06
Potato chips & similar snacks	3.45

Output multipliers for the food and agricultural sectors also compare reasonably well with other industrial sectors. The report's analysis suggests that each new dollar of farm and food output for the state brings additional production valued at nearly 1 dollar. Again, dairy processing is somewhat higher with an output multiplier of 2.26.

Chart 11: Output Multipliers for Selected Industrial Sectors, New York. Source: Agriculture-Based Economic Development: Trends and Prospects for New York by Nelson L. Bills



The multiplier analysis suggests that food and agriculture exerts a relatively large generative effect on the New York economy. It also suggests that efforts to enhance production in farming will produce large secondary and tertiary benefits for industries linked to farm and food production.

## 6. How Does Farming Fit into Herkimer County Economy?

Agriculture brings in \$49,415,000 in total cash receipts to the economy in Herkimer County. Farming contributes approximately 3.2% of the labor force and 2% of the county residents' personal earnings. In 1999, \$10,109,000 of income was attributed to farming in the County. Agriculture employs more people than both wholesale trade and transportation sectors. Although total farm employment and income are not as large as non-farm employment and income, agriculture contributes millions of dollars to the overall economy. It has a large influence on the entire economy due to its high multiplier effects. Portions of both non-farm employment and income are supported significantly by agriculture.

Herkimer County has a diverse economy that includes a relatively even spread of jobs in manufacturing, retail trade, services and government. For the most part, industrial and urban centers are located along the Mohawk River with farming activities in the surrounding towns. The northern portion of Herkimer, entirely within the Adirondack Park, does not have any major population centers and has an economy focused on recreation, seasonal residences, and forestry.

Table 12: Herkimer County Employment by Sector, 1999. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

	Employees
Total full-time and part-time employment	25,060
Farm employment (Owner-Operators are not included in this category)	809
Non farm employment	24,043
Agriculture services, forestry, fishing, and other	D
Mining	D
Construction	1,350
Manufacturing	4,277
Transportation and public utilities	696
Wholesale Trade	380
Retail Trade	4,721
Finance, insurance, and real estate	1,246
Services	6,264
Government and govt. enterprises	4,861

*D - Estimate not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information - estimate included in totals*



## Personal Income

In 1999, Herkimer had a total personal income (TPI) of \$1,313,956,000. This TPI ranked 43rd in the State and accounted for 0.2 percent of the State total. The 1999 TPI reflected an increase of 2.3 percent from 1998. The 1998-99 State change was 5.3 percent and the national change was 5.4 percent.

Total personal income (TPI) includes the earnings (wages and salaries, other labor income, proprietors' income); dividends, interest, and rent; and transfer payments received by the residents of Herkimer. In 1999, earnings were 60.4 percent of TPI; dividends, interest, and rent were 17.5 percent; and transfer payments were 22.1 percent. From 1998 to 1999, earnings increased 2.9 percent; dividends, interest, and rent increased 2.6 percent; and transfer payments increased 0.6 percent.

Table 13: Herkimer County Personal Income, 1999 – in \$1,000s. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Accounts Data

Total personal income	\$1,313,956
Farm income	\$10,109
Non farm income	\$1,303,847

## Earnings by Industry

Earnings by persons employed in Herkimer increased from \$540,447,000 in 1998 to \$564,148,000 in 1999, an increase of 4.4 percent. The largest industries in 1999 were state and local government, 24.0 percent of earnings; services, 19.0 percent; and durable goods manufacturing, 15.8 percent. Of the industries that accounted for at least 5 percent of earnings in 1999, the slowest growing from 1998 to 1999 was non-durable goods manufacturing (9.2 percent of earnings in 1999), which decreased 8.0 percent; the fastest was construction (5.8 percent of earnings in 1999), which increased 9.9 percent.

Table 14 Herkimer County Earnings by Industry, 1999 – in \$1,000s. Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Accounts Data

Earnings by place of work	\$564,148
Farm earnings	\$10,109
Non farm earnings	\$554,039
Agriculture services, forestry, fishing, and other	D
Mining	D
Construction	\$32,501
Manufacturing	\$141,232

Transportation and public utilities	\$26,940
Wholesale trade	\$12,419
Retail trade	\$66,597
Finance, insurance, and real estate	\$18,064
Services	\$107,023
Government and government enterprises	\$144,702

*D - Estimate not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information - estimate included in totals*

## 7. Changes in Housing and Demographics

The total population of Herkimer County in 2000 (US Census Data) was 64,427. This is a decrease of 1,370 people, or about 2%. However, this population data includes figures for those that live in the both the towns and villages. Between 1990 and 2000, the County villages lost about 11% of their population (641 people). Compared to the population changes seen in Table 8 below, the villages had the highest population loss of all municipalities in the County while the rural areas, especially those in the Adirondack Park gained the most population and number of dwelling units.

Since agriculture is not a factor within the villages, a look specifically at the population changes occurring outside of the villages is more revealing however. Outside of the villages, the County population decreased only slightly by about 1% (511 people). At the same time however, the number of housing units in these areas increased by more than 4% (1,240 dwelling units). Webb had the highest increase in population (17%), followed by the Town of Fairfield (11.4%). Most town population increases were between two and eight percent. The following towns lost population: Frankfort; German Flatts; Herkimer; Little Falls; Manheim; and Schuyler. Manheim had the greatest population decrease (10%). Most of the other towns had population losses in the range of three percent to five percent.

At the same time that these towns lost population, they gained additional dwelling units. Only the Town of Manheim lost dwelling units. All other towns showed increased numbers of dwelling units. Some had moderate gains ranging from one to seven percent (Frankfort, Herkimer, Russia, Schuyler, Start, Webb, and Winfield.) Others had higher rates of increases.

Those towns located in the northern portion of Herkimer County showed the greatest level of new development. Webb, Fairfield, Ohio, and Norway showed very large increases in dwelling units. Some towns located south of the Adirondack Park also saw an increase in the number of dwelling units, but the increases were not as dramatic as those northern towns. Danube is one town in the southern portion of the County that had a large increase in dwelling units (14.8%) and a very small increase in population (1.9%).

Table 15. Comparison of Population and Housing Trends, 1990 to 2000.

Town	1990 Population	2000 Population	Percent Change in Population	Number of Housing Units, 1990	Number of Housing Units, 2000	Percent Change in Housing Units
Columbia	1587	1630	2.7	581	581	0
Danube	1077	1098	1.9	385	442	14.8
Fairfield	1442	1607	11.4	507	611	20.5
Frankfort	7494	7478	-.2	2957	3185	7.7
German Flatts	14345	13629	-5.0	5777	5832	.95

Town	1990 Population	2000 Population	Percent Change in Population	Number of Housing Units, 1990	Number of Housing Units, 2000	Percent Change in Housing Units
Herkimer	10401	9962	-4.2	4444	4513	1.6
Litchfield	1414	1453	2.8	620	670	8.1
Little Falls	1635	1544	-5.6	634	637	.5
Manheim	3527	3171	<b>-10.1</b>	1523	1480	-2.8
Newport	2148	2192	2.0	822	897	<b>9.1</b>
Norway	663	711	7.2	263	311	<b>18.3</b>
Ohio	880	922	4.8	823	974	<b>18.3</b>
Russia	2294	2487	<b>8.4</b>	1238	1252	1.1
Salisbury	1934	1953	.98	782	926	<b>18.4</b>
Schuyler	3508	3385	-3.5	1448	1541	6.4
Stark	759	767	1.1	311	334	7.4
Warren	1077	1136	5.5	401	440	<b>9.7</b>
Webb	1637	1912	<b>17.0</b>	3743	3833	2.4
Winfield	2146	2202	3.0	831	871	4.8
County, Outside Villages	59968	59239	-1.2	28090	29330	4.4

There were 64,427 people residing in Herkimer County in 2000 (US Census data.) Of that, almost 17% were aged over 65 years. There were 25,734 households, and 32,026 housing units. About 13% of all houses in the county are considered seasonal. Eighty percent are owner-occupied. About 61% of Herkimer's population (over 16 years old) are in the labor force, and in 2000, the unemployment rate was 4.1%.

There has been a 2% decrease in population between 1990 and 2000. At the same time, there was a 3% increase in the number of households and a 4% increase in the number of housing units. This discrepancy between population growth and housing growth is a common trend seen in rural areas in Upstate New York, and is an indicator that some degree of rural "sprawl" is taking place. This type of rural sprawl occurs when household sizes decrease, and the existing population spreads out and occupies more dwellings.

## **8. Regulatory Framework in Herkimer County and Its Relation to Farming**

Zoning and land development regulations for subdivisions and site planning have direct impacts on farmland and agricultural practices. Furthermore, these laws should be coordinated with an updated comprehensive plan that illustrates residents' desires regarding growth and quality of life. As part of the farmland protection plan, land use regulations were reviewed from each of the municipalities within Herkimer County. These towns and villages employ a variety of land use laws including zoning, subdivision regulations, and site plan review. Other regulations govern the placement of signs, adult entertainment, and mining uses. However, there is certainly a lack of legal, regulatory and planning devices geared to supporting or enhancing farming in the county.

Exactly one half of the county's municipalities have developed a comprehensive or master plan. At least nine of these plans are significantly out of date (ten years or older). For a comprehensive plan to be an accurate snapshot of the community, it must represent the desires of its residents, and assist in the guidance of land development regulations it should be updated every five to ten years. Updated (or new) comprehensive plans would help the local governments better understand existing conditions, potential threats to quality of life, and the needs of residents, businesses and farms.

Almost three-quarters of the municipalities in the county employ zoning for the regulation of land development. For the most part, these ordinances do not support, enhance or contribute to the viability of farming. Most agricultural or rural districts allow residential uses to mix with farmlands at relatively high densities (1-5 acre lots). Scattered growth at these densities typically results in loss of farmland, increases difficulty of farming, and loss of rural character. Furthermore, (according to the County Planning Department), there are no right to farm laws employed in Herkimer County. When employed, these laws can help farmers deal with encroaching residential growth and land use compatibility issues by protecting them from nuisance lawsuits and prohibiting local governments from enacting ordinances that would impose unreasonable restrictions on agriculture.

The land use development regulatory framework in Herkimer County does not support enhanced agricultural activities or the preservation of farmland. This includes those communities with and without zoning ordinances. As mentioned above, the existing zoning laws allow conventional subdivision development at high densities (one to five-acre minimum lot sizes) within agricultural zones without requiring the protection of farms or open space.

# Herkimer County Local Government Planning and Zoning

*Source: Herkimer/Oneida County Planning Department*

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Comprehensive or Master Plan</b>	<b>Zoning Ordinance</b>	<b>Subdivision Regulations</b>	<b>Site Plan Review</b>
Cold Brook (Village)	N	N	N	N
Columbia	Y (2001)	Y	Y	N
Danube	N	N	N	N
Dolgeville (Village)	Y (1990)	Y	N	Y
Fairfield	Y	Y	N	N
Frankfort (Village)	N	Y	N	Y
Frankfort (Town)	Y (1965)	Y	Y	Y
German Flats	N	N	N	N
Herkimer (Village)	Y (1978)	Y	Y	Y
Herkimer (Town)	Y (1962)	Y	Y	Y
Ilion (Village)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Litchfield	N	Y	Y	N
Little Falls (City)	Y (1970)	Y	Y	Y
Little Falls (Town)	N	N	N	N
Manheim	N	Y	Y	Y
Middleville (Village)	N	Y	N	Y
Mohawk (Village)	Y	Y	Y	N
Newport (Village)	N	Y	N	Y
Newport (Town)	Y (1996)	Y	N	Y
Norway	Y (1992)	Y	Y	Y
Ohio	N	N	N	N
Poland (Village)	N	Y	Y	Y
Russia	Y (1977)	Y	Y	Y
Salisbury	Y (1993)	Y	Y	Y
Schuyler	Y (1965)	Y	Y	Y
Stark	Y (2002)	N	N	N
Warren	N	N	Y	N
Webb	Y (2002)	Y	Y	Y
West Winfield (Village)	N	Y	Y	N
Winfield	N	Y	Y	Y

## 9. Agricultural Assessments and Districts Herkimer County

### *Agricultural Assessments*

The New York State Agricultural Law provides property tax relief for farmers through an agricultural assessment program. Agricultural assessments allow land to be assessed for its agricultural value, rather than its market, or non-farm value. Owners of land used in agricultural production are eligible to receiving an agricultural assessment on their real property if they meet certain minimum requirements. Eligible land is defined as “not less than 10 acres of land used as a single operation in the preceding two years for the production for sale of crops, livestock or livestock products of an average gross sales value of ten thousand dollars or more.” In 1994, the law was amended to permit farms less than 10 acres in size with gross sales of \$50,000 or more to qualify as land in agricultural production. The definition also includes rented land, support land, woodland up to 50 acres, and land set aside in a federal conservation program. To be eligible, the land must either be in an agricultural district or subject to an individual commitment to use the land in agricultural production for eight years. The landowner must apply yearly to the local assessor to receive an agricultural assessment. Agricultural assessments are calculated annually.



Agricultural assessments are calculated based on the quality of soils present. The Department of Agriculture and Markets is responsible for establishing and maintaining this. It is based upon soil productivity and capability. Furthermore, the State Board of Equalization and Assessment annually is

required to calculate an agricultural assessment based on soil productivity in conjunction with the land classification system. The portion of the market value of land used for agricultural production that represents excess above the agricultural assessment is not subject to real property taxation.

When land that has received agricultural assessments is converted to a non-agricultural use, it is subject to a penalty payment. These payments equal five times the taxes saved in the last year in which the land benefited from an agricultural assessment, plus 6 percent interest compounded annually for each year in which the assessment was granted, not exceeding five years. If only part of a part of a parcel is converted, the payment is based on the converted part of the parcel that received the agricultural assessment. Landowners must notify the assessor whenever this occurs. Failure to do so can result in penalties up to \$500. Enforcement of this penalty is by the local assessor. In many cases,

the penalty payments are not enforced, or considered to be too small to be a major deterrent to taking land out of production.

According to the Herkimer County Real Property Office, in 2002, 1,434 parcels received almost \$21,000,000 in property tax assessment reductions (see Table 16, following page).

Table 16: Agricultural Exemptions by Town

	<b>Parcels receiving ag. Exemptions</b>	<b>Dollar Amount of Exemption</b>	<b>Average exemption per parcel</b>
Columbia	96	\$1,035,379	\$10,785
Danube	137	\$2,371,153	\$17,308
Fairfield	75	\$628,890	\$8,385
Frankfort	108	\$1,842,748	\$17,062
German Flatts	86	\$1,331,112	\$15,478
Herkimer	33	\$35,073	\$1,063
Litchfield	129	\$1,554,615	\$12,051
Little Falls	41	\$553,083	\$13,490
Manheim	102	\$4,713,490	\$46,211
Newport	96	\$926,784	\$9,654
Norway	11	\$313,197	\$28,472
Ohio	1	\$1,350	\$1,350
Russia	4	\$63,950	\$15,988
Salisbury	7	\$44,314	\$6,331
Schuyler	111	\$1,048,921	\$9,450
Stark	64	\$560,378	\$8,756
Warren	81	\$556,813	\$6,874
Winfield	252	\$3,371,926	\$13,381
<b>Total</b>	<b>1434</b>	<b>\$20,953,176</b>	<b>\$14,612</b>

The Town of Winfield receives the most agricultural exemptions in number (252 parcels) and dollars (\$3,371,926). Winfield, located in the southwestern corner of Herkimer County, has a significant amount of prime farmland and is almost completely within Agricultural District #2. Other towns with a significant number of parcels receiving exemptions include Danube (137), Litchfield (129), Schuyler (111), Manheim (102), and Newport (96). The Town of Mainheim had the highest average exemption per parcel at \$46,211, followed by Norway at \$28,472.

### **Agricultural Districts:**

Article 25AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law authorized the formation of districts to provide protection of farmland and businesses. Agricultural districts safeguard farmers from unreasonable local regulation, place limits on eminent



domain, require coordinated land use decisions, and enhance right-to-farm protection (*Source: Agricultural and Farmland Protection for New York, American Farmland Trust*).

In Herkimer County, there are five certified New York State Agricultural Districts. The total area of these lands covers approximately 58,115.6 acres of land (all land uses) and 51,688.7 acres of land in farms. The following information was made available through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets agricultural district profiles.

#### Agricultural District #1

Towns	Schuyler, Newport, Herkimer, Frankfort
Acres in District	14,353.2
Acres in Farms	9,981.8
Acres Cropped	5,515.8
Acres owned by farmers	9,114.0
Acres rented by farmers	867.8

*Source: Department of Agriculture and Markets, Agricultural District Review Profile, 1997*

Agricultural District #1 is located in the western portion of Herkimer County and north of the Mohawk River. The district is the least contiguous of all the county's agricultural districts. Of the 28 farms in this district most (16) list their principal enterprise as dairy, with five (5) in livestock, five (5) producing hay, and two (2) vegetable crop farms.

#### Agricultural District #2

Towns	Columbia, Frankfort, German Flatts, Litchfield, Warren, Winfield
Acres in District	17,372.6
Acres in Farms	16,716.7
Acres Cropped	9,115.7
Acres owned by farmers	15,557.2
Acres rented by farmers	1,159.5

*Source: Department of Agriculture and Markets, Agricultural District Review Profile, 1995*

Agricultural District #2, located in the southwestern portion of Herkimer County, consists of forty-six (46) dairy farms, with other principal activities being livestock (5), vegetable and grain crops (3), orchards (2), Christmas tree (1), and other (3).

#### Agricultural District #3

Towns	Danube, German Flatts, Little Falls, Stark, Warren
Acres in District	10,254.9
Acres in Farms	9,569.3
Acres Cropped	5,519.0
Acres owned by farmers	8,985.4
Acres rented by farmers	583.9

*Source: Department of Agriculture and Markets, Agricultural District Review Profile, 1995*

Agricultural District #3, located in eastern Herkimer County, consists of twenty-one (21) dairy farms, four (4) vegetable and grain crop farms, two (2) livestock farms, and one (1) other.

#### Agricultural District #4

Towns	Warren and Stark
Acres in District	9,448
Acres in Farms	9,111
Acres Cropped	5,440
Acres owned by farmers	8,641
Acres rented by farmers	470

*Source: Department of Agriculture and Markets, Agricultural District Review Profile, 1999*

Agricultural District #4, located in southern Herkimer County, located mostly in the Town of Warren with small portions found in the Town of Stark, is the one of smallest of the five districts in Herkimer County. Farms in Agricultural District #4 are predominately Dairy (24), with several livestock farms (7), cropland rental farms (7). Other farming activities include vegetable and grain crops (2), poultry (1), hay (1), and Christmas tree (1).

#### Agricultural District #6

Towns	Schuyler, Newport, Herkimer, Frankfort
Acres in District	6,686.9
Acres in Farms	6,309.9
Acres Cropped	3,095.0
Acres owned by farmers	6,112.9
Acres rented by farmers	197.0

*Source: Department of Agriculture and Markets, Agricultural District Review Profile, 1996*

Agricultural District #6, located in central Herkimer County, north of the Mohawk River, includes many acres of productive farmland well suited for the active dairy farms in the area. District #6 is the newest Agricultural District in Herkimer County (certified in 1996) and will be reviewed for renewal in 2004. Similar to the other districts in the county, Agricultural District #6 is dominated by dairy farms (18), with two (2) vegetable crop farms, one (1) livestock farm, and one (1) hay farm.

## 10. Soils

### Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Significance

Traditional farming activities such as dairy or crop farms can be found in most parts of Herkimer County outside of the Adirondack Park (where the prime agricultural activity is forestry) and more urbanized areas such as the City of Little Falls and Village of Mohawk. However, the most productive, profitable, and sustainable farms are typically located in areas where the soils are appropriate for agricultural activity. The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has mapped and described those soils in Herkimer County's Soil Survey document. These are typically called prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance. In general, locations south of the Mohawk River include some of Herkimer County's most productive farmlands. Specifically, the Towns of Winfield, Columbia, and Litchfield have an abundance of prime and statewide important soils, as well as a significant number of the county's farms. Additional areas of abundant prime soils include the Route 20 corridor (passes through southern parts of the county) and the Route 5 corridor along the Mohawk River.

The maps found in the Herkimer County Soil Survey are an excellent resource for farmland planning. In the future, the NRCS will convert these paper maps to a digital soils "layer" for use in a Geographic Information System. When this work is completed, communities will be able to easily find and highlight the prime and important soils for use in site planning, grant writing, and to help target farmland preservation efforts. In the meantime, for the purposes of gaining a better visual representation of the county's agricultural soils, prime and important soils have been highlighted in green and red on the attached maps.

### Prime Soils

Prime farmland accounts for approximately 25.2%<sup>4</sup> of the land in Herkimer County. According to the NRCS, prime farmland soils are

...land that is best suited to the production of row, forage and fiber crops. Due to inherent natural characteristics such as level topography, good drainage, adequate moisture supply, favorable soil depth and favorable soil texture, this land consistently produces the most food and fiber with the least fertilizer, labor and energy requirements. Prime soils tend to be resistant to erosion and runoff.

ApA	Appleton silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
BoB	Bombay very fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
BrB	Broadalbin loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes
BuA	Burdett silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Herkimer County Soil and Water Conservation District

CaB	Canton stony very fine sandy loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes
CsB	Conesus silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes
Fr	Fredon Fine sandy loam
He	Hamlin fine sandy loam
Hf	Hamlin silt loam
HgB	Hartland-Agawam complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HhA	Hartland gravelly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HhB	Hartland gravelly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HkB	Herkimer gravelly silt loam, moderately well drained, 0 to 4 percent slopes
HLB	Hilton silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HoB	Honeoye silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HuA	Howard gravelly fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
HuB	Howard gravelly fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HvA	Howard gravelly silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
HvB	Howard gravelly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
Lk	Lamson mucky silt loam
LoA	Lima silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
LoB	Lima silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
McA	Manheim silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
MnB	Massena very fine sandy loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes
MoB	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 3 to 8 percent slopes
OnB	Ontario silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
PaB	Palatine silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes
PIA	Palmyra gravelly silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
PIB	Palmyra gravelly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
PpB	Phelps gravelly fine sandy loam, 0 to 4 percent slopes
RaB	Raynham silt loam, 0 to 4 percent slopes
RbA	Rhinebeck silt loam, loamy substratum, 0 to 3 percent slopes
Te	Teel fine sandy loam
Ts	Teel silt loam
WaA	Wassaic silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
WaB	Wassaic silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
WIA	Williamson silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
WIB	Williamson silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes

### Lands of Statewide Importance

Lands of statewide importance, accounting for approximately 41%<sup>5</sup> of the land in Herkimer County are defined by NRCS as:

...land of particular state importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Generally these farmlands include those that are nearly prime and that produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to modern farming practices. If conditions are favorable, some may product yields as high as prime farmland.

Aa	Allis silt loam (drop?)
ApB	Appleton silt loam, 3 to 9 percent slopes
BoC	Bombay very fine sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
BrC	Broadalbin loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
BuB	Burdett silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes

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<sup>5</sup> Source: *Herkimer County Soil and Water Conservation District*

BuC	Burdett silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
CaC	Canton stony very fine sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes (add?)
FaC	Farmington silt loam, 0 to 8 percent slopes
HgB	Hartland-Agawam complex, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HmA	Hinckley gravelly loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes
HmB	Hinckley gravelly loamy sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HoC	Honeoye silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
HtA	Hornell silt loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes
HtB	Hornell silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
HtC	Hornell silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
HuC	Howard gravelly fine sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes (add?)
HvC	Howard gravelly silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
HyB	Hudson silt loam, loamy substratum, 2 to 8 percent slopes
HyC	Hudson silt loam, loamy substratum, 8 to 15 percent slopes
HyD	Hudson silt loam, loamy substratum, 15 to 30 percent slopes
In	Illion silt loam (drop?)
Is	Ilion and gun very stony silt loam (drop?)
LaB	Lairdsville silt loam, loamy subsoil variant, 3-8 percent slopes (prime?)
LaC	Lairdsville silt loam, loamy subsoil variant, 8 to 15 percent slopes
LnC	Lansing silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
LoC	Lima silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
LpB	Lockport silt loam, loamy subsoil variant, 0 to 4 percent slopes
MeB	Manheim silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes
MeC	Manheim silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
MIB	Manlius shaly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes (prime?)
MIC	Manlius shaly silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
MoB	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 3-8 percent slopes (already prime)
MoC	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 8 to 15 percent slopes
MoD	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 15 to 25 percent slopes
MsB	Mosherville very fine sandy loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes
OnC	Ontario silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
PaC	Palatine silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
PlC	Palmyra gravelly silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
PmC	Palmyra and Howard soils, rolling
RbB	Rhinebeck silt loam, loamy substratum, 3 to 8 percent slopes
WaC	Wassaic silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
Wd	Wayland silt loam, (drop?)
WIB	Williamson silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes (change to prime?)
WnA	Windsor Loamy fine sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes
WnB	Windsor loamy fine sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes

## **11. Protected Lands, Parks, and Open Spaces (see map)**

Outside of the Adirondack Park, there is very little National, State, or local public parkland in Herkimer County. There are two State Reforestation Areas in the Town of Stark, and another that straddles the boundaries of the Towns of Herkimer and Schuyler. Additional Reforestation Areas are in the Towns of Russia and the Town of Norway along its border with Ohio. The Lock 18 State Wildlife Management Area is found in the towns of Herkimer and German Flats (along the historic New York State Barge Canal). The Herkimer Home State Park straddles the border of Danube and Manheim. There are small local parks found in the Towns of Schuyler and Russia and the US Air Force operates the Newport Test Annex on two sites in the Town of Newport. Other than the above mentioned parks, there are no permanently preserved open spaces, lands with conservation easements or lands purchased by private land trusts outside of the Adirondack Park.

## **12. Wetlands, Floodplains and Watersheds (see map)**

### **Wetlands**

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation there are approximately 26,498 acres of state regulated wetlands in Herkimer County (outside of the Adirondack Park). This includes 5,070 acres of Class I wetlands, 17,497 acres of class II, followed by 2,198 acres of class III wetlands, 565 acres of class IV wetlands and 1,168 acres in uplands. For descriptions of each class please see the Department of Environmental Conservation web site: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/regs/ch10.htm>

NYS DEC regulated wetlands are at least 12.4 acres or, if smaller, have unusual local importance. In Herkimer County, major areas of wetlands can be found in several locations including: along the Mohawk River, along the border of Norway and Salisbury (near the Spruce Creek), in the southern section of the county in Columbia and Warren, and in the Towns of Litchfield and Frankfort (near Moyer Creek).

*Source: PART 664: FRESHWATER WETLANDS MAPS AND CLASSIFICATION  
(Environmental Conservation Law §3-0301 and §24-1301)  
<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/regs/664.htm#664!5> or  
<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/regs/ch10.htm>*

### **Floodplains**

Flood plain boundaries are determined and mapped through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). One hundred year flood boundaries delineate the flood elevation that has a 1 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded each year. A 500-year flood line shows the flood elevation that has a 0.2 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded each year. Overall, there is not a significant amount of flood plain area in the county. In general, the flood plains in Herkimer encompass the lands adjacent to the tributaries and streams as well as lands adjacent to many of the ponds and water bodies of the area. The largest contiguous area of floodplain is located along the Mohawk River and its tributaries. Other streams with significant areas of FEMA designated floodplain include the West Canada Creek, Spruce Creek, the Hinkley Reservoir, and the Unadilla River.

### **Watersheds and Drainage**

Drainage is dominated by the Mohawk River, while a small area in the southwestern part of the county (Towns of Winfield, Columbia, and Warren) drains into the Susquehanna River system. The Mohawk River is the only major stream in the county flowing west to east. Other streams and tributaries are generally north-south oriented, leading into the Mohawk River.



## **13. Community Opinions**

### **A. Agri-Business Survey**

#### About the Agri-Businesses:

For the 41 agri-businesses that responded, a total of 61 part time, and 348 full time people were employed averaging 2 part timers and 10 full timers per business. Businesses have been in operation for a variety of years, with many between 10 and 40 years. Only 8 have been in business fewer than 10 years. Many types of agri-businesses exist, with machinery sales and repair being the most numerous (24%), followed by feed businesses (13%). Some of the other businesses offered by participants were semen and reproductive services, custom cropping and spraying, and tire services. Regarding income levels, 23 (56%) participants indicated that less than 25% of their total client base comes from within Herkimer County. Three businesses (less than 1 percent) said that 75 to 100% of their client base is within Herkimer.

#### Future Operations:

42% said that they are planning to increase their total operations within 5 years, and 26% said that they plan on increasing agricultural sales. 20% plan on staying the same, and 4 businesses were planning on decreasing or eliminating their agricultural sales. The most likely trend these agri-businesses see happening are a move toward a small number of larger farms, and movement of farms out of the County.

#### Issues Facing Farmers and Agri-Businesses:

The greatest issues facing farmers in Herkimer County are, in order of importance, low profitability, labor availability, milk marketing, environmental issues, and high property taxes. The greatest challenges these agri-businesses face were loss of farm clientele and high costs of doing business. Other challenges identified by less than half of the participants were, in order, access to skilled labor, government regulation and high property taxes.

#### What Can, or Should be Done:

Most agreed that more needs to be done by the State or County to preserve agriculture (83%) and they suggested solutions such as increasing commodity prices, increasing the number of farmers, offering incentives, increasing programs for small farmers, and increasing educational efforts to non-farmers. 70% of the participating agri-businesses indicated that local planning or zoning boards need more information on the value of protecting agricultural land in order to make effective land use decisions. The most popular initiative to help farmers that could be done by local and county governments was the use of property tax incentives and attracting new farms to Herkimer County. Use of start-up loans was also favored.

Mandatory use of best management practices was considered to be somewhat effective (by 15 businesses) and very effective (by 3 businesses). Nine felt they would be ineffective, and 8 were neutral. For the most part, over half of the agri-businesses were unfamiliar with any of the farmland protection strategies listed on the survey. They were most knowledgeable about NYS Certified Ag Districts, and exclusive agricultural zoning. When asked if any of these strategies would be beneficial in Herkimer County, over half were not sure and 14 said they would be beneficial. All but one participating agri-businesses felt that loss of farmland is important (somewhat and very important categories added together).

## **B. Town/County Government Survey**

### About the Government Participants

Participants in this survey served in all of the capacities listed on the survey in about equal numbers and represent both local and county government. Most were experienced in their positions, and nobody indicated that they had served for less than one year and 42% indicated that they had served for over 10 years. High property taxes, better government cooperation, and increased costs of government operations were considered to be the greatest challenges facing these officials.

### Perceived Trends in Agriculture:

Six of the 33 respondents felt that loss of farmland was not important in the County. 75% felt that it is important (somewhat and very combined). Government officials feel that the most likely trends in agriculture in the County will be a decrease in the agricultural community, and a move towards a small number of very large farms. These officials did not consider increases in the farm community and a move towards a large number of small operators likely. Only two officials were aware of any nuisance suites or complaints related to farming. The greatest issues facing agriculture from the local officials' point of view are production costs, labor availability and high property taxes.

### What Can, or Should be Done:

Most (88%) felt that more can, or needs to be done by the State or County to support and promote agriculture. Some of the suggestions offered included use of more tax breaks and loans, and more legislation to help maintain and increase farm numbers. 64% think that local planning and zoning boards need more information on agriculture in their communities. Participants were equally split when asked if use of best management practices would be beneficial: 1/3 indicated they would be ineffective, 1/3 said neutral, and 1/3 said effective. Over half of the local officials were not familiar with most of the listed farmland protection strategies. Ag districts, conservation easements, and exclusive agricultural zoning were the most familiar practices to about 45% of participating local officials. As with the agri-business survey, most local officials were not sure if these would be beneficial in Herkimer County, although no one felt that they would not be

beneficial. When asked what other local initiatives could be undertaken to help keep farming viable, local officials favored property tax credits, strengthening ag support agencies, and attracting new farmers to the County. Establishment of exclusive ag-enterprise zones was not favored.

### **C. Producers Survey**

#### About the Participating Producers:

Two hundred eighty five surveys were returned from ag producers, representing a total of 60,566 total acres in Herkimer County. The average size of participants' farms was about 432 acres. Forty-six surveys however, were returned from smaller farms having less than 60 acres in size (16%). About 36% of the land included in this survey is actively farmed, or rented to a farmer (3.6%). 22% of the land is open, idle or wooded. Less than one percent is in rural residential use. The most predominant agricultural enterprise was dairying, followed by haying. 13% or 37 farms had alternative enterprises on their farms including custom work, firewood, Christmas trees, Bed and Breakfasts, or maple syrup. The average tenure on the farm was 26.7 years. Over half (53%) have owned their land for more than 20 years. There were some newer farmers however and 37 farmers have owned their land for less than 5 years.

The participating farms generally support one family (71%). Thirty-four percent indicated that 75 to 100% of their family income comes from the farm. However, forty-eight percent said that less than 25% of their family income comes from the farm.

#### Perceived Issues Facing Farmers:

According to the survey, the biggest challenges to farming in Herkimer County included, in order of significance, low profitability, high taxes, and production costs. Compared to these challenges, all others included in the survey were considered to be important by only a few participants.

#### Future Farm Plans:

About half of the farmers indicated that they plan to keep their operations the same and 18% will increase their operations. About 9% plan on selling all or a portion of their land for non-farm use. Only three plan on relocating out of the County, and 8% will decrease their operations. The most common use for rented land is for hay.

#### Perceptions About Ag Districts:

Only half of the participating farms are enrolled in ag districts and only half take advantage of agricultural value assessments. Sixty-nine percent do not have current agricultural exemptions on farm structures. When asked about the value of ag districts, 57% do not feel that this program has served the purpose of preserving farms and protecting agriculture as evidenced by farms that are still going out of business, losing

money, or being converted to non-farm uses. For those 43% of participants who indicated that ag districts are working well, property tax incentives, protection of farmland and a reduction of expenses were cited as benefits.

#### What Can, or Should be Done:

About 74% feel that more needs to be done by the State or County to preserve agriculture. These farmers feel there is need for more tax supports and incentives, increases in prices received for products, preservation of ag lands, and more local processing plants, among other ideas. For those 74 farmers who do not feel that more can, or needs to be done, they feel that the problems at hand are out of local control, and that nothing will help unless people can gain a better living from farming. 86% feel that local planning and zoning boards need more information about farming and the value for protecting farming. A small percentage feels it is too late to help.

76% of participants favor the idea that municipalities can provide reductions in local taxes in exchange for commitments to keep land farmed. Only a few did not feel this was favorable. 46% felt it would be fair for towns to require use of best management plans; 26% felt neutral about this suggestion, and 26% said it would not be fair. There were 76 different ideas offered for new initiatives or incentives that could be done at the local or county level. The most frequently cited ideas were, in order, to lower taxes, offer incentives, give better prices for milk, support local products, increase profitability, lower utility rates, start land trusts, use conservation easements, educate non-farmers, stop development on farms, start a farm of distinction program, zoning, small farm programs, right to farm laws, and offering low interest loans for new farm start-ups.

Like the other two surveys, a majority of farmers were not familiar with the listed farmland protection strategies. As such, they majority were not sure if they would be beneficial in Herkimer County. Eleven farmers said that loss of farmland in the county was not important. Over 90% said that it is important (very and somewhat categories combined).

#### **D. Public Meetings to Present Profile and Vision**

During May 2002, a series of three meetings were held throughout the area to present the completed Profile of Agriculture, the vision statement and draft issues to the public. Approximately 35 people attended these meetings and 24 people provided written comments on the vision and issue statements. Participants were asked to comment on if they agreed or did not agree on the vision statement, and were also asked to rate how important the identified issues were. These results are presented in the following section.

## 14. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threats to Agriculture in Herkimer County

The data contained in this plan, along with results from public surveys and meetings, provides information upon which the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to agriculture can be identified. This identification, called SWOT analysis, is useful to help begin developing strategic plans to address the issues facing agriculture in Herkimer County. The following chart shows the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats:

<b>Strengths (resources or capabilities that help agriculture be successful)</b>	<b>Weaknesses (Internal deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder agriculture from being successful)</b>
<p>/Development pressure from nonfarm uses is not a primary concern.</p> <p>/Land base exists still.</p> <p>/There have not been a lot of farm/nonfarm conflicts.</p> <p>/Farm support agencies (ex. Dairy team) and infrastructure (agri-businesses) still exist to service Herkimer County farms.</p> <p>/About half of farmers indicate they are going to stay in business over the next five years.</p> <p>/Many Ag-businesses desire to increase their sales and businesses.</p> <p>/There has been an increase in farmers of small properties (example, the Amish community).</p> <p>/About half of County farms have sales over \$50,000.</p> <p>/Majority of farms are mid-size employers.</p> <p>/There have been increases in sales of hay, silage and other field crops.</p> <p>/Milk production per cow is up.</p> <p>/Farm expenditures have decreased somewhat.</p> <p>/There is some experience with farm diversification and alternative enterprises on farms in the county.</p> <p>/Local officials seem to support idea of local incentives to aid farmers (as per survey.)</p> <p>/Many farms have been bought by farmers from outside the county.</p>	<p>/The County has large areas with poor soils or topography not conducive to farming. The Mohawk Valley is narrow with no broad land base.</p> <p>/The NYS Thruway cut access to many farms, and some still cope with access problems.</p> <p>/The overall farm economy is not strong:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Low average market value sold per farm.</li> <li>2. Net cash return decreasing.</li> <li>3. Farms with net gains decreasing.</li> <li>4. Farms with net losses increasing.</li> <li>5. Trends show increasing per farm expenditures.</li> </ol> <p>/There is a perception of high property taxes paid in county.</p> <p>/Half of farms are not located in NYS Agricultural Districts.</p> <p>/Half of farms are not taking advantage of agricultural tax exemptions even though some are eligible.</p>

<p>/Herkimer County has close proximity to agricultural colleges in Central New York and has good local schools.</p>	
<p><b>Opportunities (External or outside factors or situations that can affect agriculture in a favorable way)</b></p>	<p><b>Threats (External or outside factors or situations that can affect agriculture in a negative way)</b></p>
<p><u>Increase Ag-Tourism:</u>          /Herkimer County is in a location where many people pass through via the NYS Thruway, and Routes 20, 28, and 5.          /Promotion of farms, farmers, and farm products.          /Enhance connections between heritage tourism and agriculture.          /Close proximity to major tourism destinations such as Adirondacks and Cooperstown.  <u>Government Structure to Support Agriculture:</u>          /Training of local officials          /New local programs, regulations and incentives to encourage agriculture.  <u>Enhancement of Farm Businesses and Management:</u>          /Enhance use of coops and cooperative buying power.          /Land and niches exist for alternative agricultural activities.          /Work with the Mohawk Indians (who have recently bought farm for organic vegetables.)          /Enhance opportunities for diversification.          /Grass-based systems could be supported and there are lots of abandoned ag lands for this.   <u>Enhancement of attitudes towards farming.</u>          /Develop pride in farming program.          /Educate farmers on programs available.          /Strengthen ag districts/use of ag exemptions.          /Expand role of the Ag and Farmland Protection Board.          /Initiate local advertising of farms and farm products.</p>	<p>/The labor pool is limited for finding farm workers.          /The area has experienced increases in the number of nonfarm residences.          /Local municipalities have little long-range land use planning aimed at protecting agricultural land uses.          /The average age of farmers is high. Farm transfers and sales is an issue because of this.          /Negative attitudes about farming are an impediment to expansion and enhancement of farm operations. Farm family members are often alienated from farming due to negative attitudes.          /People in leadership roles are not familiar with ag protection strategies.          /Loss of some ag-businesses just now starting to be a problem.          /There is a lack of business planning on the part of many farms.          /There is a lack of adoption of new techniques that can enhance profitability.          /There is a lack of new investment and expansion of farms.          /There is a lack of farmers desiring to farm.</p>

<p>/Promote a campaign to inform people of role of agriculture and, opportunities in agriculture.</p> <p>/Initiate and fund local land trust to implement conservation easement program.</p>	
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## 15. Key Issues and Challenges to Agriculture in Herkimer County

The data and statistics detailed in previous chapters demonstrate the negative agricultural trends occurring in Herkimer County. No one issue is the single cause of the loss experienced in the County. Loss of agriculture and farmland is influenced by a variety of complex and interrelated factors. These factors likely have been at work for many years.

Many of the issues facing Herkimer County agriculture are similar to those facing other upstate New York rural communities. Some represent complex issues that are highly influenced by national agricultural policies. Others are a result of physical conditions in the County (location and extent of prime farmland soils, for example.) While suburbanizing pressures do not highly influence loss of farms in the County, non-farm development does play a role. In Herkimer County, economic conditions of farms, along with a host of factors that influence farm profitability, form the foundation for farmland loss.

The following list details those complex factors considered to be influential in the current agricultural profile of Herkimer County. The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan needs to address those issues, especially those that are pertinent to local conditions. Clearly, no one method or option can be relied upon to solve or reverse the downward trends that Herkimer County is currently experiencing. Instead, a multi-pronged approach must be taken. To reach a high level of success, this approach must be implemented at many different levels: farmers, agri-businesses, local governments, Herkimer County, and New York State all have important roles to play.

### Factors That Influence Current Agricultural Conditions

Issue 1: Low profitability of farms is one of the major factors underlying loss of farms and farmland. Factors that contribute to this problem include:

λHigh property taxes

λHigh production costs

λStiffer environmental regulations (for some farms, new regulations have resulted in farmers switching some conventional agricultural practices to alternative methods. This adds to the difficulty of farming in terms of costs, labor, equipment, and time.)

λMarginal farms in areas with poor soils have generally not been profitable and are most likely to be converted to non-farm uses or vacated.

λMany farms are too small to be profitable. Herkimer County has an increasing number of small farms.



λGenerally, there is poor management of farm businesses with a lack of business planning.

λMany farms have not implemented techniques that can improve efficiency and profitability.

Other economic related issues:

λFarmers and agri-businesses have expressed concern over the difficulty of finding labor.

λOverall, Herkimer County does not have high levels of agricultural productivity. Research from across New York has shown that areas with low levels of productivity, large numbers of smaller farms, and a low percentage of land used to directly generate farm income have higher rates of farmland loss.

λAgriculture is not very diverse in Herkimer County and farming is dominated by the dairy industry.

The public was asked to comment on this issue and rate its importance to agriculture in Herkimer County. The average rating of this issue was 8.57. 17 people indicated that this issue rated 8 or higher in importance. 3 people, or 15% indicated that this issue was less important. The following comments augmented the ratings as follows:

“Sometimes the next generation has other interests, also some of the low profitability is due to poor management.”

“Small farm operators are not necessarily good businessmen, and should not automatically be propped up in an effort to appear farm friendly. Small businesses are rebounding somewhat by emphasizing quality, and unique or niche markets. Farm operators should be encouraged to do likewise. Production savings might be realized by supporting the sharing of services among independent farmers, through the consolidation/sharing of accounting services, equipment maintainers, etc. Farm operators need to support vs. condemn the young farmhands desire to work an 8 hour day/40 per week like the now greater majority of their peers to attract better employees. I believe it’s the farm lifestyle issue that keeps today’s young people out of farming, over the hard work and salaries.”

“Poor management leads to low profitability, which is the problem. There are profitable farms.”

Issue 2: When farmland is converted to residential use, a complex set of circumstances can arise that ultimately lead to further loss of farmland. Factors that contribute to this problem include:

λAlthough high land prices are not generally perceived as a major issue in Herkimer County, suburban encroachment is taking place. Some towns have experienced increased numbers of residential units at a level that actually outpaces population growth.

λPrime farmland soils contribute positively to farm profitability. Prime soils are the most productive soils. They are also the easiest to develop and are most conducive for placement of septic systems. When prime soils are developed, a greater percent of farming takes place on marginal soils. As prime soils are lost, farming on marginal soils requires more fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals and usually have lower yields.

λAs populations increase in rural areas, new services in education, utilities, roads, and other public services are needed over time. These services typically are funded by increased property taxes. This in turn, makes it even more difficult for farmers to continue. Cost of community studies show that farmland generates more in local tax revenues than it costs to receive services.

λConflicts may arise between farmers and non-farmers.

λOver time, rural residential development changes land valuation and can lead to speculation. As speculative activities increase, land values rise, which make it more difficult for farmers to afford the land to farm.

λDeclining profits, rising property taxes, and new scattered residential development can result in what is known as the “impermanence syndrome.” This is when a farmer’s expectation of decline actually hastens and stimulates it.

The public was asked to comment on this issue and rate its importance to agriculture in Herkimer County. The average rating of this issue was 8.06. 11 people indicated that this issue rated 8 or higher in importance. 7 people, or 35% indicated that this issue was less important. The following comment augmented the ratings as follows:

“Apply political pressure to encourage brown field reclamation and eliminate all the hindrances that block the reclamation of land now occupied or unused, abandoned, and often dilapidated buildings. Encourage the revitalization of our towns and cites by making it attractive for businesses and homeowners to stay in or return to our towns, and the pressure on expansion into rural areas would lessen.”

Issue 3: Farmers, agri-businesses, and municipal officials have indicated that local planning boards need more understanding of agriculture and its role in the community. Without this knowledge, local planning decisions can negatively impact farming. Similarly, some feel that there is a general lack of knowledge about agriculture among the general population, even among many rural residents. Factors that contribute to this problem include:

λLocal planning decisions affect future land uses in the area. Local Planning Boards influence land use through the decisions they make during review of subdivision, site plan review and zoning permit applications.

λWhen asked, local government officials indicated that their planning boards did need information about agriculture and its role in the community.

λPlanning and Zoning Boards are responsible for ensuring that adequate environmental reviews are done for proposed projects. The state environmental quality review process requires that a hard look be taken at a projects impact on agriculture. They are also responsible for ensuring that impacts of proposed projects on agriculture be determined and mitigated and that other provisions of Ag and Markets 25-AA such as notification and ag data statements be done. In general, Planning Boards need information and training on these practices.

λWhen local nonfarm residents do not understand agricultural practices common to the area, conflicts can arise. Although not prominent in Herkimer County, some conflicts between farmers and nonfarmers have been identified at the local level.

λLack of awareness of how farms and agriculture contributes to the area's quality of life, character, and economy can lead to a "laissez-faire" attitudes and lack of support for farming. Many people value open space, but do not realize the contribution that active farms make to rural landscapes.

The public was asked to comment on this issue and rate its importance to agriculture in Herkimer County. The average rating of this issue was 7.8. 15 people indicated that this issue rated 8 or higher in importance. 5 people, or 25% indicated that this issue was less important. The following comments augmented the ratings as follows:

"The consumer is also lacking in understanding."

"I Disagree. In this area, the population is aware, knowledgeable, but sees the decline as inevitable or unstoppable due to economic pressures (of which they are also aware)."

"Farmer opinion gets weaker as more and more farms shut down."

“Public relations efforts are needed to reemphasize the roll of farming. The rural character of the area is in danger of being extinct.”

“I disagree with this issue statement as I believe county residents do understand agriculture. The problem is countering a defeatist attitude that the changes being experienced are unstoppable, and too often are incorrectly addressed by government. As an example, consider the issue of the spreading of septage, since it affects both farmers and community residents. It is supported politically as a farm friendly position, and yet I am sure the drafters of the Right to Farm legislation never intended (maybe never envisioned) that it would support, in this regard, the spreading/disposition of other than a farm’s own, produced waste. When farmers take advantage of loopholes in farm support legislation, it creates community dissention.”

Issue 4: Local planning efforts do not adequately consider agriculture and its role in the community. Factors that contribute to this problem include:
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λTown Boards influence local planning efforts and direction through establishment of comprehensive plans.

λA majority of local municipalities do not have a comprehensive plan. Most of those plans that do exist are out-of-date (prior to 1985).

λAlthough over half of the towns have a zoning ordinance, protection of agriculture and farmland is often not adequately addressed.

λPlanning at the local level should address more than land use. It can address a variety of topics including land use and land use regulations to protect agricultural activities, but also can establish use of tax incentives, and enhancement of recreational or agri-tourism activities, for example.

The public was asked to comment on this issue and rate its importance to agriculture in Herkimer County. The average rating of this issue was 8.05. 14 people indicated that this issue rated 8 or higher in importance. 5 people, or 25% indicated that this issue was less important. The following comments augmented the ratings as follows:

“I disagree with the last sentence of this issue statement, in that I believe economic realities/pressures will overrule all the good intentions/plans in the world. The farmer, whose retirement funds are invested in a farm, will seek to dispose of his business in the most financially rewarding way. From my standpoint, it is not the protection of agriculture that is primary, but the preservation of open lands and lands with agricultural potential. Solutions such as the sale of development rights to the government banking of land as a resource are therefore, in some localities, or through some economic periods, more attractive measures than measures that prop up failing agricultural businesses.”

Issue 5: Agriculture plays an important role in the county economy and contributes to rural character and the quality of life. Continued loss of agriculture will have negative economic impacts throughout the county because of agriculture's large multiplier effects. Residents highly value the area's rural character.

λ Working farms and landscapes are highly valued as rural features and offer a variety of amenities and cultural values such as scenic views, small communities and a rural lifestyle.

λ Farms contribute positively to environmental resources such as wildlife habitat, open space, hunting and other outdoor recreational opportunities, biodiversity, and environmental health.

λ Agriculture is the principal land use in the county.

λ Farming activities contributed \$45,824,000 in net sales to the County's economy, and supported 630 workers with a payroll of \$2,640,000, along with over \$10 million in total farm income.

The public was asked to comment on this issue and rate its importance to agriculture in Herkimer County. The average rating of this issue was 8.79. 21 people indicated that this issue rated 8 or higher in importance. 1 person, or 5% indicated that this issue was less important. The following comments augmented the ratings as follows:

"This is true, but people like farming as long as it isn't noisy or smells."

"Do more to promote the recreational uses of rural lands, so that outsiders gain a personal, vested interest in their preservation. The local area is great for biking, so encourage the widening of road shoulders, stiffen rules on loose dogs, etc. Support legislative efforts to protect landowners who open their land to recreational and hunting use. Develop means to open routes to hikers; such as done across private lands in the U.K. Recreational land use also has multiplier effects."

"Concern with how Herkimer County residents' value the area's rural character. Do not agree that the loss of agriculture will have a negative economic effect...if all farms left but we became Silicone Valley the economy would benefit. This point should be divided into 2 questions."

"They value it without realizing how they value it. I don't think most residents see how farmland is being swallowed up, or feel that a dangerous trend is started."



## **16. A Vision Statement for Herkimer County Agriculture**

The Herkimer County Farmland Protection Board participated in a visioning exercise to identify what they feel should be the future of agriculture in the county. From this, a draft vision statement was developed and then presented to the public at a series of meetings held throughout May, 2002.

24 written comments on the draft vision statement were received. Fifty-five percent agreed with the vision statement as it was presented, and 35% partially agreed. One person, or 5% did not agree with the statement, and one had no opinion.

As a result of this input, the draft vision statement was amended and a new statement developed. The following statement expresses the long-term vision for agriculture in Herkimer County:

**“Agriculture in Herkimer County is known and appreciated for its contribution to the beauty, rural character and ambiance of the region, and for its important role in the county’s economy and quality of life. A positive attitude towards farming by farmers, business people and the general population has developed. This attitude nurtures and preserves the integrity of the agricultural community.**

**Although the dairy industry continues to be a strong component of agriculture in the County, there is a diversity of farming operations that support the remaining prime and important farmlands. Land is open and available for farming activities. Alternative forms of agriculture are encouraged and promoted, and they are recognized for the value they contribute to the area. Young aspiring farmers, and farmers from outside the area are welcomed to Herkimer’s community.**

**Herkimer’s agricultural economy is strong and stable. All the core business services necessary to support area farms are easily accessible to farmers. A profitable farm economy fosters the continuation of family farms where agricultural sales have increased, farms are sold to other farmers, and development is controlled so that farms can compete as a viable land use. Farm business management is enhanced, and farm profitability has increased as a result. Agri-tourism plays a growing role in the agricultural economy. An abundance of educational programs exist to assist and support the agricultural community and concentrate on helping farmers be more productive and profitable.**

**Agriculture is recognized as having an ongoing and important role in the overall economic development of Herkimer County.”**

## **17. Goals and Recommendations**

Farm and farmland losses in Herkimer County are caused by a complex array of issues. As such, no single solution can be relied upon to encourage change and the solution must be as diverse as the issues that contribute to farmland loss. The key to success will be implementation of a coordinated package of techniques by multiple levels of government (federal, state, county, local), agri-businesses, farmers, rural landowners, and the general public. The strategy should include a comprehensive package of economic development, non-regulatory approaches, and regulatory mechanisms. Implementation of this plan should result in increased farmland investment and profitability, and a reduction in the speculative pressures to convert farmland to non-farm uses.



The four major goals and objectives of this Farmland Protection Plan are:

### **Goal 1. Farms and agri-businesses in Herkimer County will be profitable and economically dynamic.**

- ♦ Objective 1: Initiate and aggressively implement an agricultural economic development program in Herkimer County. An agricultural economic development program should provide technical assistance to farmers and agri-businesses and help provide access to capital for agricultural business development and expansion.
- ♦ Objective 2: Seek additional funding to assist farmers in meeting environmental management and other regulatory requirements.
- ♦ Objective 3: Decrease costs of farming in Herkimer County



- ♦ Objective 4: Increase farmer participation in farm business planning. Preparing a business plan allows farmers to increase their profitability by examining a variety of strategies and improve performance.
- ♦ Objective 5: Increase training opportunities for farmers and agri-businesses aimed at enhancing profitability

**Goal 2. A critical mass of farmland will be protected and available for active agricultural operations.**

- ♦ Objective 1: Integrate agriculture into local planning efforts, and increase participation of local towns in comprehensive planning and application of farmland protection strategies.
- ♦ Objective 2: The Herkimer County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should begin immediate implementation of the recommendations in this plan and strengthen their role as an advocate for agriculture in the County.
- ♦ Objective 3: Objectively identify specific farmlands to be targeted for farmland preservation programs.
- ♦ Objective 4: Increase participation in farm estate planning and farm transfer programs and facilitate farm-to-farm transfers.

**Goal 3. Local and county government decision-makers and the general public will understand agriculture and the many important roles it plays in the County. These decision-makers will be active partners in preserving and nurturing farming. A positive attitude towards farming by farmers, other business people, and the general public will develop.**

- ♦ Objective 1: Establish new promotion efforts aimed at local decision makers.
- ♦ Objective 2: Establish new promotion efforts aimed at the general public and area businesses.
- ♦ Objective 3: Establish a “Pride in Farming” program aimed at the farm community.
- ♦ Objective 4: Increase farmer participation in government activities and in local economic development efforts.

**Goal 4. Agriculture in Herkimer County will be diversified and include a wide variety of farm types and sizes.**

- ♦ Objective 1: Increase participation in programs that add value to existing agricultural products in the County.
- ♦ Objective 2: Increase agri-tourism opportunities in the County.
- ♦ Objective 3: Promote farm diversification efforts.
- ♦ Objective 4: Increase direct marketing and new product development opportunities.
- ♦ Objective 5: Promote small farms.



# **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES TO MEET HERKIMER COUNTY'S VISION FOR AGRICULTURAL**



**Goal 1. Farms and agri-businesses in Herkimer County will be profitable and economically dynamic.**

**Objective 1. Initiate and aggressively implement an agricultural economic development program in Herkimer County. An agricultural economic development program should provide technical assistance to farmers and agri-businesses and help provide access to capital for agricultural business development and expansion.**

## **Strategies**

1) Integrate agriculture into county economic initiatives.

- Work with the Herkimer County Industrial Development Authority (IDA), the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, Mohawk Valley EDGE, and the Mohawk Valley Leatherstocking Agricultural Region (MVLAR) to strengthen their efforts in agricultural economic development.

- Include agriculture and natural resource-based businesses as a part of their economic development programs. The IDA provides funding and tax abatement programs to encourage a variety of industrial and manufacturing economic development activities. However, they currently do not have the staff or the funding to implement programs for agricultural-related enterprises. Although the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District has some funding for agri-businesses, there are very limited funding opportunities for farmers. The MVLAR is currently being set up specifically to provide the type of funding farmer's need. The County, under the leadership of the

Agriculture and Farmland Preservation Board, should work with the IDA and the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District to establish agriculture as an industry on equal footing with other types of manufacturing and production efforts. Full support should be given to MVLAR. Specifically, the County should ensure that:

- Tax abatement programs for value added industries are established.
- A revolving loan fund targeted to agriculture is established. This fund can provide financing for farm start-ups, barn and facility expansions, equipment purchases, diversification projects, and processing or other value-added projects. In order to enhance success, this program should tie eligibility for funding to a requirement that a farm business plan be developed. Herkimer County and MVLAR, or the other economic development agencies should seek Community Development Block Grant (see Appendix A for New York State, Empire State Development's Small Cities Program) monies to establish this fund. The County should also work with local bank institutions to seek ways to use the Community Reinvestment Act to provide funding for farm reinvestment.
- The County should ensure that economic development programs of the IDA and the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District are not at cross-purposes with agriculture and farmland protection efforts.

2) Provide for a County Agricultural Economic Development and Marketing Specialist.

- Herkimer County could explore funding a specialist specifically for Herkimer County, or could work to see if there are options for cooperation and collaboration with the existing Agricultural Economic Development Specialists in Oneida or Otsego counties. A variety of funding sources have potential to provide monies for this program. See Appendix A for specific listing of grant opportunities. In particular, explore grants from the New York State's "Grow New York", Farmland Viability Grants Program.

- The role of this specialist should be multi-faceted and should concentrate on providing key expertise to help implement the established goals of this plan. These roles could include:

- Assisting in integrating agriculture into county, local, and other organization's economic development programs.
- Access funding sources for new agricultural initiatives.
- Work with farmers, and initiate and coordinate specialized agricultural economic development activities.
- Assist in agricultural marketing efforts, including establishing marketing programs to link people interested in establishing farms in the county with those who desire to sell their land and facilities.

- Provide administrative leadership to implement this plan.
- Facilitate training of farmers and agri-businesses in the areas of marketing, diversification, niche marketing, value-added enterprises, agri-tourism, etc.

3) Cornell Cooperative Extension in Herkimer County should initiate work on the AIDER (Agricultural Industry Development Enhancement and Retention) program. This program helps local communities integrate agriculture into comprehensive economic development strategies. The AIDER process should build upon information, vision, goals, and strategies already identified in this plan.

4) Communicate Herkimer’s agricultural vision (Chapter 16) and the economic goals established in this plan to all economic development groups and agencies in the County and region including EDGE, The Genesis Group, County economic development and planning departments, Farm Bureau, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce. Each of these agencies should have a clear understanding of the agricultural policies of Herkimer County. At the county-level, the agricultural economic development policies outlined in this plan should be incorporated into other county efforts.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Seek additional funding to assist farmers in meeting environmental management and other regulatory requirements.**

**Strategies**

1) Work with the Farm Service Agency, the County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the local Natural Resource Conservation Service staffs to identify funding sources, complete grant applications and make funding requests. Appendix A identifies a variety of grants and funding sources that should be explored on a regular basis.

- The County should charge a specific agency such as the IDA with overseeing funding initiatives for environmental management.

- Grant writing and seeking other funding sources to aid local farmers and farmland owners should be a priority of the county and agricultural-related agencies and groups.

2) Farmers can take advantage of the environmental regulations by using them to promote “green” marketing. Initiate a “green” labeling or environmental certification program that would recognize farms that are environmentally friendly. Herkimer County could work with adjacent counties, environmental organizations, and state agencies to develop a green or environment recognition program. This program should go beyond a “conservationist of the year” type award for an individual farm. Consider development of a program that provides premiums for products produced on such farms. Other locations in the United States, such as around the Chesapeake Bay, have initiated

milk premiums for farms that receive an environmental certification. The premiums received by participating farms help cover costs of meeting the environmental standards.



### **OBJECTIVE 3: Decrease costs of farming in Herkimer County**

#### **Strategies**

1) Establish programs and cooperatives to help farmers share resources and equipment, and to take advantage of the buying power of multiple farms. Additional selling or purchasing cooperatives can provide less costly goods and services. Cooperatives could be arranged through a formal and highly organized structure, or done informally. Cooperatives have the most success when they are narrowly focused. For example, a group of dairy farmers could organize to bid on sawdust bedding on an annual basis.

- Provide technical assistance to help farmers form, and administer, new cooperatives. The USDA Rural Development Agency can assist in cooperative start-up.

- Cooperatives can also be formed for growers. Growers who sell wholesale can increase access to markets with high-volume retailers (supermarkets) through a cooperative. Grower cooperatives can offer locally grown food that could be marketed in a very beneficial way.

2) Strengthen participation in the Ag District Program. About half of Herkimer's farms do not currently participate in these programs. Participation in this program should be supported since Agricultural Districts can protect farms from nuisance lawsuits, eminent

domain takings, and regulations that interfere with farming. The AFPB should work to include all eligible farms in an agricultural district.

- During each district's eight-year review, the AFPB should work to identify active farmlands that are not currently in an agricultural district and target efforts to reach those landowners and educate them about the benefits of being in an ag district. Farms that are not participating are identified, in general, on the Agricultural Districts and Farmed Parcels Map.

3) Increase the number of farmers receiving ag exemptions (use-value assessment). Many farmers are not eligible for ag exemptions on real property taxes because they are not meeting the \$10,000 income eligibility requirements.

- Farmers and agri-businesses should work with and support Farm Bureau efforts to change this requirement at the state level to allow farms earning less than \$10,000 to be eligible for ag assessments.

- The County should provide for continuing education for local assessors on the agricultural assessment program.

- The County should routinely monitor assessors' performance related to agricultural assessments in order to ensure that there are consistent and proper assessment procedures throughout the County.

- Aggressive efforts should be made by the County and local assessors to educate farmland owners about, and encourage participation in, the ag exemption program. Further, local farmers and farmland owners should be educated about other tax abatement programs including the following: the farm building exemption portion of the Real Property Tax Law; Section 483; NYS Farmers School Tax Credit (STAR); NYS Historic Barn Credit Program; and the NYS Barn Rehabilitation Cost Share Program.

- The County should develop a short, concise directory of tax incentives and benefits for farmers and farmland owners to help in promoting participation in these beneficial programs.

- When land is taken out of production, local assessors should aggressively enforce the required tax abatement roll-backs (penalties for farmland conversion to non-farm use).

4) Develop new, local tax initiatives to complement existing ag exemptions.

- Expand local tax benefits for agricultural support industries, farm marketing buildings, and agricultural tourism projects. These activities are currently not eligible for ag assessments and expanding benefits to them will serve as further incentives for farm reinvestment and diversification. Local municipalities can offer tax benefits in addition to the New York State ag assessment program.

■ Local governments have expressed support for local tax initiatives to support farmers. Farmers listed assistance with taxes as an important part of a farmland protection program. Local towns should consider developing addition tax exemptions and incentives for farmers. Eligibility should be more inclusive than exists under the state ag exemption program to include smaller farms and farms that make less than \$10,000.

5) Local assessors should also inform landowners and residents about the New York State 480-A law, which reduces taxes on woodland parcels over 50 acres that are committed to continuing forest. Participation in this program would encourage the maintenance of woodlands for timber purposes along with other forest values such as maple syrup production, and would serve to reduce costs for owning this land.

6) In order to be more energy efficient and to reduce costs, Herkimer County farmers should participate in NYSERDA programs such as the Agricultural Initiative, and their Energy Efficiency Services Program. A variety of funding sources and technical assistance is available through these programs. Farm support agencies such as Cornell Cooperative Extension should aggressively promote participation in these programs.

7) Encourage increased participation in programs that reduce the cost of farming inputs such as integrated pest management, organic farming, and pasture-based grazing management. Grass-based systems are of particular value to actively pursue in Herkimer County as they can take advantage of the many smaller abandoned farms located on poorer soils.

8) Encourage specialization and use of custom operators to increase profits. New opportunities for agri-businesses to grow and expand through providing custom work such as crop harvesting, heifer raising, pesticide management, and forage production not only expands the agricultural economy, but will allow farmers to concentrate on those aspects of their business where they can be most profitable.

**OBJECTIVE 4: Increase farmer participation in farm business planning. Preparing a business plan allows farmers to increase their profitability by examining a variety of strategies and improve performance.**

### **Strategies**

1) Increased efforts need to be made to expand farmer participation in financial management programs such as the Cornell Cooperative Extensions Farm Business Summary program. It is vital that farmers understand the link between farm business planning and profitability.

■ Recent studies into financial management practices of New York dairy farms clearly link increased profitability with use of appropriate techniques that analyze



financial strengths and weaknesses (Gloy, LaDue, and Youngblood, 2002). Farmers who focus on using profitability measures (such as benchmarking, trend analysis, and accrual net farm income) tend to be more profitable than those who choose to use other measures of performance such as milk production per cow.

- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County should aggressively promote the farm business summary program through media outreach, educational programming, personal communications, and workshops.

- Use creative incentives and educational efforts to increase participation in these programs.

2) The AFPB should advocate and work with County officials to seek additional funding in county allocations to provide cost sharing and grants for farm business planning and management.

3) Other financial management-related recommendations to help farmers increase profitability are:

- Always obtain price quotes and information on products from more than one supplier. Farmers who always or frequently obtain price quotes have been shown to have higher rates of return on assets than those who do not. Price quotes can yield more competitive prices.

- Negotiate prices to meet or improve upon another supplier's offer

- Ensure that purchased products such as feed and seed are of high quality.

- Farmers should regularly sample and test feed for content quality.

- Evaluate the impacts of proposed investments by using techniques such as cash flow analysis or calculation of a payback period.

## **OBJECTIVE 5: Increase training opportunities for farmers and agri-businesses aimed at enhancing profitability.**

### **Strategies**

1) The County and Cornell Cooperative Extension should continue strong support and expand funding opportunities for the Dairy Team, Pro-Dairy, and other agricultural activities such as value-added initiatives, niche marketing, agri-tourism development, and farm diversification. Value-added initiatives and these other agricultural activities are described in more detail under strategies for Goal 4. Each of these has the potential to offer additional income to farm families.

2) Increase coordination and communication among farm support agencies.

- The County should develop a printed directory that outlines the functions and programs available from each agency in the county, region, and state. This directory should include program descriptions and contact information. Much of the information supplied in Chapter 17 can be used in this directory. When complete, the directory should be widely disseminated to farmers and farmland owners. Development of this directory could be a role for the Agricultural Economic and Marketing Specialist.
- The County should also develop a printed directory of funding opportunities and financial assistance programs for farmers.
- Consider establishing regular meetings between farm support agencies. These meetings should be designed so that all staff members become familiar with each other's programs. Additionally, the agenda should include ways to coordinate programs, enhance participation, and increase communication with the farm and non-farm community.
- Facilitate formation of a farmer-to-farmer discussion group or a farmer-mentoring program. Farmers could benefit from having a forum to discuss issues, techniques, and ideas with one another. A farmer-mentoring program could link new farmers to the area with well-established farmers or to link retired farmers with younger farmers.

**Goal 2. A critical mass of farmland will be protected and available for active agricultural operations.**

In order for active agriculture to continue in Herkimer County, adequate supplies of farmland must remain available over the long-term. A critical mass of farmland is also needed to support the agri-businesses and agricultural service agencies that farms rely upon. Farming becomes more difficult for the area to support farms and farm infrastructure when the land becomes very fragmented. Further, as lands are converted to non-farm uses or abandoned, a cascading affect can be established where it becomes harder to the remaining farms to stay in business.



**OBJECTIVE 1: Integrate agriculture into local planning efforts, and increase participation of local towns in comprehensive planning and application of farmland protection strategies.**

### **Strategies**

1) Provide information to and training of local planning and town boards to enhance project reviews and evaluation of impacts on agriculture. Specifically, both boards should have training and information on New York State requirements related to agricultural districts. These requirements are as follows:

Municipalities are required to consider the impact of their laws and proposed projects on farms in agricultural districts. There are several requirements in the Agricultural Districts Law (Agriculture and Markets, Article 25-AA) that ask municipalities to carefully consider farm operations within local agriculture districts when making any land regulations decisions. Section 305-a of the law requires local planning and land use decision making to recognize the policy and goals of the agricultural districts law and to avoid unreasonable restrictions or regulations on farm operations within agricultural districts. For example, municipal governments should not instigate or assist intense residential development in farming areas by installing unnecessary utilities or infrastructure that are more typical of suburban areas. Nor should the local government enact laws that restrict the ability of a farm to conduct normal agricultural operations. Section 305 (2) of the Agricultural District Law states that:

“No local government shall exercise any of its powers to enact local laws or ordinances within an agricultural district in a manner which would unreasonably restrict or regulate farm structures or farming practices in contravention of the

purposes of the act unless such restrictions or regulations bear a direct relationship to the public health or safety.”

Individual public projects are also included in this careful review. Section 305 (4) states that it is important to analyze the effect of proposed public projects on agriculture and to avoid or minimize adverse farm impacts before public dollars are spent or land is acquired for projects.

### Agricultural Data Statement

One of the most important features for the coordination of local planning and agriculture is the agricultural data statement (ADS). The ADS requires input from owners of farmland, and evaluation and consideration of a proposal’s possible impacts on agriculture before a local board makes a land use or planning decision.

The ADS is required when a municipality receives applications for special use permits, site plan approvals, use variances or subdivision approvals requiring municipal review and endorsement if they occur within or on a property within five hundred feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district. In these cases, the reviewing board must evaluate the statement and review the possible impacts of the proposed project on the functioning of farm operations.

The Agricultural Data Statement includes:

- ♦ Name and address of the applicant
- ♦ Description of the proposed project and its location
- ♦ Names and addresses of landowners within the district who have farms and are located within 500 feet of the boundary of the proposed project property
- ♦ Map showing the project’s site relative to the farm operations identified in the agricultural data statement

The municipality (usually the town clerk) must notify the owners of land identified in the agricultural data statement to allow farmland owners to comment on the effect of any proposed change on their farm operation. In addition, the municipality’s review board is required to evaluate the possible impacts of the proposed project in a way that is consistent with the Agricultural Districts Law. While there is no requirement that any potential conflicts or impacts be mitigated, the State Environmental Quality Review Act may be used (where appropriate) to further investigate and/or request mitigation to (or deny) project proposals.

### A Suggested Review Process\*

- ♦ A map of the municipality’s agricultural districts should be well displayed within the town office where land use applications are submitted. This will help both applicant and reviewing officer to determine the location of the parcel in question. Maps can be obtained from County Planning Department or Clerk of the County Legislative Body. See also the general Agricultural Districts and Farmed Parcels Map.

- ♦ The local reviewing board should ascertain present and future farming conditions to ensure the proposed land uses does not conflict with current or future farming activities. The board should ensure that the proposal complies with the municipality's comprehensive plan and zoning documents (if they exist). Further, the proposal must be in accordance with any local laws regarding land development (such as set backs, minimum lot size, etc). As mentioned earlier, SEQR review could be an effective method of seeking mitigation of conflicts or negative impacts due to a proposal. Some questions that Planning Boards should ask to determine if a project will negatively impact farms include:
  - ♦ What potential conflicts between the existing farm and the new use will be created? How will these conflicts be prevented?
  - ♦ Will the new use negatively impact a farmer's ability to use existing right-of-ways or farm roads needed to access fields?
  - ♦ Will the new use affect land values and rental rates for agriculture?
  - ♦ If new roads are to be built, will they accommodate agricultural equipment and traffic?
  - ♦ Will this new use spur additional non-farm development in the future?
  - ♦ Is the landowner familiar with nearby agricultural practices that will be used and how will they be educated about them?
  - ♦ Will the new use remove significant amount of land from being available for farming?
- ♦ The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) may assist local reviewing boards in project evaluation. There is no set role or guideline for Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in this process. Under the law's procedural considerations it only states "the County AFPB may assist local review boards in review process."
- ♦ According to Town Law 283-a and Village Law 7-741, notice must be given to the county about proposals requiring the Agricultural Data Statement.
- ♦ A copy of the completed Agricultural Data Statement and action by the local reviewing board should be submitted to the AFPB for its records.

*\*Source: Agricultural and Farmland Protection for New York, American Farmland Trust).*

*Processing an Agricultural Data Statement (pursuant to Section 305-a of the Agriculture and Markets Law), Department of Agriculture and Markets.*

*Interview with Ron Meade and Bob Somers, Agricultural Districts Program, Division of Agricultural Protection and Development Services, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (July 2002).*

2) Make available additional information about the role agriculture plays in Herkimer County. Herkimer County should develop a variety of communication and educational tools to inform the general public and local government officials about the role that agriculture plays in the County. Agriculture is important to the overall economy of the area. However, particular emphasis should be placed on communicating the vital function active agriculture plays in maintaining rural character, wildlife habitats, open space, quality of residential life, and in maintaining a lower tax rate. Some important facts and figures from this plan can be used to emphasize these points. Other information to convey includes the following:

When prime farmlands are converted to non-farm uses, food production can shift to soils less suitable for production. Farming on these soils requires more effort and input in order to maintain production yields. This adds costs to producing food and in turn, can lead to price escalation for fresh foods at the store.

When lands are converted to residential uses, sprawl can occur. Although the problem has not escalated to severe levels in Herkimer County, sprawl can have negative impacts on a variety of resources. Paying for services associated with new residential development (municipal services, road maintenance, and schools) can actually increase costs of providing those services. Farmland pays more in property taxes than it demands in public services. Costs of Community Services Studies (COCS) conducted throughout the northeast and in New York State show that residential development consistently demands more in services than it generates in revenue. A community that invests in farmland protection will generate a positive revenue stream compared to expenses.

Farmland contributes significantly toward the tourism industry. In the Mohawk Valley, tourism is a major economic activity. This tourism is linked directly to scenic landscapes, farms, streams and rivers, and forests. Without these resources, tourism in the county would suffer. Farmland is also a major contributor to open space, which is also very important to the County's tourism industry. Working farms contribute significantly to the Mohawk Valley corridor, and the designated Scenic Byway in the county. New York State has recognized the importance of working farms to open space. In the New York State Open Space Plan (1994), protection of working farms is included as a resource category of concern.

Rural areas offer a variety of amenities and cultural values that are highly valued by residents. These rural amenities include such things as wildlife habitat, hunting and other outdoor recreational activities, scenic views, a rural lifestyle, and small traditional communities. Many people do not realize the contribution that active farms make to rural landscapes. Communication of this role of agriculture should be a priority.

Undeveloped lands, including farmland and forests, play an important role in the hydrological cycle. Farm fields constitute major portions of the Mohawk River Watershed and play a role in both surface and ground water in the County.

■ A Web site should be developed and maintained for purposes of promoting agricultural development and farmland protection efforts in Herkimer County. The web site should include not only the maps and information contained in this plan, but also information about buying and selling farmland, a forum for farmers and the general public to interact with each other, advertisement of agri-tourism events, and links to the farm service agencies and agri-businesses that support farming in the County.

■ Written materials such as an executive summary of this plan, Herkimer County Agricultural Fact Sheets, and special topic brochures should be made available to the public and local officials throughout the county. Some special topic brochures could concentrate on options to preserve farmland, use of conservation easements, location of u-pick operations, etc. Alternatively, CD-ROM's can be distributed inexpensively with the same information on it. CD-ROM's have the advantage of being able to have much more detailed information and maps included.

■ The AFPB should develop regular press releases to general circulation newspapers, and specific newsletter articles about agriculture in the county. It is important to keep agriculture relevant and visible. Press releases can highlight this plan and the specific recommendations made in it while future progress reports can be used to update the community on plan implementation. In addition, these press releases can feature specific farms, agricultural activities, or agri-tourism events in Herkimer County.

■ Under the auspices of the AFPB, regular press releases to general circulation newspapers, and specific newsletter articles about agriculture in the county should take place. It is important to keep agriculture relevant and visible. Press releases can highlight this plan, and specific recommendations made in it. Progress reports on implementation of the plan can also be featured. In addition, these press releases can feature specific farms, agricultural activities, or agri-tourism events that are taking place.

■ The AFPB should ensure widespread distribution of this plan after adoption. Printed copies of the plan should be available at a variety of county and local government offices. Each town board and town planning board should also receive a copy. The AFPB should consider discussing the plan and its recommendations with town supervisors so that they understand the role local governments can have in farmland protection. The plan can also be made available on CD-ROM as well as on a web site.



3) Increase understanding of local town and planning boards on the range of farmland protection techniques that are available. Local governments have an important role to play in enhancing agriculture and protecting important farmlands in the county. Planning, zoning, and other land use practices are important farmland protection tools. Many communities in Herkimer County do not have comprehensive plans or land use regulations in place that adequately address agriculture and farmland protection issues.

■ **Comprehensive Planning.** Local governments should develop new comprehensive plans or update existing ones. It is vital that agricultural is integrated into local municipal goals and policies. The plans should establish a commitment to agriculture.

Comprehensive plans are documents, developed at the local level, which form a “roadmap” for a community’s future. Such plans detail policies, goals, objectives, and guidelines for the future development of a municipality. Most plans evaluate the areas suitability for growth and development, and identify strategies that will meet the needs of residents and landowners.

Comprehensive plans should be considered fundamental tools for agricultural protection. They should aim to identify areas suitable for both continued agricultural activity and those areas where new development would be appropriate. Comprehensive plans typically include strategies designed to conserve natural resources, preserve community character and historic locations, provide for affordable housing, recreational opportunities, and public services, and protect important farmlands. Development of local comprehensive plans is authorized under New York State Town Law, Section 272-a.

■ **Local regulations** should be reviewed and evaluated for their level of “farm-friendliness.” Often, local regulations include provisions that make farming difficult. For example, many zoning ordinances highly regulate use of farm stands or where livestock may be kept. Although most existing regulations in the



county do not currently over-regulate agricultural activities, it is important for local governments to be aware of these issues. Local governments should ensure that existing or future local laws do not include provisions that impede normal agricultural activities.

■ There are a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory land use tools that can be applied to protect agriculture. One or more of the following farmland protection techniques should be implemented in Herkimer County:

- ◆ Develop a program to purchase or lease development rights from willing landowners on lands identified via a LESA system as being the most valuable farmland to protect.
- ◆ Work with local governments to establish cluster development options.
- ◆ Work with local governments to establish subdivision procedures that preserve open space and farmland.
- ◆ Work with local governments to move away from requiring minimum lot sizes of two to five acres and instead, institute use of a true density measurement of dwellings per acre. In critical locations of farmland, consider adopting very large lot sizes to adequately protect farmlands.
- ◆ Local governments should consider other methods of setting density to protect farmlands such as sliding scale zoning.
- ◆ The County should provide training to Town Boards and Planning Boards in SEQRA and evaluating impacts of proposed projects on agriculture. Designation of certain farmland areas as critical environmental areas would help protect them from negative impacts associated with new development. The County should assist local communities in identifying these locations and in adopting local Type I lists under SEQRA.
- ◆ Agricultural zoning should be considered as a mechanism to restrict non-farm development. Agricultural zones should be consistent with New York State Certified Agricultural District locations
- ◆ Use of Ag Overlay zones can protect farmland by controlling the location, type and amount of development that can occur in a specific area.
- ◆ Local planning should limit development sprawl along arterials and highways and should restrict public water and sewer to hamlets and villages in order to prevent development from encroaching on agricultural areas.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) – Development rights of a property can be legally split from other property rights and held so that development is prevented. Development rights are usually permanently sold or donated, but leased or temporary programs are becoming more common. When the development rights on a property are sold, donated or leased, a deed restriction is placed on the property. The deed restriction is a written document that details the specific limits placed on that property and is called a conservation easement. The restrictions contained in the easement stay with the land no matter who the owner is. Land with a conservation easement remains privately owned and managed. It also

remains on the local tax rolls, but should be assessed accordingly. Although the land remains in private ownership, the easement is “held” by either a government entity or a qualified non-profit organization. A conservation easement is always voluntary and is specific to a particular parcel of land. The price of an easement is determined by calculating the difference between the fair market value of the property and its restricted value.

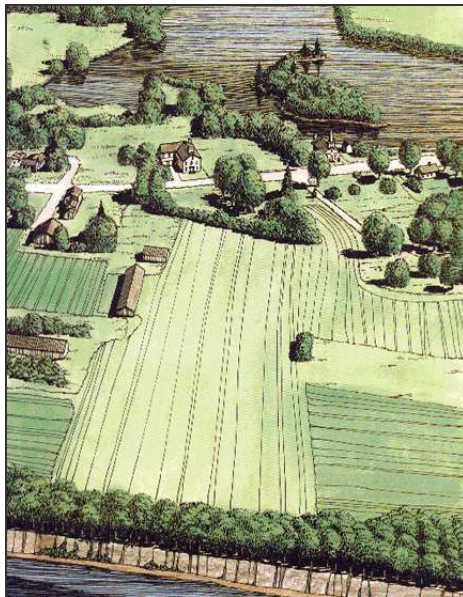
PDR is a key provision in the farmland protection toolbox. For agricultural protection, the ultimate goal of a PDR program is to preserve a critical mass of farmland in close or adjoining blocks. While lands with conservation easements on them are protected from development, selling an easement allows farmers to receive a percentage of the cash equity of their land and still maintain control over the farming operations. Many farmers use funds from a PDR program to enhance their operations, buy more land, or retire debt. Retiring farmers can create a retirement fund by selling their development rights and still have viable property to pass along to the next generation.

The advantages of a PDR program are many. PDR can protect farmland while keeping it in private ownership. Farmers can capitalize on their land and receive a financially competitive alternative to development. PDR programs help keep the land affordable to be bought and sold as farmland. It can be implemented by state or local governments, or by private organizations. The major disadvantage is that PDRs are expensive and there are limited funds for land purchases in areas without intensive subdivision activity.

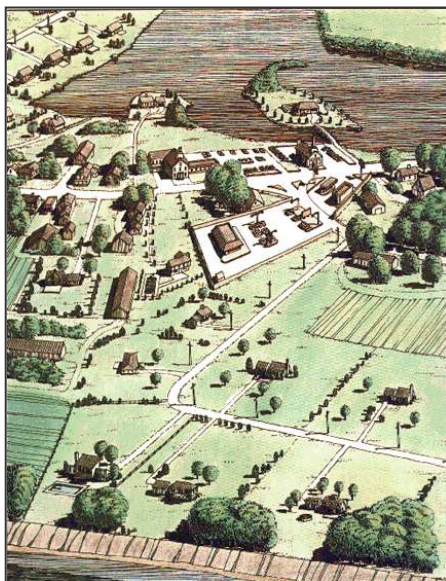
Funding for PDR programs comes from a variety of sources. Currently there are more farmers who wish to participate than there are funds available. The New York State program requires applicants to contribute a local match and thus county or municipal funds are also required. The 2002 Farm Bill contains funds for PDR as well. Funds can also come from local and national land trusts and private individuals. Local communities can finance a PDR program through use of bonds, general tax revenues, and use of real estate transfer taxes.

In contrast to the permanency of most PDR programs, development rights can also be leased for a specified period of time. Lease Development Rights (LDR) programs have several advantages. While a permanent easement program eliminates the opportunities for younger generations to redeem equity in their land, LDR allows a farmer to recover equity in the short-term and preserves development options for a younger generation. Furthermore, LDR typically costs less to implement. The major disadvantage of LDR is that there are no assurances the farmland will be ultimately protected, a requirement of most major funding sources.

Cluster Development – Zoning or subdivision laws can allow, on a voluntary or mandatory basis, that new homes be grouped together on smaller lots in one location on a parcel. This grouping can protect open land by leaving a large portion of the parcel undeveloped. The undeveloped portion of the land is permanently restricted from development and can be used for future agricultural use. However, large-scale commercial operations such as dairy farms are typically not compatible due to increased conflicts between the farm and non-farm uses. Clustering may be more appropriate in areas having less-intensive agricultural operations.



This illustration is an example of a typical undeveloped parcel of farmland.



This is the same parcel developed with a conventional subdivision layout. Note that new houses and streets have been built throughout the former farmland and that there is little land left over for continued agriculture.





Under a clustered site layout, the parcel has been developed at the same density (same number of houses), but they have been clustered around existing buildings on or near the site. This leaves the majority of land open and available for farming with minimal interference from the new residences. Note also that the remaining farmland is still contiguous with an adjacent farm. Maintenance of as much unbroken farmland as possible is an important feature to strive for when using cluster development.

**Subdivision Review** – Subdivision review determines where new lots will be located and how the land will be developed. Subdivision review can be used to lessen the impact of new development on agriculture. For example, some subdivision regulations require a percentage of each parcel being subdivided be maintained as open space. These types of provisions can work to protect at least some types of agricultural operations. Conservation subdivision is another technique that can be applied via subdivision regulations. Like the clustering technique, it is a method of siting new houses on a parcel in a manner that protects important environmental features. Conservation subdivisions are developed around features such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes, views, historical features such as buildings and stonewalls, and farmland. It allows houses to be built at the density allowed by local law, but places them on the site in a way that preserves those important features. Conservation subdivision design is an excellent method to preserve open space and protect a variety of natural resources. Agriculture can certainly fit into a conservation design, but like clustering, intensive operations may not mix well with residences. Operations such as hay, nurseries, organic vegetables, horse farms, and other agricultural activities may indeed fit in well however.





This illustration shows a typical subdivision where new housing units are spread throughout all of the open, usable land on this parcel. In this situation, there is no opportunity to preserve any of the parcel for continued agriculture.



In this example, the houses are sited in a conservation subdivision method. Note that there are the same number of houses in both the conventional and conservation subdivisions. However, the conservation subdivision sites houses away from prime areas that are preserved for continued use as agricultural fields, or for open space and environmental protection.

Large Lot Zoning – A typical provision of most local land use laws or ordinances in Herkimer County requires minimum lot sizes from 2 to 5 acres. Originally, this system was intended to reduce the density of housing so to protect rural areas. However, the opposite has typically been shown to occur. Large-lot zoning most often results in rural sprawl where homes are evenly spaced every two to five acres. In the process, more land is used and people are often forced to buy more residential acreage than they want or need. Even though it is very common, such a technique has not been successful in protecting agriculture. For example, large-lot zoning typically includes a list of uses that are permitted by right (usually single-family houses). However, zoning ordinances that mix single-family houses along with agriculture fail to recognize that farming and residential development usually are not compatible. Furthermore, the more residences that are built, the more impermanent agriculture becomes. This system also fails to view agricultural areas as important zones worthy of special protection from incompatible uses.

There are some examples of communities where large-lot zoning has been shown to be useful. In those cases however, minimum lot sizes are set very large such as 20, 30 or more acres. This type of land use regulation works on the premise that minimum lot size should be large enough to help keep farmland in blocks big enough to farm profitably. Very large minimum lot sizes discourage the intrusion of non-farm uses and house sites that break up previously contiguous farmland. This type of “true large-lot zoning” could successfully work in Herkimer County and local municipalities should consider the advantages of this method. The disadvantage of true large-lot zoning is that it may be politically difficult to enact, and the zoning regulations may not hold up to political pressures to rezone if the adjacent development pressures make the land more valuable for non-farm uses.

Regulation of Density - As an alternative to very large lot zoning, it is recommended that local municipalities in Herkimer County move their land use policies away from setting density by requiring minimum lot sizes, and instead, set a true density measurement such as the number of dwellings per acre. Use of dwellings per acre should also require use of a maximum lot size big enough to site a septic system (usually one or two acres). This allows flexibility in siting homes so as to not interfere with prime agricultural locations on the parcel, and allows a majority of the parcel to remain undeveloped.

Sliding Scale Zoning – This is a zoning technique that uses a scale to determine the number of building lots that could be developed on a parcel. It allows each landowner a certain number of buildable lots based on the size of the parcel. The number of potential buildable lots decreases as the parcel increases in size. Thus, parcel size governs density. Smaller tracts are allowed to be denser than larger ones. Both minimum and maximum lot sizes are set, usually at one and two acres, respectively. Sliding scale zoning can be coupled with standards that restrict development to the least

productive soils or restrict development on environmentally sensitive lands.

State Environmental Quality Review Act – The intent of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) is to ensure a thorough review of potential environmental impacts of a proposed project before they are approved. SEQRA also provides a mechanism to mitigate potential negative impacts. A SEQRA review should include a thorough evaluation of how a proposed project would impact agriculture. Town Boards and Planning Boards should receive adequate information and training on the application of SEQRA, especially as it relates to agriculture.

Unfortunately, some of the activities that impact agriculture are exempt from a SEQRA review. Activities such as building single-family homes on large lots, and subdivisions of less than 10 units are not subject to SEQRA. These are often the uses that have the most impact on agriculture.

There are, however, several ways to enhance the use of SEQRA in Herkimer County. For example, local communities are authorized to designate certain important farmland locations as a Critical Environmental Area (CEA). When proposed projects are located in a CEA, the lead agency conducting the review would be required to give a more thorough analysis of the project to determine if it negatively impacted the areas important resources.

A second method to enhance the use of SEQRA at the local level is for municipalities to set their own Type I action lists. Type I actions are presumed to have more potential for a negative environmental impacts. Consequently, they require a Full Environmental Assessment Form to be prepared and often require the preparation of an environmental impact statement to provide detailed information on potential impacts and mitigation alternatives. SEQRA includes a list of Type I actions, but local governments can add to that list. A local Type I list could include those actions considered to have potential negative impacts on agriculture and thus would be afforded a more thorough review.

Agricultural zoning – Agricultural zoning designates certain areas where farming is to be the primary land use. Other type of development is restricted so as not to impair the land's use for agriculture. Agricultural zones should match New York State Certified Agricultural Districts. This type of local law generally restricts density of new residential development and requires small building lots. Typical density levels are 1 dwelling per 20 or more acres with houses required to be on lots with a



maximum size of 1 acre. This type of zoning has proven to be very effective in preventing non-farm development from encroaching on commercial agricultural operations. It also is effective in reducing speculative pressures that raise land values. This technique requires strong political and public support, profitable farming, and commitment from farmers to keep their land in production. Agricultural zoning often has more support in locations farther away from locations under heavy development pressure. Thus, it may be a suitable technique for communities in southern Herkimer County to explore. It could be applied to those critical areas exceeding the established LESA thresholds (see Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool, page \_\_), and/or in locations with prime soils.

Ag Overlay Zones – An agricultural overlay district is an effective method to direct development away from prime farmlands. An overlay district is a mapped area that “fits” over other zoning districts. An agricultural overlay can be fitted over one or more base residential districts to correspond with land that has prime soils and active agricultural operations. Overlays generally regulate how development will occur in that area. A variety of land use options can be included in overlay districts including mandatory clustering, use of buffers between residences and existing farms, and other performance standards. Overlay zones can also be used to change densities and permitted uses. This technique does not prevent development, but rather controls the location, type and amount of development that can occur.

Smart Growth Initiatives – Building on traditional styles and locations of development can be another important tool in protecting farmland. Local communities should establish land use plans and policies that encourage growth to take place in hamlets and villages. Public water and sewer infrastructure should be limited to those areas as well. When policies and available infrastructure work together to direct growth to traditional built-up areas, there is less pressure on farmland. Within these hamlets and villages, land use policies should also direct new commercial growth away from highways leading out of the center. Highway sprawl puts further speculative pressure on farms to sell for non-farm uses. A clear distinction between the built-up nature of hamlets and villages, and active agricultural locations is important to maintain not only farmland, but rural character as well.

Buffers - Buffers are physical barriers between incompatible land uses. Buffers are often required to separate agricultural uses from residential uses. Buffers can be strips of land (a minimum of 50’ wide) or by vegetation such as hedgerows, trees or shrubs. When are required, it is the responsibility of the developer to provide the buffer, rather than the farm owner.

4) In order to assist municipalities evaluate these different agricultural protection techniques, consider creating local volunteer agricultural committees. These committees could work to identify tools and techniques that would work specifically in their community. Their role would be to make recommendations to the Planning or Town Board to be considered as part of a comprehensive plan or local law and to provide agricultural expertise to the Planning Board when needed.

5) Herkimer County and each local municipality should consider passing a right-to-farm law. This is basically a law that protects farmers from nuisance complaints related to standard farming practices. Right to farm laws not only discourage neighbors from suing farmers, but they also document the importance of farming in that community and put non-farm rural residents on notice that accepted agricultural practices are reasonable activities to expect in that area. Further, these laws send an important positive message to farm families that their operations are valued and accepted by the community.

When dispute resolution sections are included in right to farm laws, communities will have an additional means for resolving conflicts. It should be a goal that problems are discussed and solved at the local level.

New York has two types of right to farm laws. One applies to farms in agricultural districts and protects them from unreasonable local regulation. This law does not protect farmers from negligent operation or if the nuisance was pre-existing. The second NY law applies to agricultural activities on farms and includes private nuisance protection. New York also allows farmers to be awarded legal fees if it is found that a nuisance complaint was frivolous.

Right to farm laws should contain specific language to be legally sustainable. They should also contain clear definitions of sound agricultural practices, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and solid statements of intent and purpose.

While these laws do not directly protect farmland from being abandoned or converted to other uses, they should be considered an important component of the overall farmland protection strategy. Appendix B includes a model right to farm law. The Towns south of the Mohawk River are locations where a Right-To-Farm law would be especially important. The AFPB, along with Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Oneida—Herkimer Planning Department and local members of the farm bureau should be involved to implement local right to farm laws.

It may be useful as an education tool to provide a written brochure on agricultural districts, and local right to farm laws designed for new buyers of land near farms. Local real estate agents could distribute this brochure. A model Right-To-Farm law is included in the appendix.

**OBJECTIVE 2: The Herkimer County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should begin immediate implementation of the recommendations in this plan and strengthen their role as an advocate for agriculture in the County.**

**Strategies**

The County AFPB is authorized under New York State law to advise the county legislative body about agricultural districts; review notice of intent filings; make recommendations about proposed acquisition of farmland in agricultural districts; prepare and update county agricultural and farmland protection plans; request review of state agency regulations that affect farm operations within an agricultural district; and review and endorse applications for funding for purchase of development rights. In addition to these roles, the AFPB should:

- 1) Review and update this plan every five years.
- 2) “Fine-tune” and implement the proposed Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool (LESA) system to help launch a PDR program in the county (see Objective 3 below). In order to take this step, the AFPB must advocate swift completion of digitizing county tax parcel and soil information. The Board should establish an ad hoc committee to field test the model and set thresholds for eligibility.
- 3) Seek funds and endorse applications for PDR programs in the county. Eligible projects should score at or above the established thresholds in the LESA system
- 4) Provide leadership and act as advocates for agriculture to implement this plan.
- 5) Have a significant leadership role in attaining a new Agricultural Economic Development and Marketing specialist.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Objectively identify specific farmlands to be targeted for farmland preservation programs.**

**Strategies**

- 1) Digitize all tax parcels and soil data within the County. This is a vital step that must be completed prior to implementation of many of the recommendations included in this plan. The County is currently digitizing tax parcels. The County should strongly advocate for immediate digitization of soil data by the NRCS.
- 2) In order to successfully implement this Plan, decision-makers in Herkimer County will need to take advantage of many farmland protection techniques that are available. Some of the recommended techniques to protect farmland include use of purchase of development rights programs (PDR) and land use planning techniques that are applied at the local level. A successful program will objectively identify lands that have important characteristics that make those locations critical lands to support continuing agriculture.

In order to identify those lands, Herkimer County should implement a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool. (LESA).

A draft LESA has been developed for Herkimer County and is described in the appendix. Local and county-decision makers can use this technique to evaluate and rank farmland parcels in order to decide where the most appropriate locations are to target protection measures.

This Plan offers a first step or template for the Herkimer County LESA (See Appendix). However, in order to implement a full LESA system specific for Herkimer, the following additional steps will need to be taken (each of these is described in more detail in the LESA Appendix):

- 1.) Obtain digital tax parcel information and digital soil data. When this becomes available, the County can fully and efficiently implement LESA.
- 2.) The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, together with local NRCS, SWCD, and Extension Staff, along with input from area farmers, should evaluate the suggested LE and SA factors and their ratings, and make adjustments as deemed necessary.
- 3.) Field-test the draft LESA system. It is recommended that one area, or township be selected to field test the system.
- 4.) As a result of the field-testing, further adjustments of the factors or weightings could be done.
- 5.) The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should establish thresholds.
- 6.) The LESA system should undergo periodic evaluation and revision, if necessary.

#### **Objective 4: Increase participation in farm estate planning and farm transfer programs and facilitate farm-to-farm transfers.**

##### **Strategies**

1) Farm support agencies should increase efforts at educating local farmers about the New York FarmLink Program. The NY FarmLink Program is designed to improve the process and effectiveness of farm transfers by providing farmers with essential networking, consulting, and educational support. This type of assistance is critical to help farm families with estate planning and farm transfers.

■ In addition to providing technical information on farm transfers, encourage intergenerational farm transfers by offering new educational programs. A farmer-mentoring program could help facilitate this.

■ Provide for sources of funding aimed to help start-up costs for young farmers.

2) The County, through support of an Agricultural Economic Development and Marketing Specialist should initiate a program to advertise farmland that is for sale to



potential farm buyers. To keep farmland from being converted to non-farm uses, it is important to link those who are selling farmland to those who wish to buy farmland for farming. Promote central New York farms especially to neighboring states who are losing farms to urban encroachment. Several mechanisms have been successful in other parts of the State to facilitate this.

These include the following:

- Highlight agricultural opportunities in Herkimer County by developing a video and establishing a web site. This site could include information on land farms that are for sale. Include information that advertises the positive and strong points of the County including its location to quality schools of higher education, cultural activities, strong agri-business support, available land, and high quality of rural life.
  - Provide area real estate agents and area chambers of commerce with written materials that highlight agricultural opportunities in Herkimer County, and maps and information about the County's agricultural districts that can serve to actively promote Herkimer County as an excellent location for new farm businesses.
  - Provide incentives to attract new agricultural business to move to Herkimer County.
- 3) For the short-term, the County should establish ties with area land trusts (such as the Schoharie County Land Trust, the Otsego Land Trust, and the American Farmland Trust) to facilitate purchase or leases of development rights. In the long-term, the County should facilitate formation of a Herkimer County Land Trust.

**Goal 3. Local and county government decision-makers and the general public will understand agriculture and the many important roles it plays in the County. These decision-makers will be active partners in preserving and nurturing farming. A positive attitude towards farming by farmers, other business people, and the general public will develop.**

Lack of understanding on the part of local decision makers and residents about farm practices and the role of agriculture in their communities contributes to farmland loss. It also contributes to the development of negative attitudes in the farm community. Negative feelings about agriculture prevent innovation and “can-do” attitudes – both of which are needed in order to move towards more profitability and long-term success in farming.

**Objective 1: Establish new promotion efforts aimed at local decision makers.**

1) Establish a series of farm visits for local officials from county and local governments. These tours should highlight different locations in the county and different types of farms. Farm visits should be aimed at helping local officials understand the farmers’ needs and the benefits of agriculture to their communities. They should also foster a greater appreciation of the work involved in farming.

2) Increase training and educational opportunities about agriculture for local government officials. A variety of specific training recommendations are detailed in other parts of this plan. Strategies for training are outlined in Goal 1, Objective 3, Strategy 3; Goal 2, Objective 1, Strategy 1 – 3; Goal 3, Objective 1, Strategy 1 – 2, and Objective 4. The object of all these efforts are to convey the important role agriculture plays in the economy, quality of life, the environment, food production, and in maintaining municipal tax levels.

**Objective 2: Establish new promotion efforts aimed at the general public and area businesses.**

1) Establish a countywide farm tour to allow the public access to local farms. Like the tours for local officials, these farm tours should highlight different locations in the county and different types of farms. They should be designed to foster a greater appreciation of farmers, the work involved in farming, and to promote county agricultural products.

2) Work with area schools to provide agricultural education. The goal of the program should be to promote agriculture as a local career opportunity, and to educate youth about agricultural techniques in general.

- ♦ Seek to establish FFA chapters in local schools.
- ♦ Help agricultural 4-H clubs be more visible in schools and in the general community.
- ♦ Work with area BOCES to provide hands-on training programs related to agriculture. The goal should be to train young people for jobs related to agriculture.
- ♦ Cornell Cooperative Extension should initiate an in-school program such as “Ag in the Classroom” to provide education on farms and food production.

3) Support local advertising of farm products - marketing/buy local. Develop and actively promote a county identity and logo for agriculture. This logo should be placed on all promotion and education materials, including signs that could be placed at farms and farm businesses.

4) Consider development of a sign program for towns that have agricultural districts in place, similar to signs placed when entering floodplain areas. These agricultural district signs should be friendly and welcoming, include the county logo, and let people know when that they have entered a community that has an agricultural district and that farming is supported.

5) A “We Support Herkimer Farming” sign should be developed and placed at area farms and businesses that support county farms.

5) Seek funding for and develop a series of public service announcements for television, radio and printed news media. These advertisements should promote specific ag-related events and markets, as well as promote the farm community and its role in the county.

6) Promote area farms and farm fresh produce. Create a directory and map of area farms that have agri-tourism opportunities, direct marketing operations such as “U-Pick,” retail sales of products such as maple syrup and honey, wool, and other homegrown products.

**Objective 3: Establish a “Pride in Farming” program aimed at the farm community.**

1) Initiate a county-wide “farm of distinction” program. This should differ from other such programs in that it does not concentrate on the aesthetic look of a farm. Specific criteria for eligibility for this program could include participation in conservation programs, use of innovative technologies, efforts to diversify farm operations, farmer involvement in continuing education, and other activities that illustrate efforts of the farm to remain viable and profitable.

2) Initiate a separate farm beautification program. This county-wide effort should recognize farms for efforts made in beautification, historic renovation of farm buildings, and on-going upkeep of the premises.

**Objective 4: Increase farmer participation in government activities and in local economic development efforts.**

1) All town governments in the County should be encouraged to involve local farmers as members on planning boards.

2) Encourage use of Section 271.11 of the New York State Town Law. This section, applicable to those towns having an NY agricultural district within its boundaries, authorizes the town to appoint one or more agricultural members to the planning board.

3) The County should ensure that representatives of the farm community are involved in local economic development agencies, and county planning efforts.

■ One or more members of the agricultural community should be appointed to the Herkimer County Industrial Development (IDA).

■The County Legislatures' Planning and Development Committee should include as members, legislators from primarily agricultural towns.

4) Farmers should become involved in local chambers of commerce. Agricultural operations are businesses and farmers should join their area chambers as members. Furthermore, farmers should be well represented on the planning and economic development committees of their local chamber of commerce. Farmers need to act as aggressive advocates for agriculture outside of traditional organizations such as the Farm Bureau.

**Goal 4. Agriculture in Herkimer County will be diversified and include a wide variety of farm types and sizes.**

**Objective 1: Increase participation in programs that add value to existing agricultural products in the County.**

- 1) Explore the interest and feasibility in establishing a countywide milk cooperative to produce cheese, yogurt and fluid milk products locally.
- 2) Support and encourage farmers to seek funding for value-added efforts through the federal program "Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants."

**Objective 2: Increase agri-tourism opportunities in the County.**

- 1) Cornell Cooperative Extension along with support from the AFPB, should promote agri-tourism opportunities and provide information for new agr-business start-ups. Opportunities could include:

- Farm tours
- Farm stands
- Corn mazes
- Petting "zoo" and opportunities for children to interact with farm animals
- Establishment of Bed & Breakfast operations on farms
- Hayrides

- 2) Herkimer County agriculture should aggressively take advantage of its location along the Revolutionary Trail, the Southern Adirondack Trail (Route 28), and scenic byways. Market agri-tour opportunities to tour bus lines, travel agents, and through programs such as the I Love NY effort. Regional tourism promotion efforts should highlight agricultural activities and opportunities in the county.

- 3) All agri-tourism activities should be listed in a directory and mapped.



4) Market agri-tourism events at other tourist destinations such as the Herkimer Diamond Mine, Howe Caverns (in Schoharie County), the Utica Zoo, historical sites, including the Canal, and in Old Forge. Other important destinations where agri-tourism events can be promoted include the Russian Monastery, Farmers Museum (Otsego County), Garlic Festival (Little Falls), Remington Arms Museum (Ilion), and Lydon Lyons African Violet Growers.

**Objective 3: Promote farm diversification efforts.**

- 1) Farmers should take advantage of expanding their agricultural businesses to diversify and cater to niche markets. Niche markets often pay premium prices for products.
- 2) Support and encourage area farmers to seek assistance in diversification efforts from the New York State Food Venture Center (Cornell University), the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship, and the Community Food and Agriculture Program.
- 3) Farms containing woodlands can take advantage of them and attain increased value from them by leasing them for hunting and other outdoor recreation. Farmers should employ woodland management Best Management Practices and consider applying for the 480-a tax assessment program.
- 4) Promote alternative agricultural operations such as horses, organic farming, aquaculture, vegetables and fruit, and greenhouse crops, among others. The County should consider providing training, incentives, and on-going support for such operations.

**Objective 4: Increase direct marketing and new product development opportunities.**

- 1) Initiate a direct marketing program to sell Herkimer County produce to local restaurants and grocery stores. Take advantage of a green labeling system and at the same time promote the “grown locally” county logo. A program could be based on the successful restaurant supported agricultural marketing system developed by the New York City Watershed Agricultural Council. Grower cooperatives can help make this activity more successful. Work cooperatively with the NYS Direct Marketing Association for assistance in this endeavor.
- 2) Initiate a farmer to retailer linkage program similar to that offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension in Columbia County. This is a program that seeks to create direct marketing links between producers and metropolitan area retailers.
- 3) The Farmers’ Market Federation of New York sponsors a farmers’ market in Dolgeville. This is an excellent program and consideration should be given to working with the Federation to expand and/or duplicate this program elsewhere in the County.
- 4) Marketing efforts should participate in and take advantage of green labeling and Pride of New York programs. Herkimer County has a unique location as the major gateway to the Adirondacks, and as a location in central New York. It has strong highway access via

the New York State Thruway. These are all features that should be marketed, promoted, and used to expand direct market sales.

**Objective 5: Promote small farms.**

1) Cornell Cooperative Extension should provide training and promote use of small farms and establishment of alternative types of farming.

2) With support of the AFB, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the USDA “Small Farm Program,” and other farm support agencies, Herkimer County should seek funding for small farm programs. Encourage new farm enterprises and provide training for small farms that are oriented towards quality hay production, nursery and greenhouse crops, and horse facilities. Herkimer County has numerous farms located up in the hills or on areas having less than prime soils that could be successfully utilized for a variety of small farming operations. Currently, many of these farmlands are abandoned. Landowners should be helped to recognize new opportunities these lands may bring. Further, this land base should be promoted for alternative agricultural enterprises to new farmers.

3) Work with Native Americans to encourage small farming enterprises.

4) Promote use of grass-based systems for livestock and poultry as a profitable method for using many of the smaller farms that have been vacated recently.

5) Encourage small farms to participate in all Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, and NRCS programs. Reach out to them and offer assistance, and information on small farm programs.

## 18. Implementation Steps

Many individuals, agencies and organizations have important roles to play in implementing this plan. The County, under the leadership of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, should take a lead role. However, local municipalities are also important players in the process and can positively enhance Herkimer's farms by taking action at the local level. There are numerous ways that local towns can use the information contained in this plan to enhance agriculture in their communities. The following steps can guide use of this plan by local municipalities:

*Step 1:* Familiarize town officials, planning board members and landowners with the plan and maps. Town officials and landowners should know where important farms, farmlands, and other resources are located in their municipality.

*Step 2:* Develop or update town comprehensive plans as recommended in Chapter 17 of this plan. This effort should include a thorough inventory of farms, farmland soils, and ag districts in the town. At the same time, examine where agricultural lands have been vacated or converted to other uses. Local comprehensive plans can incorporate many of the vision, goals, and strategies as recommended in Chapter 17.

*Step 3:* Identify important blocks of contiguous farmland that remain along with areas having the most productive soils and concentrate farmland protection efforts in these locations. Chapter 17 identifies a range of solutions that can be used to protect farmlands.

*Step 4:* Review local laws for consistency with agriculture and for their level of "farm-friendliness". This review should determine if the local laws are consistent with the goals outlined in both this plan, and with existing local comprehensive plans.

*Step 5:* Implement steps to help make project review that is being done by local planning boards more effective at incorporating agricultural issues into the process. Towns should work to implement strategies outlined in Chapter 17 that will help their planning boards follow through on SEQR and NYS Ag and Markets laws more effectively.

The ideas and strategies presented in this plan have been prioritized and scheduled for implementation. In addition, specific agencies and groups have been identified as having leadership or technical skills needed to implement the strategies. Key players in implementing this plan will be the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, Oneida/Herkimer Planning Office, Agricultural Economic Development and Marketing Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension in Herkimer County, the Herkimer County Soil and Water Conservation District, local staff for the NRCS, area Chambers of Commerce, Farm Bureau, various county agencies; local governments, and individual farmers. Priority tasks should be accomplished in one to three years. Intermediate term actions should occur within four to eight years. Some strategies need on-going attention. The strategies are:

## **Key to Implementation Table**

### **Major Goal**

**Increase Profitability** (Goal 1. Farms and agri-businesses in Herkimer County will be profitable and economically dynamic.)

**Farmland Protection** (Goal 2. A critical mass of farmland will be protected and available for active agricultural operations.)

**Increase Awareness and Positive Attitudes** (Goal 3. Local and county government decision-makers and the general public will understand agriculture and the many important roles it plays in the County. These decision-makers will be active partners in preserving and nurturing farming. A positive attitude towards farming by farmers, other business people, and the general public will develop.)

**Increase Farm Diversity** (Goal 4. Agriculture in Herkimer County will be diversified and include a wide variety of farm types and sizes.)

### **Time Frames**

**P** Priority strategy to be implemented in the short term of 1 to 3 years after adoption.

**I** Important strategy to be implemented in the intermediate term of 4 to 8 years after adoption.

**O** Strategies that are ongoing throughout the life of this plan.

### **Responsibility**

AFPB Herkimer County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board

Local Gov'ts Local municipalities in Herkimer County

County Legisl. Herkimer County Legislature

AED Spec. Agriculture and Economic Development Specialist (\*= to be hired)

CCE Cornell Cooperative Extension in Herkimer County

SWCD Soil and Water Conservation District

NRCS Natural Resource Conservation Service

Land Trust A land trust (to be formed or to link with existing organizations)

HOCCPP Herkimer Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program

FSA Farm Service Agency

Major Goal	Strategy Description	Time Frame	Responsibility										Plan Page No.
			AFPB	LOCAL GOV'TS.	COUNTY LEGISL.	AED SPEC. *	CCE	SWCD	NRCS	LAND TRRUST	HOCCPP.	FSA	
<b>Increase Profitability</b>													
	Establish tax abatement programs through the IDA	P	λ		λ								57
	Establish revolving loan fund	P	λ		λ							λ	58
	Provide for AED/Marketing Specialist	P	λ		λ		λ						58
	Initiate AIDER	P	λ	λ		λ	λ						59
	Integrate agricultural economic development goals into County	P			λ	λ							59
	Identify and seek new grants to help with environmental management	P/O	λ			λ	λ	λ	λ				59
	Initiate green labeling/incentive program	I				λ	λ	λ	λ				59
	Establish new selling or purchasing cooperatives	I				λ	λ	λ	λ				60
	Increase number of farms in Ag District program	P/O	λ	λ				λ	λ				60
	Increase participation in number of farms receiving agricultural assessments	P/O	λ	λ				λ	λ				61
	Increase educational opportunities for	O	λ	λ			λ				λ		62

Major Goal	Strategy Description	Time Frame	Responsibility										Plan Page No.
			AFPB	LOCAL GOV'TS.	COUNTY LEGISL.	AED SPEC. *	CCE	SWCD	NRCS	LAND TRRUST	HOCCPP.	FSA	
	local assessors												
	Increase educational opportunities for farmers/ develop directory of tax benefits	O			λ	λ	λ						62
	Provide new, local tax incentive programs	P	λ	λ		λ							62
	Promote IPM, organic, pastured-based systems	O					λ	λ	λ				62
	Aggressively promote and provide incentives for farmer participation in farm business summary program and use of farm business plans	P	λ		λ	λ	λ					λ	62
	Increase communication and coordination of farm support agencies	P/O					λ	λ	λ			λ	64
	Establish farmer to farmer mentoring groups	I					λ						64
<b>Protection</b>													
	Provide Planning Boards with information and education on NYS Ag & Markets regulations	O		λ		λ	λ				λ		65
	Initiate educational program on role of agriculture via website, written materials, information on CD-ROM,	P/O				λ	λ						68

Major Goal	Strategy Description	Time Frame	Responsibility										Plan Page No.
			AFPB	LOCAL GOV'TS.	COUNTY LEGISL.	AED SPEC. *	CCE	SWCD	NRCS	LAND TRRUST	HOCPP.	FSA	
	press articles												
	Promote development of new or updated comprehensive plans	P		λ							λ		70
	Work with local governments to make local laws farm-friendly	O		λ							λ		70
	Work with local governments to implement farmland protection planning techniques	P	λ	λ			λ				λ		71
	Establish a PDR program	P/I	λ		λ	λ				λ	λ		71
	Pass right-to-farm laws	P		λ	λ						λ		79
	Enhance role of AFPB to include assistance in local project review, establish LESA, seek additional funding, implement plan, promote agricultural economic development	P	λ										80
	Digitize soil data and tax parcels	P			λ				λ				80
	Establish LESA	P/I	λ					λ	λ	λ			80
	Increase awareness of and promote FarmLink program	I/O				λ	λ						81
	Promote agricultural opportunities for new farmers via video, website, information for area real estate agents, provide incentives to attract	I/O	λ			λ	λ						81

Major Goal	Strategy Description	Time Frame	Responsibility										Plan Page No.
			AFPB	LOCAL GOV'TS.	COUNTY LEGISL.	AED SPEC. *	CCE	SWCD	NRCS	LAND TRRUST	HOCPP.	FSA	
	new farmers												
	Establish Herkimer County Land Trust	I			λ					λ	λ		82
<b>Awareness</b>													
	Establish series of farm visits for local government officials	P/O	λ	λ		λ	λ						83
	Establish series of farm visits for general public	P/O	λ	λ		λ	λ						83
	Provide agricultural education and information on ag-related careers to county schools	I/O	λ				λ	λ	λ				83
	Develop county identity and logo for agriculture	I	λ		λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	83
	Develop “We Support Herkimer Farming” signage program	P/I	λ		λ	λ	λ	λ	λ	λ		λ	84
	Seek funding and implement public service announcements	I/O	λ			λ	λ						84
	Create directory and map of agri-tourism and direct marketing opportunities	P	λ			λ	λ						84
	Create county sponsored “Farm of Distinction” program	P	λ		λ	λ	λ						84
	Initiate farm beautification program	I	λ		λ	λ	λ						84



Major Goal	Strategy Description	Time Frame	Responsibility										Plan Page No.
			AFPB	LOCAL GOV'TS.	COUNTY LEGISL.	AED SPEC. *	CCE	SWCD	NRCS	LAND TRRUST	HOCPP.	FSA	
	Involve farm community in local planning boards	P	λ	λ							λ		84
	Appoint farm community members to Herkimer County Development Corporation	P	λ		λ								84
<b>Diversity</b>													
	Explore feasibility of county-wide milk cooperative	I	λ			λ	λ	λ					85
	Educate on and promote new value-added efforts	O				λ	λ	λ					85
	Promote on-farm agri-tourism activities	O				λ	λ						85
	Aggressively take advantage of the area's scenic byways and regional tourism	O				λ	λ						85
	Promote new niche marketing opportunities	O				λ	λ	λ					86
	Promote farm diversification	O				λ	λ	λ					86
	Promote use of farm woodlots of added income	O				λ	λ	λ					86
	Initiate direct marketing of local produce to local restaurants and groceries	O	λ			λ	λ						86

Major Goal	Strategy Description	Time Frame	Responsibility										Plan Page No.
			AFPB	LOCAL GOV'TS.	COUNTY LEGISL.	AED SPEC. *	CCE	SWCD	NRCS	LAND TRRUST	HOCCPP.	FSA	
	Create new retail-producer funds for start-ups, etc.	O	λ			λ							87
	Work with Native Americans to encourage small farming	O				λ	λ	λ					87

## 19. Appendices

### Appendix A. Agencies, Programs and Resources to Support Farming

*Agriculture is essential to Herkimer County's economy, culture, and beautiful landscape. A support network of public and private resources is necessary to help farmers maintain and expand their operations. These resources, many of which are described in this chapter, are available directly to producers as well as to local municipalities and organizations. All levels of government and many education facilities (such as universities and technical schools), not-for-profit organizations, and private business entities provide agricultural support resources.*

As several of the resources listed here are regional, statewide, or national programs and are available outside of Herkimer County, local contact information is provided where appropriate (i.e. field offices). Web links to most organizations are included in their discussions and provide additional information beyond the individual descriptions below.

#### CORNELL UNIVERSITY

(<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/>)

Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI): CaRDI works to strengthen and support New York's local communities and citizens. CaRDI and the Cornell Local Government Program serve as a point of entry to Cornell University's resources and expertise in community development and local governance, and provide outreach to community leaders, educators, elected officials and citizens interested in the vitality of their communities.

Contact: phone: 607-255-9510; web: <http://www.cardi.cornell.edu/>

AIDER: Agricultural Industry Development, Enhancement & Retention: AIDER is a community-based program for agriculture and food systems economic development. AIDER's focus is the implementation of high profile, action-based projects that strengthen and expand the agriculture and food sector of the local economy. AIDER achieves its goals by integrating agriculture into comprehensive economic development strategies at the local level.

Contact: Maureen Maloney Robb, Agricultural Economic Development Extension Associate

Phone: (315) 536-7444; web: <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/programs/aider/>

#### Community and Economic Development Toolbox

The purpose of this toolbox is to provide accessible tools to local community and economic development (CED) practitioners, such as community leaders, newly elected officials, extension educators, and community technical assistance providers, so that they are more knowledgeable about basic CED issues and are better equipped to assist in decision making and determining the future of their communities.

Contact: phone: 607-254-4418; web: [http://www.cardi.cornell.edu/cd\\_toolbox\\_2/cdindex.cfm](http://www.cardi.cornell.edu/cd_toolbox_2/cdindex.cfm)

Cornell: Horticultural Business Management and Marketing Program: Designed to enhance the competitive position of the New York fruit, vegetable, and ornamental horticultural industry through targeted, curriculum-driven educational programs. The program recognizes the strategic importance of these sectors of the agricultural sector and seeks to capitalize on the opportunities to promote economic development by increasing the profitability of producers and marketers of fruit, vegetable and horticultural products and services. Emphasis is placed on adaptation of new technologies to enhance productivity while maintaining environmental quality and sustainability.

Contact: Phone: 607-255-3688; email: [wl32@cornell.edu](mailto:wl32@cornell.edu)

#### Cornell: Pro Dairy

The Pro Dairy program is designed to facilitate economic development in New York by increasing the profitability and competitiveness of its dairy industry. Pro-dairy, a NYS dairy industry educational program, enables farm families and other agricultural professionals to realize their values and strive to achieve their professional and personal goals. The program is committed to creativity, innovation and excellence in providing educational programs.

Contact: phone: 607-255-4285; web: <http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/>

*Total Dairy Management*: This program is designed for students, dairy farmers, agribusiness people and others who have a sincere interest in dairy farm management. Objectives are to gain further understanding of the integration and application of dairy farm management principles and programs with respect to progressive dairying and related industries

Contact: phone: (607)255-2878; web: <http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/dm/dm.html>

Also see: Advanced Dairy Nutrition and Management of Agri service Professionals:

<http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/dm/advanced/>

*Cornell University Small Farm Program*: This program and associated web sites contain a listing of resources, grants, programs, and sites produced by the Cornell Cooperative Extension that focus on small farms.

Contact: Jim Hayes, 518-234-2105

Also see: <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/agfoodcommunity/CornellSmallFarmEfforts.html> This is an excellent database with articles dealing with farming practices, management, etc.

*New York State Food Venture Center*: Offers guidance to parties seeking to introduce new food products and processes to the marketplace. Services include library and literature searches, laboratory analyses, and pilot plant development. The Food Venture Center provides assistance in meeting state and federal regulations for safe and properly labeled food products and helps companies understand and address state regulations and licensing requirements. In cooperation with faculty and staff of the Department of Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics, support is provided in the areas of business planning from concept, to venture capital, on to a mature company. The primary target audiences for this program are venture capitalists and entrepreneurs who have product concepts and who need assistance in technology transfer and the establishment of a food processing company.

Contact: phone (315) 787-2273

*Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station*: Designed to provide the fundamental knowledge and the research base for sustaining agriculture and food systems, protecting the environment and natural resources, and improving communities throughout New York State as well as contributing the New York State share to the national agricultural research program.

Contact: Phone: 607-255-2552; web: <http://cuaes.cornell.edu/home.htm>

*New York State Agricultural Experiment Station*: Primary mission is to support New York's fruit and vegetable industry. Researchers and extension educators work to develop good farming, food storage, and processing practices while safeguarding the environment, increasing market share for New York producers, and assuring consumers safe, reasonably-priced, high-quality fruits and vegetables.

The NYS Agricultural Experiment Station is a division of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University.

Contact: phone: 315-787-2290; web: <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/>

*The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (NECFE)*: NECFE is a joint effort to expand the activities of the NYS Food Venture Center at Cornell University and the Center for Food Science at the University of Vermont, and funded in part by Fund for Rural America/CSREES/USDA. Their goal is to provide comprehensive assistance to beginning and established food entrepreneurs thus promoting sustainable economic development of rural communities. The Center offers services, outreach and research development opportunities in four critical areas: business and product process development, product safety, process/product technology transfer and product commercialization

Contact: phone: (NECFE) 888-624-6785, (UVM) 802-656-8300 or (Cornell) 315-787-2274, Email NECFE at: [necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu](mailto:necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu)  
<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/index.html>

Also see:

Food Processing, A Guide to Creating a New Business: publication available autumn 2002 on web site.  
Small Scale Food Entrepreneurship: A Technical Guide for Food Ventures

*The Community, Food & Agriculture Program (CFAP)* (Formerly the Farming Alternatives Program): CFAP works with agriculture, food, and community partners to promote "civic agriculture," that is, food and agriculture systems that sustain and strengthen farm families, local communities, and natural resources. CFAP conducts research on: (1) innovative food production and marketing initiatives that connect farmers with regional food processors and citizens (consumers); and (2) creative food-system-based community development initiatives that provide new opportunities for farmers, communities, and consumers.

The Community, Food & Agriculture Program is housed in the Department of Rural Sociology in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University. Education programs, research, and other activities are conducted throughout New York State.

Contact: Phone: (607) 255-9832

## **CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Contact: Phone: (607) 255-2237; web: <http://www.cce.cornell.edu>

Herkimer County: Contact: Bernard Armata (315) 866-7920

Questions regarding Cornell Cooperative Extension programs and resources should be posed initially to the local contact (Bernie Armata). However, where appropriate, additional telephone numbers are provided for follow-up.

*Central New York Dairy, Field Crops, and Livestock Team:* Organization made up of experts in dairy, field crops, livestock, and business management. These individuals assist farmers in the five county area of Herkimer, Chenango, Otsego, Fulton, and Montgomery.

Contact: phone: Bernie Armata (315) 866-7920

### **Agriculture & Food Systems Sustainability Initiative**

This program is designed to empower individuals and enterprises in agriculture and food systems to thrive by maintaining strong rural communities, advancing a clean, healthy environment, promoting attractive landscapes, assuring a safe, nutritious, and abundant local food supply and supporting a thriving New York State economy.

Contact: phone: (607) 255-3131; web: <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/initiatives/afs/index.cfm>

*Cornell Program on Agricultural and Small Business Finance:* Provides objective tax and financially related research and information for agricultural and small business operators, their advisors, capital providers, and policy makers.

Sample programs:

Developing & Utilizing the Capabilities of Personnel Farm Business; Analysis Farm Labor Policy & Regulations; FarmNet; Financial Education for Lenders & Farmers; Human Resource Management; Income Tax Management & Reporting; Risk Management; Sustainable Agriculture & the Environment; Thriving in an Environment of Change

Contact: Phone: Charles Cuykendall, (607) 255-2130; email: [chc4@cornell.edu](mailto:chc4@cornell.edu)

*Environment & Natural Resources Initiative:* Their goal is to improve the quality and sustainability of human environments and natural resources. This is accomplished by conserving and

ensuring the quality of water supplies, promoting environmental stewardship and sound decision making about the management of natural resources, promoting community, agricultural, and residential environmental enhancement, preparing youth to make informed environmental choices and enhancing science education through the environment  
Contact: Phone: (607) 255-2115

Also See: New Farmer Development Program: Cornell Cooperative Extension (212) 340-2937: John Nettleton

## HERKIMER CO. SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Authorized under state law, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are located in each county in New York State. Their special purpose is to develop and carry out a program of soils, water, and related natural resource conservation. This is accomplished by providing technical assistance and programs to residents, landowners and units of government.  
Contact: phone: Herkimer County SWCD: (315) 866-2520

Programs available through Herkimer County SWCD

Seeding Programs: Various trees, shrubs and ground covers are available each Spring for such conservation uses as erosion control, wind and snow breaks, energy conservation, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and woodland products. Quantities are available to fit the needs of the rural and urban landowner. Advice is also available on site and species selection and planting techniques.

Pond Services: Ponds are a reliable and economical source of water and serve a variety of purposes including water for livestock, irrigation, fish production, runoff water storage, wildlife habitat and recreation. The SWCD offers pond site investigations as well as fish stocking, which includes bass, trout and grass carp.

Soils information: The SWCD has information on Herkimer County soils. Landowners can use this information to determine if a piece of property has the potential for flooding, is suitable for septic tank absorption field, what crop yields can be expected, pond site feasibility, tree species selection, as well as other soil capabilities and limitations. Soil group worksheets for agricultural assessment can also be completed at SWCD.

Water Quality Management: Herkimer County SWCD performs percolation testing and deep hole investigations in accordance with NYS Public Health Law Standards for household septic system installation.

Conservation Education: The SWCD takes part in many education activities including the Envirothon competition. Herkimer County's SWCD also participates in Conservation Field Day, Morning Programs and the Farm/Home Safety Day Camp.

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)

<http://www.usda.gov/>

USDA Rural Development: New York: USDA Rural Development's goal is to help all rural New Yorkers improve their quality of life. They do this by offering loans, loan guarantees, grants and technical assistance. Programs are designed to provide affordable financial assistance for homes, apartment buildings, businesses, community facilities, water and wastewater systems, and much more. Information regarding all USDA Rural development programs can be found by calling the local number at the Marcy Service Center listed below. However, additional telephone numbers and web site addresses are provided. Contact: phone (Marcy Service Center): (315) 736-3316; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ny/index.htm>  
National Rural Development: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

**Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants:** Farm Labor Housing loans and grants are provided to buy, build, improve, or repair housing for farm laborers, including persons whose income is earned in aquaculture (fish and oyster farms) and those engaged in on-farm processing. Funds can be used to purchase a site or a leasehold interest in a site; to construct housing, day care facilities, or community rooms; to pay fees to purchase durable household furnishings; and to pay construction loan interest. Contact: phone: (607) 723-1384; web: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/ProgramBriefs/brief\\_mfh\\_flh.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/ProgramBriefs/brief_mfh_flh.htm)

**Community Facilities Loan Program:** provides low-interest direct and guaranteed loans for the development, construction, enlargement, improvement, and operation of community facilities in rural areas. Contact: phone: USDA rural development (315) 477-6400; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/dp.htm> Marcy Service Center (315) 736-3316.

**Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants:** provided to finance a range of projects, including for-profit businesses. Grants are provided to establish revolving loan funds to finance purposes such as community development assistance, education and training for economic development, business incubators and technical assistance. Contact: Phone: USDA Rural Development Office (315) 477-6400

**Rural Business Cooperative Service:** The goal of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) is to help rural residents form new cooperative businesses and improve the operations of existing cooperatives. To accomplish this, Cooperative Services provides technical assistance to cooperatives and those thinking of forming cooperatives. It also conducts cooperative-related research and produces information products to promote public understanding of cooperatives.

**Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program:** provides grants to nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions to improve the economic condition of rural areas through the development of new cooperatives and/or the improvement of existing cooperatives. Contact: phone: 202-720-8460; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rcdg.htm>

**Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG):** provides grants to non-profits and public bodies to finance and facilitate the development of small and emerging private business enterprises in rural areas. While these funds cannot be used for agricultural production, they can be used for commercial nurseries, timber operations, and limited agricultural production related to technical assistance. Contact: phone: (202) 720-1400

**Intermediary Re-lending Loan Program (IRP):** The purpose of the IRP is to finance business facilities and community development projects in rural areas. This is achieved through loans made by the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) to intermediaries. Intermediaries re-lend funds to ultimate recipients for business facilities or community development. Intermediaries establish revolving loan funds so collections from loans made to ultimate recipients in excess of necessary operating expenses and debt payments will be used for more loans to ultimate recipients. Contact: phone: (202) 720-1400; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/irp.htm>

**Rural Business Opportunity Grants:** offers grants to nonprofits and public bodies to assist in the economic development of rural areas by providing grants to assist business and community development. Contact: phone: (315) 477-6400; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbog.htm>

**Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants (VADG):** VADG was authorized by the Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 and was amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The Farm Bill establishes four related, but different programs from the \$40 million of funds per year. The programs are (1) VADG producer grants, (2) a resource center, (3) a series of innovation centers, and (4) university research on the impact of value-added activities. The Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) posted on their site only deals with the VADG



producer grants.

Contact: Phone: Robert Pestridge (315) 477-6426; email: [robert.pestridge@ny.usda.gov](mailto:robert.pestridge@ny.usda.gov) ; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm>

*USDA Agricultural Marketing Service:* The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service administers programs that facilitate the efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural Products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops. AMS programs promote a strategic marketing perspective that adapts product and marketing practices and technologies to the issues of today and the challenges of tomorrow.

Contact: phone: (202) 720-5115; web: <http://www.ams.usda.gov>

*The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)* provides matching funds to State Departments of Agriculture and other State agencies for 20-30 projects per year, on average. These funds have been used by States to conduct marketing studies or assist in developing innovative approaches to the marketing of agricultural products.

Contact: Phone: Janise Zygmunt, FSMIP Staff Officer (202) 720-2704; web: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fsmip.htm>

#### Natural Resource Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Contact: web: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

New York Office: phone: 315-477-6504; web: <http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/>

The following services are available at Herkimer County USDA service center

Contact: Phone: (315) 866-2520

*Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):* administered by the US Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) through the Farm Service Agency – the CRP encourages farmers to voluntarily plant permanent areas of grass and trees and land that need protection from erosion, to act as windbreaks, or in places where vegetation can improve water quality or provide food and habitat for wildlife.

*Environmental Quality Incentive Program: (EQIP):* Provides funds to eligible farmers for installing conservation measures. A range of practices qualify such as agricultural waste management facilities, erosion control measures and implementation of a nutrient management plan, establishment of rotational grazing systems and certain forestry and wildlife habitat improvement measures.

*Wetlands Reserve Program:* Seeks to restore and protect wetlands on private property on a voluntary basis. Landowners can receive payment to protect and improve wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agricultural lands. Landowners can receive as much as 100% of the appraised agricultural market value of the property and as much as 100% of all appraisal fees, surveys and title searches

*Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP):* a voluntary program for landowners to develop and improve habitat on grassland areas. Participants work with NRCS to prepare a wildlife habitat plan.

*Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative:* Technical assistance is provided for rotational grazing systems. Assistance available includes: layout or rotational grazing systems, laneway placement and design and watering systems. Well-managed pastures have been proven to be one of the most cost effective feeds that can be produced for grazing animals.

*Forestry Incentive Program (FIP):* supports sustainable forestry practices on privately owned, non-industrial, forest lands. Landowners may get up to 65% cost sharing for practices such as tree planting, timber stand improvement, and site preparation for natural regeneration



**THE COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE (CSREES):** The goal of this service is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities.  
Contact: phone: 202-720-7441; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/>

**Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program** awards grants to support the development of community food projects that promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues.  
Contact: phone: 202-720-4423; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm>

**The Small Farm Program:** The Small Farm Program is an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), committed to meeting the needs of the small farm community. Its goal is to improve the income levels and the economic viability of small farm enterprises through partnerships with the Land Grant System, public and private sectors by facilitating research, extension, and education programs to meet the specific needs of small farmers.  
Contact: phone: 1-800-583-3071; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm>

**Initiative for Future Agricultural and Food Systems (IFAFS):** The IFAFS is a research and education competitive grants program that addresses a number of critical emerging agricultural issues. These issues related to future food production, food safety, environmental quality, natural resource management, and farm income.  
Program temporarily discontinued, check web page for updates.  
Contact: phone: (202) 401-1898; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/ifafs/>

**National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program:** Provides grants for research that will provide new knowledge for improved agricultural competitiveness, sustainability and economic performance, and for revitalization of rural economies. Research institutions, private organizations or corporations, and individuals are eligible to apply.  
Contact: (202) 401-5038; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/nri/>

**Small Business Innovation Research:** Small Business Innovation Research: awards grants to qualified small businesses for innovative research on important problems facing agriculture and rural America that could lead to significant public benefit  
Contact: phone: (202) 401-4002; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/sbir/>

**Agreeability Program:** The AgrAbility Project assists people with disabilities employed in agriculture. The project links the Cooperative Extension Service at a land-grant university with a private nonprofit disability service organization to provide practical education and assistance that promotes independence in agricultural production and rural living.  
Contact: Brad Rein, National Program Leader  
Phone: (202) 401-0151; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/agsys/agsyspp/agrabil/agrabil.htm>

**Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, (Farm Bill):** governs Federal farm programs for the next 6 years, was signed into law on May 13, 2002. Among the bill's highlights: it alters the farm payment program and introduces counter-cyclical farm income support; expands conservation land retirement programs and emphasizes on-farm environmental practices; relaxes rules to make more borrowers eligible for Federal farm credit assistance; restores food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants; adds various commodities to those requiring country-of-origin labeling; introduces provisions on animal welfare. Information about the 2002 farm bill: <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill/>  
Compares 1996 and 2002 farm bills side by side: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Features/farmbill/>

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION (SARE):** provides project grants to improve management of on-farm resources to enhance productivity, profitability and competitiveness, to promote crop, livestock and enterprise diversification, - Land grant colleges, universities, state agricultural

experiment stations, state cooperative extension services, non profits, individuals, state and federal governmental entities may apply.

Contact: phone: (202) 720-4423; web: <http://www.sare.org>

Excellent tip sheet on farm management and improving farms: <http://www.sare.org/tipsheet/tip7.htm>

Northeast Region: phone: (802)-656-0471; web: <http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare>

#### Farmer/Grower Grant Program

The goal of the Farmer/Grower Grant Program is to develop, refine, and demonstrate new sustainable techniques and to explore innovative ideas developed by farmers across the region. Information gained from these farm-based projects may be used to redirect research priorities.

Contact: phone: (802) 656-0471; web: <http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare/FGinfo.html>

Also see: Small Dairy Resource Handbook at <http://www.sare.org/handbook/dairy/>

FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA): Works to stabilize farm income and help farmers conserve land and water resources. FSA also provides credit to new or disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, and helps farm operations recover from the effects of disaster.

Herkimer County contact: phone: (Charles Anken) 315- 866-2520;

National contact: phone: (202) 720-7809; web: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

*Specifically available at USDA Service Center*

Natural Disaster Assistance: The Emergency Conservation Program, Non-insurable Crop Disaster Assistance Program, Emergency Loan Assistance, and Emergency Haying and Grazing.

Farm Loan Program: Beginning Farmer Down Payment Farm Ownership, Direct Farmer Ownership, Direct Operating Loan, Guaranteed Operating Loan, and Guaranteed Farm Ownership

Price Support: On behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation, FSA administers Marketing Assistance Loans or Commodity Loans. Program participants are eligible for wheat, barley, oat, soybean and corn loans with the farm stored production as collateral. The producer may also be eligible for a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) that does not need to be repaid.

Also available: Conservation Assistance and Aerial Photos of Herkimer County.

#### NATIONAL CENTER FOR APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY:

Assists people and farmers in becoming more self-sufficient. The organization is divided into three program areas (Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, Sustainable Communities Program, and Sustainable Energy Program).

Contact: phone: (406) 494-4572; <http://www.ncat.org>

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development: NCAT's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development projects help low-income rural communities to explore community-based approaches and appropriate technologies to holistically address chronic problems such as unemployment and illiteracy.

Sustainable Communities Program works at the local, regional, and national levels to foster the notion of sustainable development in a community context. The program aims to develop information and demonstration projects that promote a prosperous economy, a healthy environment, and an equitable society--the three pillars of sustainable community development.

Sustainable Energy Program operates projects in the areas of renewable energy, low-income energy, and affordable housing.

#### APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER FOR RURAL AREAS (ATTRA):

ATTRA provides technical assistance to farmers, Extension agents, market gardeners, agricultural researchers, and other agricultural professionals in all 50 states. Topics addressed by ATTRA can be

categorized into three broad areas: sustainable farming production practices alternative crop and livestock enterprises innovative marketing.

Contact: phone 1-800-346-9140; web: <http://www.attra.org/>

## SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Contact: phone: 1-(800) U-ASK-SBA or (315) 471-9393; web: <http://www.sba.gov/>

### *Small Business Administration MicroLoan Program*

Small Business Administration MicroLoan Program: provides short-term loans to small business for financing inventory, purchasing equipment, machinery and fixtures, etc. Funds are available to nonprofit intermediaries, who make loans to eligible borrowers.

Contact: phone: (607) 734-8130; web: <http://www.sba.gov/financing/frmicro.html>

*The 7(a) Loan Guaranty Program:* One of SBA's primary lending programs. 7(a) provides loans to small businesses unable to secure financing on reasonable terms through normal lending channels. The program operates through private-sector lenders that provide loans, which are, in turn, guaranteed by the SBA.

<http://www.sba.gov/financing>

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

*Sustainable Development Challenge Grants (EPA):* encourage communities to develop locally oriented initiatives that address serious environmental problems through the application of sustainable development strategies. Successful projects integrate environmental protection, economic vitality and community well being.

Contact: phone: (202) 260-6812; web: <http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity>

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

*Technology Opportunities Program (TOP):* TOP promotes the widespread availability and use of digital network technologies in the public and non-profit sectors. The program gives grants for model projects demonstrating innovative uses of network technologies. Projects are nationally significant demonstrations of how digital network technologies can be used to extend and improve the delivery of valuable services and opportunities to all Americans, especially the underserved.

Contact: phone: (202) 482-2048; web: <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top/index.html>

## NEW YORK FARM BUREAU:

Farm Bureau is a non-governmental, volunteer organization financed and controlled by families for the purpose of solving economic and public policy issues challenging the agriculture industry. Farm Bureau's "grass roots" policy development process continues to ensure that the organization represents the majority position of its membership. Policy development begins at the county level with problem identification and culminates at the New York Farm Bureau Annual Meeting with a resolution addressing the issues.

Contact: phone: (518) 436-8495; web: <http://www.nyfb.org/>

*Grassroots:* The New York Farm Bureau's Newsletter "Grassroots", reflects the philosophy of the New York Farm Bureau, whereby all policies are determined at the member, or "grassroots," level. Grassroots is published monthly, and distributed to more than 32,000 agricultural supporters across the Empire State. Grassroots reports on a variety of issues relevant to agriculture in New York.

Web: <http://www.nyfb.org/periodic/Grassroots/grass0502/grassroots0502.htm>

*Young Farmer Program:* The objective of the Young Farmers & Ranchers Program is to provide leadership in building a more effective Farm Bureau to preserve our individual freedoms and expand our opportunities in agriculture.

Contact: phone: Sandy Prokop (518) 436-8495

## NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TAX AND FINANCE, NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF REAL PROPERTY SERVICE

NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: (800) 462-8100

NYS Office of Real Property Tax Service: phone: (518) 486-5446

*Agricultural Assessment:* provides property tax relief for farmers and farmland owners. Agricultural assessment provides “use value” assessment for eligible agricultural land.

Contact: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County or

web: <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/assessor/valuation/agriculture/index.htm>

### *Forestry Assessment:*

Allows eligible landowners to receive a reduction in their tax assessment. Landowner must own a minimum of 50 acres of contiguous forest land and must be willing to commit his or her land to the production of forest crops.

web: <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/assessor/valuation/agriculture/index.htm>

*Farmers' School Tax Credit:* Eligible farmers can obtain an income tax or corporation franchise tax credit. Applies to school taxes paid by the farmer on land, structures, buildings used for agricultural production in New York.

Contact: NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100; web: <http://www.tax.ny.state.us>

*Farm Buildings:* New York's Real Property Tax Law (Section 483) provides a 10-year property tax exemption for new or reconstructed agricultural structures. For more information contact county real property, town assessor, Cornell cooperative extension of Herkimer County

Contact: NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100 (as for property tax assistance); web: <http://www.tax.ny.state.us>

*New York State Barns Restoration and Preservation Program:* New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation provides funding for repairs on agricultural buildings including barns, sheds, and silos that are at least 50 years old.

Contact: Phone: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Field Services Bureau, (518) 237-8643; web: <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/field/fsb/barns.htm> or NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100

*New Orchards and Vineyards:* Newly planted or replanted orchards or vineyards receive a 100 percent exemption for the first four years following establishment. For more information contact local town assessor regarding real property Tax law (305-C)

*New York State School Tax Relief (STAR Program)* This program provides a partial exemption from school property taxes for owner-occupied primary residences. Senior citizens with combined incomes that do not exceed \$60,000 may be eligible for an enhanced exemption.

Contact: NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100 (Ask for income tax assistance); web: <http://www.tax.ny.state.us>

## NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

Contact: phone: 1-800-554-4501; web: <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us>

*Farmland Viability Competitive Grants Program:* The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals that seek to improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of

participating farms. The program provides financial assistance in the form of matching grants to applicants for projects which contribute to overall farm profitability and sound environmental management. These grants enable county agricultural and farmland protection boards (AFPBs) to implement components of their approved county farmland protection plans. All proposals must address how the Farmland Viability Plan will increase the overall profitability and contribute to the sound environmental management of farm operations. Projects may include evaluating the processing of agricultural products, transitioning to an alternative product, construction of new facilities, or the protection of natural resources.

*NYS Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program:* Assists county governments in developing agricultural and farmland protection plans to maintain the economic viability of the State's agricultural industry and its supporting land base. The Department also assists local governments in the implementation of local farmland protection plans that focus on preserving the land base by purchasing the development rights on farms using conservation easements.

*Specialty Crop Grants:* The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals intended to promote and enhance specialty crop businesses in the State. Proposals that benefit a specialty crop production sector or sectors, as opposed to a specific business, will be favored.

*Grow New York Enterprise Program:* dedicates \$3 million to increasing the demand for and expanding the use of New York's agriculture and forest products. The primary objective of the program is to provide funds to local governments who in turn use the dollars to assist qualifying businesses that undertake activities resulting in the creation or retention of job opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons.

Contact: Tim Pezzolesi (518) 457-0752

*Farmland Viability Grants:* The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals that seek to improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms. The program provides financial assistance in the form of matching grants to applicants for projects that contribute to overall farm profitability and sound environmental management. (under grow NY)

*Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program (ANPSACP)*  
*ANPSACP* is intended to support plans, activities, and projects that will reduce and/or prevent the nonpoint source contribution from agricultural activities, through watershed based and individual farm level agricultural assessments and plans to identify agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution, and through the implementation of Best Management Practices, as defined in Section 3 of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law. Proposals for funding will be accepted from soil and water conservation districts or a group of districts acting jointly, who will be referred to as "Project Sponsors." Groups of districts acting jointly should submit one application with one district assuming lead sponsor status.

*Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD):* Farm Worker Child Care  
The Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD) Program delivers day care and early childhood development services to the children of individuals employed in the production of processing of New York State food and agricultural products.

*Food Trade Shows:* The Department of Agriculture and Markets provides a marketing opportunity for New York farms

*Farmers' Market Competitive Grants Program:* awards matching grants to individuals, partnerships, associations, cooperatives, and county agricultural and farmland protection boards for projects that improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms.  
Contact: phone: (518) 457-7076

*Farmland Viability Program:* provides funding for matching grants for the development of plans or implementation of projects that are intended to improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms.

Contact: Phone: Kim Blot (518) 457-7076

*Workforce Training: the Agricultural Workforce Certification Program:* provides classroom and on-the-job training to both new and experienced workers in various agricultural disciplines.

*Right to Farm* (section 305a of the Agriculture and Markets Law) Right to Farm laws are designed to protect farmers and farm operations from nuisance liability.

*Agricultural Environmental Management: (AEM)* addresses agricultural non-point source water quality issues. The program specifically helps to document farmer stewardship, maintain viability of the farm enterprise, assist farmers in complying with regulations and coordinate federal funding to meet state water quality objectives.

*Advisory Council:* the Advisory Council on Agriculture provides recommendations and performs a number of legally mandated functions relating to the Agricultural Districts Law.

*Soil and Water Conservation Committee:* establishes policy to guide and assist county Soil and Water Conservation Districts' programs that are funded by state and county appropriations. The committee also works jointly with the DEC and Agriculture and Markets in effectively protection New York's waters from non-point sources of pollution and advising other agencies on matters relating to soil and water conservation

*Non-Point Source Grants:* (NYS Agricultural Non-point Source Abatement and Control Program): provides funds to assist farmers with reducing their non-point source water pollution.

*New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program:* integrated management based program designed to address animal health, environmental stewardship and public health issues confronting the food animal producer.

*Weights and Measures:* responsible for assuring measurement accuracy and uniformity in commerce throughout NYS. The department regulates measuring device accuracy, packaged commodity net contents, and quality standards for gasoline and diesel fuel

## NEW YORK STATE ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (NYSERDA)

Contact: Phone: (866) NYSERDA or (518) 862-1090; web: <http://www.nyserda.org/agricultural.html>

*Agricultural Initiative:* Through this program NYSERDA offers cost sharing and low-interest financing programs to help farms save energy, develop new products and increase profits. Previous projects have helped farmers: lower on-farm energy costs, use more environmentally friendly manure-management methods, improve profitability through value-added products, and to generate their own electricity. Applications will be accepted through June 2003.

*Energy Efficiency Services Program:* provide near-term solutions to agriculture's high-energy costs. Cost sharing by NYSERDA helps farmers identify and install cost-effective measures that save energy. Programs include:

*Technical Assistance:* Provides farms and other agricultural facilities with detailed, on-site engineering studies that include technical and cost-benefit analysis of electrical energy-saving capital improvements, electric-load management, and operational improvements that will save money.



Smart Equipment Choices Program: This program is designed to accelerate the incorporation of energy- efficient equipment in commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, and multi-family buildings (defined as 5 units or more) operations, and for certain non-building integrated functions.

Financial Assistance:

NY Energy Smart Loan Fund: offers interest reduction on loans from participating lenders for energy-efficiency improvements or installing renewable energy systems.

NY Energy Smart Performance Program: provides performance-based incentives for electric-efficiency measures including lighting, motors, and refrigeration.

New Construction Program: provides financial incentives to lower the added cost of energy-efficient machinery in new or renovated buildings.

FlexTech Program: FlexTech's primary focus is to increase productivity and economic competitiveness by identifying and encouraging the implementation of cost-effective energy-efficiency measures

Contact: phone: Mark Mayhew (866) NYSERDA, or (518) 862-1090, ext. 3319;

web: <http://www.nyserda.org/flextech.html>

## EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Block Grants – small cities program: The Community Development Block Grant Program provides grants to eligible cities, towns, and villages with a population under 50,000 and counties with an area population under 200,000 to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities and or improve community facilities and services.

Contact: phone: (315) 425-9110 or (518) 474-2057; web: <http://www.nysmallcities.com>

## NEW YORK FARMLINK

The NY FarmLink Program is designed to improve the process and effectiveness of farm transfers by providing farmers with essential networking, consulting, and educational support.

Contact: phone: 1-800-547-3276

## NY FARM NET

An information, referral and consulting program for New York's farm community. Their mission is to provide farm families with a network of contacts and support services to help them develop skills for dealing with life challenges and transitions - through personalized education, confidential consulting, and referral.

Contact: phone: 1-800-547-FARM ([www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org)) web site doesn't work?

## RURAL NEW YORK GRANT PROGRAM

This program provides support for local land conservation, environmental advocacy, land use planning and historic preservation projects. Contact: Land Trust Alliance of New York 587-0774, New York Planning Federation (432-4094), Open space institute (212-505-7480, ext 256), preservation league of New York State (462-5658); web: <http://www.preservenys.org/rnyguidelines.htm>

## NORTHEAST FARM CREDIT AG ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Designed to support projects and activities that promote agriculture or enhance the economic viability of agriculture in the northeast.

Contact: phone: (413) 821-9267

## THE ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

This organization funds organic farming research and education efforts related to organic farming practices, disseminates research results to organic farmers and to growers interested in adopting organic production systems, and educates the public and decision-makers about organic farming issues.

Contact: phone: (831) 426-6606; web: <http://www.ofrf.org>

### **NY FARMS!**

NY Farms strengthens NY agriculture and food systems through a partnership working to create public awareness of the importance of farming, promote agriculture and food system literacy, and foster consumer loyalty to New York farm products.

*NY Farms mini-grants program:* for creative projects that educate diverse audiences about the importance of local farming and food systems and foster consumer loyalty to New York farm products. Sponsor must be a full member of NY Farms and have an organizational structure able to provide oversight.

Contact: phone: (315) 255-9267 or 1-888-NYFARMS (693-2767)

### **THE FARMERS' MARKET FEDERATION OF NEW YORK**

Farmers markets provide a means for local producers of agricultural products to sell those products directly to the consumer. The Farmers' Market Federation of New York is a statewide not-for-profit organization designed to both promote and provide support services for the farmers markets within New York State.

Contact: phone: 315-475-1101; web: <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/>

The Farmers' Market Federation of New York sponsors one farmers' market in Herkimer that is seeking new vendors:

#### **DOLGEVILLE FARMERS MARKET/FLEA MARKET**

Sponsor: Dolgeville Rotary Club

Location: Behind the Herkimer County Trust Bank, Dolgeville, NY

Times of Operation: Friday, 8am to 12 noon

Season: May 1 through October 31

Contact: Richard A. Zientek: Phone: 315-429-9356

### **CENTER FOR AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP (CADE):**

Helps farmers in the region locate untapped markets for specialty agricultural products.

Contact: phone: (607) 286-7372

### **DAIRYLEA COOPERATIVE INC.**

A farmer-owned agricultural marketing and service organization with more than 2,500 member farms located throughout the Northeast. As the largest milk-marketing organization based in the region, DairyLea sells more than 5.5 billion pounds of raw milk annually through a milk-marketing network that reaches from Maine to Ohio to Maryland

Contact: phone: (315) 433-0100 or 1-800-654-8838

*Agri-Edge Development:* helps agricultural operations start up, expand, diversity of improve their businesses. Helps ventures identify and secure financing, plan and structure projects and business relationships, and locate management expertise. Agri-Edge Development, LLC, is a business and economic development effort focused on helping individual farm and non-farm agricultural businesses. Agri-Edge works to increase productivity and profitability for individual businesses, spark job creation and retention in agriculture, initiate growth in markets and serve as a catalyst for the vitality and stability of Northeast agriculture.

Contact: phone: 1-888-858-7811 ext. 5507 or 5505; web: <http://www.dairylea.com/Services/aed.htm>



## ORGANIC ALLIANCE:

The mission of the Organic Alliance is to encourage an ecologically and socially responsible agriculture that reflects humankind's obligation to protect the health of the planet for future generations. The Alliance promotes the environmental and economic benefits of certified organic food production to farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers.

Contact: web: [www.organic.org](http://www.organic.org)

## NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION (NOFA)

NOFA is an affiliation of seven state chapters, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The quarterly newspaper of NOFA Interstate, The Natural Farmer, publishes features on organic market conditions and other topics of interest to the Northeast organic community.

Contact: phone: 978-355-2853 or 978-355-2270; web: <http://www.nofa.org>

## NEW YORK STATE FARMERS' DIRECT MARKETING

ASSOCIATION: This organization is designed to increase each member's profitability through the sharing of marketing ideas, information and products.

Contact: phone: (315) 475-1101; web: <http://www.nysfdma.com/>

## NEW ENGLAND SMALL FARM INSTITUTE

A private non-profit organization supporting beginning farmers and sustainable small-scale agriculture throughout New England. Programs include the small farm library, small farm matching service, business and farm training skills, the small and sustainable farm policy initiative and Growing New Farmers. This organization is Massachusetts based, however there are many resources available for Herkimer County farmers through their web site.

Contact: phone: 413-323-4531; web: <http://www.smallfarm.org>

Growing New Farmers (GNF): GNF is a multi-faceted project that serves new farmers in the northeast. The GNF Service Provider Consortium is a network of over 150 organizations committed to offering and improving services for our region's new farmer community. GNF brings together service providers from across the Northeast who are committed to working with and advocating for new and beginning farmers from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia.

Contact: Phone (413) 323- 4531;

Web: <http://gnf.bigmindcatalyst.com/cgi/bmc.pl?page=pubpg1.html&node=1009>

New Farmer Resources Directory:

[http://gnf.bigmindcatalyst.com/cgi/bmcDL.pl/gimmerman/2001\\_NENFN\\_DIRECTORY.pdf](http://gnf.bigmindcatalyst.com/cgi/bmcDL.pl/gimmerman/2001_NENFN_DIRECTORY.pdf)

## FIRST PIONEER FARM CREDIT

First Pioneer is a full financial services provider for agricultural businesses. They offer a broad range of competitively priced loans, such as mortgages, seasonal loans and lines of credit. Other services include equipment leases, record keeping, tax planning and preparation, appraisals, business consulting, and multi-peril crop insurance. First Pioneer's AgEnhancement grants help support organizations that promote agriculture. Each year, northeast agricultural credit associations award grants to help organizations promote awareness of agriculture in the six New England states, New York and New Jersey. Funds are provided as part of the Northeast Farm Credit AgEnhancement program, an ongoing educational campaign that supports the food and fiber industries in the Northeast.

Contact: phone: Bob Smith at (413) 821-0233 or

Contact: phone: (860) 741-4380; web: <http://www.firstpioneer.com>

### SMALL SCALE FOOD PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION:

Organization helps to make small processors profitable by providing assistance in product liability, producing nutrition labels, and linking farm producers with processors and marketers. A listserv is available to receive up to date info through email at [lyris@zeus.morrisville.edu](mailto:lyris@zeus.morrisville.edu) (subscribe to list)  
Contact: Amanda Hewitt: Phone: (315) 736-3394; email: [amh23@cornell.edu](mailto:amh23@cornell.edu)

### HUDSON VALLEY HOMETOWN FOODS (Kinderhook, NY):

This new business is a small scale food processor that freezes and vacuum packages produce and meals for sale in New York City and other markets. They are in need of farmers that can produce freezable foods for their specific needs. They will also visit farmers and producers to educate on their system of packaging and sales for franchise opportunities.

Contact: phone: (Anna Dawson) (518) 758-7342

### MINER AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE:

The Miner Institute demonstrates the best practices for the North Country in dairy farming, equine management, and environmental conservation through its own dairy, crops, horse, and forestry operations and through outreach activities in the region. The Miner Institute also conducts practical research for the North Country on the dairy-crop interface, equine reproduction and management, and environmental concerns. Its research activities combine a national reputation with a regional application. The Miner Institute also offers a range of credit and continuing education programs in dairy agriculture, equine management and environmental studies. It provides short-term training sessions and conducts residential undergraduate and graduate programs in cooperation with New York and Vermont colleges and universities. Its summer farm and equine management program draws students from agricultural colleges across the country

Contact: phone: (518) 846-7121 or 846-8445; web: <http://www.whminer.com/>

### THE COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT OF NEW YORK CITY (CENYC)

CENYC promotes environmental awareness and solutions to environmental problems. Programs include: Open Space Greening; Greenmarket; and Environmental Education and Waste Prevention and Recycling. Upstate farmers may be able to sell goods in NYC markets or find potential farm operators through these programs (Greenmarket, New Farmer Development Project).

Contact: phone: (212) 788-7900; web: <http://www.cenyc.org>; email: [conyc@cenyc.org](mailto:conyc@cenyc.org)

*Greenmarket:* Since 1976, Greenmarket has organized and managed open-air farmers markets in New York City. By providing an opportunity for growers to sell over 600 varieties of fruits, vegetables, and farm products directly to New Yorkers, Greenmarket supports farmers and preserves farmland for the future. Greenmarket believes that the open marketplace provides the most beneficial means of exchange between farmers and city residents.

*The New Farmer Development Program (NFDP)* supports agriculturally experienced immigrants in the NYC vicinity in establishing environmentally and economically sustainable farm operations. Our mission is to combat the decline of family farms by bringing about an agricultural future for our participants, ensuring the vitality of regional farmland and a vibrant food supply.

Contact Rachel Dannefer, Project Director, at (212) 477-3220

### **BEGINNING FARMER CENTER:**

The Beginning Farmer Center, located at Iowa State University Extension, focuses exclusively on the needs and issues facing beginning farmers. It also facilitates the matching of beginning farmers with existing farmers who wanted to transition their farm businesses to the next generation. The center has an extensive online publication list that is very useful for new farmers across the country.

Contact: phone: 515-294-6160; web: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>

### **PHILLIES BRIDGE FARM PROJECT, INC.**

The Phillies Bridge Farm Project, Inc. demonstrates and promotes agriculture that is ecologically sound, community oriented, and economically viable. The Farm Project operates an organic vegetable community supported agriculture (CSA) farm that provides 80 shares for approximately 130 families, including at least 10% low-income families. The Project also provides school children, CSA members, and the general public with opportunities to learn about and participate in sustainable agriculture.

Contact: phone: Christopher Duncan (845) 256-9108

### **SOUTH CENTRAL NY RESOURCE AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Central New York Resource Conservation and Development Project, Inc., is a 501-C-3 not-for-profit organization. The RC&D program is a USDA program, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service that supplies federal support to the local CNY RC&D Council. Their mission is to improve the region's economic vitality through the wiser use of available human and natural resources and to do that by empowering rural residents from throughout the region. Herkimer County is outside their program area. However, there may be need for a similar program locally or cooperation/consultation with their staff.

Contact: Phone: Jim McLaughlin (607) 334-4715 x112;

Web: <http://www.norwich.net/~socnyrcd/index.html>

### **AREA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

These facilities provide agricultural and education programs for farmers.

*Cornell: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences:* offers coursework in Agricultural Resource Systems, Animal Systems, Economic and Social Systems, and Plant Systems.

Contact: phone: 607-254-5137; web: <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/>

*SUNY Cobleskill Agriculture Division:*

Contact: phone: (518) 255-5321; web: <http://www.cobleskill.edu/Academic/AG/>

*SUNY Morrisville College of Agriculture and Technology:*

Contact: phone: (315) 684-6083; web: <http://www.morrisville.edu>

*SUNY – ESF College of Environmental Science and Forestry*

Contact: phone: 315-470-6500; web: <http://www.esf.edu/>

### **OTSEGO AREA OCCUPATIONAL CENTER: INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURE PROGRAM**

The Otsego Area Occupational Center is a technical/vocational school where students are taught essential skills in many career areas. Additionally, a GED diploma program is available to adults and certain school age students.

Contact: phone: John Janszewski (607) 286-7715; web: <http://www.oaoc.org>

## **Appendix B. Sample Right to Farm Law**

### **Section 1. Definitions.**

(a) Agricultural land shall mean all that real property within the boundaries of \_\_\_\_\_, in Herkimer County currently used for agricultural operations or upon which agricultural operations may in the future be established.

(b) Agricultural Operation shall be defined as per Section 301 (11) of the State Agriculture and Markets Law and includes.

### **Section 2. Purpose and Intent**

(a) It is the declared policy of this \_\_\_\_\_ to enhance and encourage agricultural operations within the \_\_\_\_\_. It is the further intent of this \_\_\_\_\_ to provide to the residents proper notification of the \_\_\_\_\_ recognition and support of agriculture through this law.

(b) It is the purpose and intent of this section to reduce the loss to the \_\_\_\_\_ of its agricultural resources by clarifying the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be considered a nuisance.

(c) An additional purpose of this law is to promote a good neighbor policy by advising purchasers and users of property adjacent to or near agricultural operations of the inherent potential problems associated with such purchase or residence. Such concerns may include, but are not limited to, the noises, odors, dust, chemicals, smoke, and hours of operation that may accompany agricultural operations. It is intended that through mandatory disclosures, purchasers and users will better understand the impact of living near agricultural operations and be prepared to accept attendant conditions as the natural result of living in or near rural areas.

### **Section 3. Right-to-Farm Declaration**

Farmers, as well as those employed, retained, or otherwise authorized to act on behalf of farmers, may lawfully engage in agricultural practices within the \_\_\_\_\_ at all times and all such locations as are reasonable necessary to conduct the business of agriculture. For determining the reasonableness of the time, place and methodology of such practice, due weight and consideration shall be given to both traditional customs and procedures in the farming industry as well as to advances resulting from increased knowledge, research, and improved technologies.

Agricultural practices conducted on farmland shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance if such agricultural practices are:

1. Reasonable and necessary to the farm operation;
2. Conducted in a manner which is not negligent or reckless;

3. Conducted in conformity with generally accepted and sound agricultural practices;
4. Conducted in conformity with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations;
5. Conducted in a manner which does not constitute a threat to public health and safety or cause injury to health or safety of any person, and
6. Conducted in a manner that does not reasonably obstruct the free passage or use of navigable waters or public roadways.

#### Section 4. Disclosure and Notification

The \_\_\_\_\_ requires land holders or their agents to comply with Section 10 of Article 25-AA of the State Agriculture and Markets Law and provide notice to prospective purchasers and occupants as follows: “It is the policy of this state and community to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products and also for its natural and ecological value. This notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies wholly or partially within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust, and odors.” This notice shall be provided to prospective purchasers of property within an agricultural district or on property with boundaries within 500 feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district. The seller or seller’s agent shall include a copy of this notice as an addendum to the purchase and sale contract at the time an offer to purchase is made.

#### Section 5. Resolution of Disputes

(a) Should any controversy arise regarding any inconveniences or discomforts occasioned by agricultural operations which cannot be settled by direct negotiation between the parties involved, either party may submit the controversy to a dispute resolution committee as set forth below in an attempt to resolve the matter prior to the filing of any court action and prior to a request for a determination by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets about whether the practice in question is sound pursuant to Section 308 of Article 25-AA of the State Agriculture and Markets Law.

(b) Any controversy between parties may be submitted to a grievance committee whose decision shall be advisory only, within 30 days of the date of the occurrence of the particular activity giving rise to the controversy or of the date a party became aware of the occurrence.

(c) The committee shall be composed of three members selected from the community including one representative from the farm community, one person from Town government, and one person mutually agreed upon by both parties involved in the dispute.

(d) The effectiveness of the committee as a forum for the resolution of disputes is dependent upon full discussion and complete presentation of all pertinent facts

concerning the dispute in order to eliminate any misunderstandings. The parties are encouraged to cooperate in the exchange of pertinent information concerning the controversy.

(e) The controversy shall be presented to the committee by written request of one of the parties within the time specified. Thereafter, the committee may investigate the facts of the controversy but must, within 25 days, hold a meeting to consider the merit of the matter, and within 10 days of the meeting render a decision in writing to the parties. At the time of the meeting, both parties shall have an opportunity to present what each considers to be pertinent facts.

#### Section 6. Separability.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this law is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of a court or competent jurisdiction, it shall not affect the remaining portions of this ordinance.

#### Section 7. Effective Date.

This local law shall be effective immediately upon filing with the New York Secretary of State.

## **Appendix C. A Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool for Herkimer County**

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) is a tool to help citizens and officials in Herkimer County locate and prioritize those lands that should be protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses. LESA was developed by the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service, and is based on a technique developed in Orange County in 1971 (the first place it was used in the United States.) LESA has a long history of use in New York State and throughout the United States. It is essentially a rating system and analytical tool that can help local officials identify farmlands needing protection. LESA works by considering local issues such as soil quality, development pressure, and other factors that affect agricultural practices. It is not a regulatory program. Rather, LESA's role in Herkimer County should be to provide a systematic and objective procedure to rate and rank sites in order to help make decisions on where to target farmland protection programs. A LESA system can be useful to answer questions such as what lands are most appropriate to designate for long-term continuation in agricultural uses, and which farms should be given the highest priority for purchase of development rights monies. Herkimer County's LESA has been designed based on existing knowledge of the county, local soils, and local land use and farming conditions. A draft model is presented in this plan, subject to fine-tuning by the Ag and Farmland Protection Board at the time when digitized tax and soil data become available.

### **How LESA Works**

LESA is a rating system. The LESA system combines soil quality factors with other factors that affect the importance of the site for continued agriculture. Soil quality factors are grouped under Land Evaluation Factors (LE). The other factors are grouped under Site Assessment Factors (SA). The SA factors include non-soil factors that measure limitations on agricultural productivity or farm practices; factors that measure development pressure or land conversion; and factors that measure other public values such as scenic or historic values.

Each factor is given a weighting to show their relative importance. Each factor has a numerical scale (usually on a scale of 1 to 100). For example, if there are 5 soil types, and type E is a prime farmland soil that has the best ability to support agriculture, it gets a rating of 100. Soil Type B may not be as good a soil, and may get a rating of 85. Soil Type D is on very steep slopes and is highly redouble and shallow and gets a rating of 50. The same system is used for the SA factors. For example, one SA factor may be "adjacent uses" where farms that have other farms adjacent to it could receive a rating of 100. However, a farm that has less than half of its boundary adjacent to other farmlands may get a rating of 20. All LE and SA factors are combined and each is given a weight to show the relative importance of that whole factor. For example, it may be that the soil characteristics are much more important than the SA factor "adjacent land uses." In this case, the LA factor would be weighted much higher than the SA factor. Appendix C offers an example of the proposed LESA system for Herkimer County.

The Guidebook for Land Evaluation and Site Assessment, prepared by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service recommends several steps be taken to develop a LESA system. These steps are:

- 1) Specify LE factors
- 2) Specify SA factors
- 3) Develop a rating scale for each factor
- 4) Assign weights to each factor
- 5) Tally the weighted ratings to result in a LESA score
- 6) Prepare score "thresholds" to be used in decision-making
- 7) Test the LESA model

Steps 1 through 4 are presented in this plan. Steps 5 through 7 should be completed after digital tax parcel and soil information is received.

#### A Basis for LE and SA Factors for Herkimer County

Most of the funding that is available for implementing PDR and other farmland protection programs comes from State and Federal programs. Both the State and Federal programs have established specific criteria for funding eligibility. These criteria have been incorporated into the draft LE and SA factors for Herkimer County, (outlined below.) In this way, farmland in the county that is highly ranked by the LESA system will also be identified as meeting those important funding criteria. It is important to note that many locations will meet most of the state and federal criteria detailed below. Some may have difficulty meeting eligibility requirements related to indicators of development pressure however, if located in an area not experiencing high rates of land conversion.

#### State Funding Criteria

Priority is given for funding under the State program when

λ Viable agricultural land is preserved (viable defined as "land highly suitable for agricultural production and which will continue to be economically feasible for such use if real property taxes, farm use restrictions, and speculative activities are limited to levels approximating those in commercial agricultural areas not influenced by the proximity of non-agricultural development")

λ Locations are facing significant development pressure; and

λ Locations serve as a buffer for a significant natural public resource containing important ecosystem or habitat characteristics.

Consideration is also given to:

- ⊗ The number of acres that will be protected;
- ⊗ The quality of the soil resources involved;
- ⊗ The percentage of the total farm acreage available for agricultural production;



- ⌘The extent to which the property is bordered by or proximate to other farms which are already protected by a conservation easement or which might reasonably be expected to enter into a farmland preservation agreement in the future;
- ⌘The level of farm management that is demonstrated by the current landowner;
- ⌘The likelihood of the property's succession as a farm if the present ownership changes;

### Federal Program Eligibility

In order to be eligible for federal funding for conservation easements, the property must have:

λPrime, unique, statewide, or locally important soil or contain historical or archaeological resources. Farms must contain at least 50% of prime, unique, statewide or locally important soils. Eligible historical or archaeological parcels must be on a farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or formally determined eligible for listing by the State Historic Preservation Officer, or formally designated by the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

λCropland, grassland, pastures land, and incidental forestland and wetlands that are part of an agricultural operation. Farms must be in compliance with federal wetland conservation and highly erodible land provisions.

### Recommended LE factors for Herkimer County

A good deal of soil information is already available from the Herkimer County Soil Survey. Prime, unique and statewide important soils have been identified. The land capability classifications and soil productivity ratings for all soil types are also identified in the soil survey. The LE factor for the County should take into consideration these three soil features.

The recommended LE factor and its scales are presented below. This combines the existing information on soil productivity, classification of soils, land capability, and is organized by the 10 agricultural groups of the New York State Classification System.

A Recommended LE Factor for Herkimer County: Agricultural Groups, Land Capability, Important Farmlands, Soil Productivity and Relative Scales

<b>Agricultural Group</b>	<b>Land Capability</b>	<b>Important Farmland</b>	<b>Soil Productivity</b>	<b>Percent of County</b>	<b>Acres in County</b>	<b>Relative Value (Scale)</b>
1	I	Prime	82-100	1.9	6305	100
2	Ile, IIw, IIs	Prime	82-90	8.4	28600	98
3	Ile, IIw, IIs	Prime	72-82	8.0	27240	91
4	Ile, IIw	Prime	50-74	6.9	23495	82

Agricultural Group	Land Capability	Important Farmland	Soil Productivity	Percent of County	Acres in County	Relative Value (Scale)
5	Ile, IIIe, IIIw, IIIs	Statewide	58.1 (Prime where drained) 58.2-74.0	12.2	41540	69
6	IIIe, IIIw, IIIs	Statewide	(all other 58.1's) 56.0-58.1	10.8	36770	67
7	IIIe, IIIw, IIIs	Statewide	44-56	9.9	33705	57
8	IIIe, IIIs, IVw	Statewide	Under 44	8.1	27580	43
9	Ive, Ivs, Vw, Viw, Vie, VIIe, VIIs		22-50	15.7	53450	41
10	Vw, Vis, VIIe, VIIs, VIIIw, and Other		0	18.1	61615	0

### **How to determine the LE Score when more than one soil type is present**

LE Factor: When more than one soil type is present, the parcels' total score is determined as follows

Soil A	Scale	X	% of Parcel	=	Sites Partial Rating
Soil B	Scale	X	% of Parcel	=	Sites Partial Rating
Soil C	Scale	X	% of Parcel	=	Sites Partial Rating
LE Total				=	Add all partial ratings, above

### **Recommended SA factors for Herkimer County**

**Development pressure:** Development pressure can be indicated and measured by a number of factors.

**Distance to State Roads and Major Intersections:** The closer you are to major roads and intersections, the more development pressure there could be.

0-1 miles	100
1.1-3 miles	80
3.1-5 miles	40

>5 miles	10
----------	----

**Distance to Hamlets, Villages, Other Developed Areas, or where Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure Exist:** Generally, farmland closest to existing or potential public infrastructure facilities has a greater chance of being converted to non-farm uses.

0-1 miles	80
1.1-3 miles	50
3+ miles	30

**Compatibility of Adjacent Uses:** Adjacent land uses affect the ability of a farmer to conduct normal farming practices without incurring complaints and lawsuits. The more compatible the adjacent uses are, the more ability the farmer has to continue active operations. Compatible uses include forestry, other agricultural-oriented operations such as greenhouses, pastureland, cropland, farm buildings, and mines, and certain recreational and school uses. Incompatible adjacent uses are home sites, and commercial development. The total perimeter of the farmed parcel is measured and the percent of adjacent uses determined to be compatible or incompatible. The SA factor is measured as the percent of the total perimeter that has incompatible uses.

71-100% incompatible	10
61-70% incompatible	20
51-60% incompatible	40
41-50% incompatible	50
31-40% incompatible	60
21-30% incompatible	80
11-20% incompatible	90
0-10% incompatible	100

**Distance to public-owned preserved forest, parkland, or to a parcel that has a conservation easement:** Farms near protected lands are important and have a better chance of staying as a farm.

0 - .5 miles	100
.5 to 1 miles	80
1.1 - 3 miles	50
3.1 - 4.9 miles	40
>5 miles	10

**Number of acres of farm suitable for agricultural production**

200+ acres	100
150-199	90
100-149	80
50-99	60
25-49	50

10-24	40
5-9	30
<5	10

**Level of any on-farm investment within past 10 years: (this includes new facilities, equipment, animals, buildings, or land)**

0-\$10,000	10	
\$10,001-\$25,000		30
\$25,001-\$75,000		50
\$75,001-\$150,000	85	
>\$150,000	100	

**Farm Business Planning:** Farms that have prepared business plans are usually more profitable and more likely to stay in business.

Implemented a farm business plan	Yes	100
Implemented a farm business plan	No	25

**Stewardship of Farm**

Enrolled in Conservation Programs, or has completed a whole farm or conservation plan	100
Demonstrates that conservation work occurs or follows Best Management Practices, but has not completed a whole farm or conservation plan	50
Not Enrolled in Conservation Programs, and does not do Best Management Practices	0

**Participation in Ag District Programs:** Being in an agricultural district indicates a longer term potential for continued agriculture. Is parcel in an agricultural district?

Yes	100
No	50

**Environmental Limitations to Agriculture:** Parcels having slopes > 15%, lake, wetland, mapped stream or river, FIRM mapped floodplain, or critical natural habitat (as defined by NYS DEC) on it. These are also important features to be protected as contributors to environmental health and rural character.

1 of the above features	70
2 of the above features	80
3 of the above features	90
4 or more of the above features	100
None of the above features present	20

## Recommended Weighting of Factors

### First Tier Factors and Weights

FACTOR	WEIGHTS
<u>LE Soil Factor</u>	.45
<u>SA-1 Factors (those that affect agricultural productivity)</u>	<u>.35</u>
# Acres suitable for production	.32
Level on on-farm investment within past 3 years	.20
Stewardship of farm	.15
Farm Business Planning	.15
Compatibility of Adjacent Uses	.13
Environmental Limitations to Agriculture	.05
<u>SA-2 Factors (factors that impact a sites continued agricultural use)</u>	<u>.20</u>
Distance to Hamlets, Villages, Development	.40
Distance to State Roads and Intersections	.30
Distance to public-owned preserved forestland, parkland or land with a conservation easement	.20
Participation in Ag District Program	.10

### Total LESA Score

The Total LESA score for a parcel is calculated by

1. Figuring LE and SA factor scores
2. Multiplying the LE and SA factor Scores by the Weight
3. Adding LE and SA Subtotals.

### An Example

The following example illustrates the recommended LESA system for Herkimer County:

Scenario: A 350-acre dairy farm has three soil types on it: 120 acres are in Agricultural Group 5, 40 acres in Agricultural Group 1, and the remaining 190 acres in Agricultural Group 9. The farm is not in an agricultural district. Other farms surround 60% of its boundary and the rest (40%) is new houses. It is ½ mile from a Village that has public sewer and is less than 2 miles from the highway interchange. It is more than 10 miles from a state forest. The river is ¼ mile away and is located in its floodplain. The farm has 500 feet of road frontage. There are no public-owned parks, or lands with conservation easements within 5 miles. Out of the 350 acres, 225 acres are available for cropland, and the rest is in woodlot or in use by barns and farm facilities. The current owners have a conservation plan for the farm, and have invested a total of \$40,000 in the past three years. They have no farm business plan. Based on the LESA system recommended for Herkimer County, this farm would receive the following LESA scores:

To figure the LESA score for this farm, the LE and SA factors and their scales and weights would be calculated as follows:

**Step 1: Figure the Total LE Score:**

Amount of Soil	X	Scale	=	LE Partial Rating
Subtotal				
120 acres of Group 5 (34.3% of farm)	X	69	=	23.67
40 acres of Group 1 (11.4% of farm)	X	100	=	11.4
190 acres of Group 9 (54.3% of farm)	X	41	=	<u>22.26</u>
				57.33

With a weighting on the LE portion assigned as .48, the LE Score would be  $57.33 \times .48 = 27.52$

**Step 2: Figure the SA Scores**

Factor Name	Rating	Weight	Score (Rating x Weight)
SA-1 Factors			
225 acres available	100	.32	32
\$40,000 3 year investment	50	.20	10
Has conservation plan	100	.15	15
No Business Plan	25	.15	3.75
40% Incompatible Uses	60	.13	7.8
¼ mile from river, and in floodplain	70	.05	3.5
SA-2 Factors			
½ mile from sewer	80	.40	32
2 miles from state road	80	.30	24
> 5 miles from any preserved lands	10	.20	20
Not in an Ag District	50	.10	5
		<b>TOTAL SA-1 SCORE</b>	<b>72.05</b>
		<b>TOTAL SA-2 SCORE</b>	<b>81.0</b>

### Step 3: Combine LE and SA Scores With Weights

Add LE + (SA-1 Score x SA-1 Weight) + (SA-2 Score x SA-2)

$27.52 + (72.05 \times .35) + (81.0 \times .20) = \text{TOTAL LESA SCORE}$

**$27.52 + 25.22 + 16.2 = 68.94 \text{ TOTAL LESA SCORE}$**

LESA should be applied to other farms for comparative purposes. Those with the highest ratings would be the priority lands to apply farmland protection techniques.

## Appendix D. Survey Forms

### *FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN PRODUCER SURVEY*

1. How many acres do you currently own? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what township is this land located? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the current use of this land (please indicate approximate acres in each use).  
\_\_\_\_\_ Actively farmed (cropped or pastured)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Rented to a farmer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Rural residence  
\_\_\_\_\_ Open, idle land  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wooded
4. If actively farmed, what is the major enterprise? (check one)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Dairy                      \_\_\_\_\_ Horses  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hay                        \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas Trees  
\_\_\_\_\_ Cash Crops                \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetables  
\_\_\_\_\_ Heifers                    \_\_\_\_\_ Fruit  
\_\_\_\_\_ Livestock                 \_\_\_\_\_ Horticulture  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other-please explain \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have any alternative enterprises on your farm? (i.e. Christmas trees, custom work, Bed & Breakfast, etc)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No  
  
Please explain \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many years have you operated your farm? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many households does your farm support? (do not include hired help) \_\_\_\_\_
8. About how much of your net family income came from your farm last year?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Less than 25%                      \_\_\_\_\_ 50-74%  
\_\_\_\_\_ 25-49%                                \_\_\_\_\_ 75-100%



9. Over the next five years do you intend to: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Increase your farming operation
- ☐ Decrease your farming operation
- ☐ Stay the same
- ☐ Sell all of your land for **farm use**
- ☒ Sell a portion of your land for **non-farm** purposes
- ☐ Sell all of your land for **non-farm** purposes
- ☐ Relocate outside Herkimer County and continue to farm
- ☐ Transfer the farm to a family member

10. If rented to a farmer, how is the land used? (check all that apply)

- ☒ Hay
- ☒ Pasture
- ☐ Cash Crop
- ☐ Other-Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

11. How long have you owned this land?

- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ 20-40 years
- ☐ More than 40 years

12. Is your land currently enrolled in a state certified Agricultural District?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Are you taking advantage of Agricultural Value Assessment on your property?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. Do you have current Agricultural Exemptions on any agricultural structures?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. Do you think that Agricultural Districts have served the purpose of preserving farms and protecting agriculture?

- ☐ Yes-
- ☐ No- (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you think more can or needs to be done by the State or County to preserve agriculture?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No (please explain)

17. Do you think local planning and/or zoning boards need more information on the value of protecting agricultural land in order to make effective land use decisions?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes (please explain)

\_\_\_\_\_ No (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

18. In your opinion, what are the 3 greatest issues facing farmers in your Township (please list in order: 1, 2, 3).

\_\_\_\_\_ Loss of farmland

\_\_\_\_\_ Low profitability

\_\_\_\_\_ High taxes

\_\_\_\_\_ Landfill siting

\_\_\_\_\_ Production Costs

\_\_\_\_\_ Marketing

\_\_\_\_\_ High land prices

\_\_\_\_\_ Access to agriservice

\_\_\_\_\_ Suburban encroachment

\_\_\_\_\_ Development pressure

\_\_\_\_\_ Environmental regulations-check those that apply:

\_\_\_\_\_ Pesticide use

\_\_\_\_\_ Fertilizer use

\_\_\_\_\_ Land use

\_\_\_\_\_ Wetlands

\_\_\_\_\_ Other-Please indicate \_\_\_\_\_

19. Some municipalities in other parts of New York State offer farmers reductions in local taxes in exchange for their commitment to keep farm land in production. How do you feel about your town adopting this kind of plan?

\_\_\_\_\_ Strongly oppose

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat oppose

\_\_\_\_\_ Neutral

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat favor

\_\_\_\_\_ Strongly favor

20. How fair do you think it would be for towns to require a commitment to “Best Management Practices” such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), nutrient management, and soil conservation in exchange for tax reductions to farmers?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very unfair

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat unfair

\_\_\_\_\_ Neutral

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat fair

\_\_\_\_\_ Very fair

21. Are you familiar with the following Farmland Protection Strategies?

Conservation Easements	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Land Conservancy of Trust	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Sale of Development Rights	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Transfer of Development Rights	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>

22. Do you feel that any of these would be beneficial in Herkimer County?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes          \_\_\_\_\_ No          \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

23. In your opinion, how important is the loss of farmland in Herkimer County to you?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very important

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat important

\_\_\_\_\_ Not important

24. What initiatives or incentives should local / county governments undertake to help keep farming viable in Herkimer County?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your assistance in completing this survey.

Please return by March 30, 2001

## FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN AGRI-BUSINESS SURVEY

1. In what township(s) is your business located?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How many people do you employ:

Part Time : \_\_\_\_\_

Full Time: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you operated your business?

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than 5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ 5-10 years

\_\_\_\_\_ 10-20 years

\_\_\_\_\_ 20-40 years

\_\_\_\_\_ More than 40 years

4. What type of agri-business do you operate?

\_\_\_\_\_ Feed

\_\_\_\_\_ Seed Dealer

\_\_\_\_\_ Machinery Sales and Repair

\_\_\_\_\_ Insurance

\_\_\_\_\_ Veterinary

\_\_\_\_\_ Financial

\_\_\_\_\_ Equipment

\_\_\_\_\_ Fertilizer Dealer

\_\_\_\_\_ Agri Chemical

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_\_ If other, please explain

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What percentage of your client base is from the Herkimer County agricultural community?

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than 25%

\_\_\_\_\_ 50%-74%

\_\_\_\_\_ 25%-49%

\_\_\_\_\_ 75%-100%

6. Over the next 5 years do you intend to: (list in priority order)

\_\_\_\_\_ Increase your operation

\_\_\_\_\_ Increase agricultural sales

\_\_\_\_\_ Decrease your operation

\_\_\_\_\_ Decrease agricultural sales

\_\_\_\_\_ Stay the same

\_\_\_\_\_ Eliminate agricultural sales

\_\_\_\_\_ Transfer the business to a  
family member

7. Do you think more can or needs to be done by the State or County to preserve agriculture?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

8. Do you think local planning and/or zoning boards need more information on the value of protecting agricultural land in order to make effective land use decisions?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

9. In your opinion, what are the greatest issues facing farmers in Herkimer County? (please list the top five)

_____ Low profitability	_____ Milk marketing
_____ High property taxes	_____ Landfill siting
_____ Labor availability	_____ High land prices
_____ Access to agriservice	_____ Machinery costs
_____ Suburban encroachment	_____ Loss of farmland
_____ Development pressure	_____ Environmental issues
_____ Other - Please explain	_____

10. What challenges are facing you as a business operator in Herkimer County? (Please list in priority order)

_____ Access to skilled labor	_____ Loss of farm clientele
_____ Government regulation	_____ High cost of doing business
_____ High property taxes	_____ Other

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

11. How effective do you think it would be for local governments to require a commitment to “Best Management Practices” such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), nutrient management, and soil conservation in exchange for tax reductions to farmers?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very ineffective

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat ineffective

\_\_\_\_\_ Neutral

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat effective

\_\_\_\_\_ Very effective

12. Are you familiar with the following Farmland Protection Strategies?

Conservation Easements	_____ Yes	_____ No
Local Land Conservancy or Trust	_____ Yes	_____ No

Sale of Development Rights	_____ Yes	_____ No
Transfer of Development Rights	_____ Yes	_____ No
Exclusive Agricultural Zoning	_____ Yes	_____ No
“Circuit Breaker” Tax Adjustment	_____ Yes	_____ No
N.Y.S Certified Ag Districts	_____ Yes	_____ No

13. Do you feel that any of the strategies listed above would be beneficial in Herkimer County?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes          \_\_\_\_\_ No          \_\_\_\_\_ Not Sure

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

14. In your opinion, how important is the loss of farmland in Herkimer County to you?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very important

\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat important

\_\_\_\_\_ Not important

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

15. What initiatives or incentives should local/county governments undertake to help keep farming viable in Herkimer County?

_____ Yes	_____ No	Property tax credit for active farms
_____ Yes	_____ No	Start up loans for new farms
_____ Yes	_____ No	Attract new farms to Herkimer County
_____ Yes	_____ No	Establish exclusive ag-enterprize zones
_____ Yes	_____ No	Other (Please explain) _____

16. What trends do you see in agriculture in Herkimer County? (Please check all the apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ A small number of larger farms

\_\_\_\_\_ Change emphasis from dairy to other types of farms

\_\_\_\_\_ A larger number of small operations

\_\_\_\_\_ Movement of farms out of Herkimer County

\_\_\_\_\_ No significant change

17. If you would like to help the Farmland Protection Board create a Farmland Protection Plan for Herkimer County, please check all that apply.

\_\_\_\_\_ Help organize local or town meeting

- \_\_\_\_\_ Have opportunity to discuss my opinions more fully
- \_\_\_\_\_ Give additional input
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep informed about meetings and other activities through mailings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Please make any additional comments, suggestions, or observations in the space below that you have regarding the future of farming in your township or the County.

FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN TOWN/COUNTY GOVERNMENT SURVEY

1. What township do you represent and in what capacity?

Town of \_\_\_\_\_  
Or District \_\_\_\_\_

Capacity (check those that apply):  
\_\_\_\_\_ Town Supervisor  
\_\_\_\_\_ Planning Board  
\_\_\_\_\_ Zoning Board  
\_\_\_\_\_ Assessor  
\_\_\_\_\_ County Legislator  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please indicate)

2. How long have you served in this capacity?

\_\_\_\_\_ Less than 1 year                      \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3-6 years                                  \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ 10-20 years                                \_\_\_\_\_ More than 20 years

3. What trends do you see in Herkimer County agriculture over the next 5 years: (list in priority with number 1 being high priority to number 7 as lowest)

_____ Increase of agricultural community	_____ Decrease agricultural community
_____ No significant change in agricultural	_____ Few, but very large farms
_____ A large number of small operations	_____ Relocation of operations outside of Herkimer County
_____ Change of emphasis from dairy to other types of farms	_____ Other (please indicate) _____

4. Are you aware of any nuisance suits or right-to-farm complaints involving agriculture in your township/district?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you think more can or needs to be done by the State or County to support and further promote agriculture?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you think local/county planning and/or zoning boards need more information on the benefits of protecting agricultural land in order to make effective land use decision?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_



7. How many members of the agricultural community (farmer, agribusiness, etc.) hold an office in your township or Herkimer County?

\_\_\_\_\_ Don't know                      \_\_\_\_\_ Zero                      \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3-5                                      \_\_\_\_\_ More than 5

8. In your opinion, what are the greatest issues that will face farmers in Herkimer County over the next five years? (Please list the top five in rank order with 1 the highest)

_____ Low profitability	_____ Marketing	_____ High property taxes
_____ Landfill siting	_____ Labor availability	_____ High land prices
_____ Access to agriservice	_____ Production costs	_____ Suburban encroachment
_____ Loss of farmland	_____ Development pressure	_____ Environmental issues
_____ Other Please explain		

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9. What challenges are facing you as a Town/County official in Herkimer County? (Please list in priority order, rank 1 the greatest challenge)

_____ Loss of tax base	_____ Attracting new businesses
_____ Increased cost of government operation	_____ State mandates
_____ High property taxes	_____ Citizen apathy
_____ Better government interagency cooperation	_____ Land use management
_____ Other, Please indicate	

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

10. How effective do you think it would be for local governments to require a commitment to "Best Management Practices" such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), nutrient management, and soil conservation in exchange for tax reductions to farmers?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very ineffective  
\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat ineffective  
\_\_\_\_\_ Neutral  
\_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat effective  
\_\_\_\_\_ Very effective

11. Are you familiar with the following Farmland Protection Strategies?

Conservation Easements	_____ Yes	_____ No
Local Land Conservancy or Trust	_____ Yes	_____ No
Sale of Development Rights	_____ Yes	_____ No
Transfer of Development Rights	_____ Yes	_____ No
Exclusive Agricultural Zoning	_____ Yes	_____ No
N.Y.S. Certified Ag Districts	_____ Yes	_____ No

12. Do you feel that any of the strategies listed above would be beneficial in Herkimer County?

Yes                                      No                                      Not Sure

13. In your opinion, how important is the loss of farmland in Herkimer County to your township/district?

\_\_\_\_\_ Very important                      \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat important                      \_\_\_\_\_ Not important

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

14. What initiatives or incentives should local/county governments undertake to help keep farming viable in Herkimer County?

_____ Yes	_____ No	Property tax credit for active farms
_____ Yes	_____ No	Start up loans for new farms
_____ Yes	_____ No	Attract new farms to Herkimer County
_____ Yes	_____ No	Establish exclusive ag-enterprize zones
_____ Yes	_____ No	Strengthen Ag support agencies
_____ Yes	_____ No	Other (Please explain) _____

15. Would you be interested in having a member of the Herkimer County Farmland Protection Board give a presentation on the Farmland Protection Plan for Herkimer County?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

16. If you would like to help the Farmland Protection Board create a Farmland Protection Plan for Herkimer County, please check all that apply.

\_\_\_\_\_ Help organize local or town meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ Have opportunity to discuss my opinions more fully

\_\_\_\_\_ Give additional input

\_\_\_\_\_ Keep informed about meetings and other activities through mailings

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Please make any additional comments, suggestions, or observations in the space below that you have regarding the future of farming in your township or the County.

## **20. Definitions/Glossary**

**AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT:** A legally recognized geographic area formed by one or more landowners and approved by one or more government agencies, designed to keep land in agriculture. Agricultural districts are created for fixed, renewable terms. Enrollment is voluntary; landowners receive a variety of benefits that may include eligibility for differential assessment, limits on annexation and eminent domain, protection against unreasonable government regulation and private nuisance lawsuits, and eligibility for purchase of agricultural conservation easement programs. Also known as agricultural preserves, agricultural security areas, agricultural preservation districts, agricultural areas, agricultural incentive areas, agricultural development areas and agricultural protection areas.

**AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION ZONING (APZ):** Zoning is a form of local land use regulation. Agricultural protection zoning ordinances protect the agricultural land base by limiting non-farm uses, prohibiting high-density development, requiring houses to be built on small lots and restricting subdivision of land into parcels that are too small to farm

**APPRAISAL:** A systematic method of determining the market value of property.

**BUFFERS:** Physical barriers that separate farms from land uses that are incompatible with agriculture. Buffers help safeguard farms from vandals and trespassers, and protect homeowners from some of the negative impacts of commercial farming. Vegetated buffers and topographic barriers reduce the potential for clashes between farmers and their non-farming neighbors. Buffers may be required by local zoning ordinances.

**CLUSTER ZONING:** A form of zoning that allows houses to be built close together in areas where large minimum lot sizes are generally required. By grouping houses on small sections of a large parcel of land, cluster zoning can be used to protect open space. Also known as cluster development, land preservation subdivision, open land subdivision and open space subdivision.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:** A regional, county or municipal document that contains a vision of how the community will grow and change and a set of plans and policies to guide land use decisions. Comprehensive plans also are known as general plans and master plans.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT:** Legally recorded, voluntary agreements that limit land to specific uses. Easements may apply to entire parcels of land or to specific parts of the property. Most are permanent; term easements impose restrictions for a limited number of years. Land protected by conservation easements remains on the tax rolls and is privately owned and managed; landowners who donate permanent conservation easements are generally entitled to tax benefits.

**COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES (COCS) STUDY:** A case study method of allocating local revenues and expenditures to different land use categories. COCS studies reveal the net contribution of residential, commercial, industrial, forest and agricultural lands to local budgets.

**DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS:** Development rights entitle property owners to develop land in accordance with local land use regulations. In some jurisdictions, these rights may be sold to public agencies or qualified nonprofit organizations through a purchase of agricultural conservation easement or purchase of development rights program. Sale of development rights to a public agency or land trust generally does not pass any affirmative interest in the property. Rather than the right to develop the land, the buyer acquires the responsibility to enforce the negative covenants or restrictions stipulated in the development rights agreement. Development rights may also be sold to individuals or a public agency through a transfer of development rights program. In this case, the buyer does acquire a positive right to develop land, but the right is transferred to a site that can accommodate growth.

**DIFFERENTIAL ASSESSMENT:** An agricultural property tax relief program that allows eligible farmland to be assessed at its value for agriculture rather than its fair market value, which reflects "highest and best" use. These take three different forms: preferential assessment, deferred taxation and restrictive agreements. Differential assessment is also known as current use assessment, current use valuation, farm use valuation and use assessment.

**FARM LINK:** A program that matches retiring farmers who want to keep their land in agriculture with beginning farmers who want to buy a farm. Farm Link programs are designed to facilitate farm transfer, usually between farmers who are not related to each other. Also known as Land Link.

**LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT (LESA):** A numerical system that measures the quality of farmland. It is generally used to select tracts of land to be protected or developed.

**LAND TRUST:** A private, nonprofit conservation organization formed to protect natural resources such as productive farm and forest land, natural areas, historic structures and recreational areas. Land trusts purchase and accept donations of conservation easements. They educate the public about the need to conserve land, and some provide land use and estate planning services to local governments and individual citizens.

**PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR):** PDR programs pay farmers to keep their land available for agriculture. Landowners sell an agricultural conservation easement to a qualified public agency or private conservation organization. Landowners retain full ownership and use of their land for agricultural purposes. PDR programs do not give government agencies the right to develop land. Development rights are extinguished in exchange for compensation.

**RIGHT-TO-FARM LAW:** A state law or local ordinance that protects farmers and farm operations from public and private nuisance lawsuits. A private nuisance interferes with an individual's use and enjoyment of his or her property. Public nuisances involve actions that injure the public at large.

**SETBACK:** A zoning provision requiring new homes to be separated from existing farms by a specified distance and vice versa.