

Final Report - May 2025



ONEIDA COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGIC PLAN

**Advancing Local Agriculture through Strategic Investment &
Coordination 2025–2030 Strategic Framework**

Prepared for Oneida County Department of Planning & Prepared by LaBella Associates

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Oneida County Agricultural Inventory and Assessment serves as a strategic evaluation of the county's agricultural and food-related initiatives. This document builds on previous plans—including the 2017 Oneida County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, the Farmers to Consumers Initiative, and the Dairy Sustainability Action Plan—by analyzing their outcomes, assessing economic trends, and identifying emerging opportunities and challenges within the agricultural sector.

The purpose of this assessment is to provide stakeholders, including Oneida County government and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), with a clear roadmap for advancing the county's agricultural economy. By synthesizing past strategies, market conditions, and stakeholder input, the plan establishes priorities and recommended actions that will guide future investments in Oneida County's agricultural sector.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This plan is structured to facilitate a strategic and data-driven approach to agricultural development. It includes:

- A Review of Past Plans – Summarizing key findings and recommendations from foundational agricultural studies conducted since 2017.
- Stakeholder Input and SWOT Analysis – Incorporating perspectives from industry leaders and analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the county's agricultural sector.
- Market and Economic Analysis – Evaluating trends in agricultural production, supply chain development, workforce challenges, and land use policies.
- Recommended Projects and Implementation Strategy – Identifying high-impact initiatives that align with county priorities and available resources.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

1. Progress Made, but Ongoing Needs Remain

Many of the 171 action items identified in prior agricultural plans have been advanced, but 70% of priority actions still require continued effort. While the County has successfully launched initiatives such as Farm to Institution programs and regional supply chain enhancements, there is a need to maintain momentum and secure sustainable funding.

2. Strategic Focus on Supply Chains and Market Development

The economic analysis underscores the need to strengthen Oneida County's food supply chain by enhancing farm-to-table connections, institutional procurement, and food processing capabilities. With 84.3% of the food dollar being captured by processing and distribution rather than farm production, the County must support vertical integration and local processing capacity to retain more economic value.

3. Farmland Protection and Policy Considerations

Oneida County ranks 18th in New York State for total market value of agricultural products sold, yet farmland acreage has declined. Protecting prime agricultural lands while accommodating economic development is a key challenge. Policies supporting sustainable land management and zoning for agribusiness growth will be essential.

4. Workforce Development and Agricultural Education

Challenges in attracting and retaining skilled labor persist, particularly within the dairy and specialty crop sectors. Collaboration with educational institutions, expansion of apprenticeship programs, and targeted investments in agricultural career pathways are critical to ensuring a sustainable workforce.

5. Opportunities in Farm to School and Institutional Procurement

The Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES Food Services Program and Upstate Growers & Packers have laid the groundwork for expanding farm-to-institution sales. However, logistical barriers, procurement complexities, and storage limitations must be addressed to fully realize the potential of local food sourcing.

RECOMMENDED PROJECTS

From key takeaways, consideration of the County and its agricultural operator's competitive position across industries and geographies, and evaluation of what has worked and not worked within current implementation activities, the planning group further identified five strategic theme areas for the County to focus on. The theme areas are natural buckets within which current, successful activities are already occurring and represent industry areas where the strengths and opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis and industry research indicate the County has durable competitive advantages compared to the rest of the State and region. These theme areas are:

1. Farmland Preservation and Protection
2. Economic Development and Business Support
3. Agritourism and Local Food Promotion
4. Workforce Development and Farm Transition
5. Sustainability and Climate Resilience

The planning group went on to identify 21 project concepts within the five theme areas. These projects were evaluated based on impact, urgency, and feasibility. Each project concept is outlined in a short profile, detailing the current challenge, model approach, and key actions. An implementation matrix included in this summary provides an overview of all projects. Additionally, four priority projects are further developed into "project sheets," serving as mini-implementation plans to guide execution, facilitate stakeholder engagement, and support resource acquisition, including grant applications.

IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure this plan drives action, Oneida County and Cornell Cooperative Extension will establish an Implementation Committee to coordinate efforts, monitor progress, and guide decision-making. The committee will meet quarterly, supported by working groups aligned with the plan's five strategic themes. Each theme area includes a focused set of measurable objectives and key results (OKRs) to track progress without overburdening staff. An annual Implementation Report and retreat will evaluate outcomes, adjust priorities, and sustain momentum. This structure is designed to balance accountability with flexibility—ensuring implementation remains focused, feasible, and responsive to evolving opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The Oneida County Agricultural Inventory and Assessment provides a strategic framework for leveraging existing strengths while addressing key challenges in the agricultural sector. By focusing on supply chain resilience, market expansion, workforce development, and sustainable land policies, Oneida County can continue to support a thriving agricultural economy. The implementation matrix and project sheets accompanying this document will guide decision-making and resource allocation to ensure the successful execution of these initiatives.



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INTRODUCTION

The Oneida County Agricultural Inventory and Assessment serves as a comprehensive evaluation and summary of Oneida County's agricultural and food-related initiatives, examining the outcomes of past actions, analyzing relevant economic data, and providing insights into specific programs through stakeholder interviews with representatives from partner organizations. It highlights the achievements and challenges of agricultural strategies implemented in recent years, identifying progress made in advancing the goals set forth in the 2017 Oneida County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (OC AFPP), the Oneida County Farmers to Consumers Initiative, and the Dairy Sustainability Action Plan.

By detailing both the status of completed initiatives and the areas where further progress is needed, this summary offers a foundational understanding of the County's strategic position within the agricultural sector. Key themes discussed include supply chain resilience, market expansion, workforce development, and sustainable land management. The document synthesizes insights from past and ongoing efforts, highlighting trends, capacity-building measures, and the importance of adaptive strategies responsive to local and regional changes.

This summary will support ongoing collaborative prioritization among the organizations involved in carrying out recommended strategies, setting the stage for selecting priority projects to advance Oneida County's agricultural and economic objectives. The insights provided here are intended to guide stakeholders in making informed decisions, focusing resources on high-impact projects, and aligning future actions with the evolving needs of Oneida County's agricultural community.

A STRATEGY FOR WHOM?

Setting a strategy for a county is challenging. Within a county's geography, there are numerous issues to address, opportunities to pursue, and diverse stakeholders engaged in different facets of the economy. Even when focusing on a single industry—agriculture—this complexity remains. For this strategic plan, we refined our priorities to focus on projects that are primarily led or facilitated by Oneida County government agencies and partners, particularly the Planning Department, and Oneida County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE).

While some inherent characteristics will require their collaboration, our focus on CCE and Oneida County government aims to narrow the possibilities to functions that align naturally with each organization's role. Identifying core competencies, resource allocation, and competitive advantages becomes theoretical and vague without referencing specific organizations. While some inherent characteristics of Oneida County agriculture, like water resources, proximity to markets, and soil quality, shape competitive advantages and disadvantages for all county operators, a clear strategic direction requires understanding of the essential capabilities, management structures, and differentiators of the entities responsible for implementing recommended actions.





PAST PLAN SUMMARIES

What they say and how they relate to one another

Since 2017, Oneida County – either the County government or CCE – has completed three foundational agricultural reports, which continue to inform the County’s approach to agriculture. These include the Oneida County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2017), Oneida County Farmers to Consumers Initiative (2018), and the Dairy Sustainability Action Plan (2018). Each are summarized on the following pages.

ONEIDA COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

The 2017 Oneida County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (OC AFPP) represents the first planning update for agriculture in Oneida County in 17 years. The 2017 OC AFPP sets out three categories of action items to implement within the first year, guided by the Oneida County Farmland Protection Board. These action item categories are described by three guiding principles:

1. Oneida County is ag-friendly;
2. Oneida County agriculture is an amenity for residents and an attraction for visitors;
3. Oneida County is planning for the future of agriculture.

To address the first group of action items, the Oneida County Executive tasked Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County to develop the Agriculture-Friendly Oneida County Initiative. One of the products of this initiative is Agriculture-Friendly Oneida

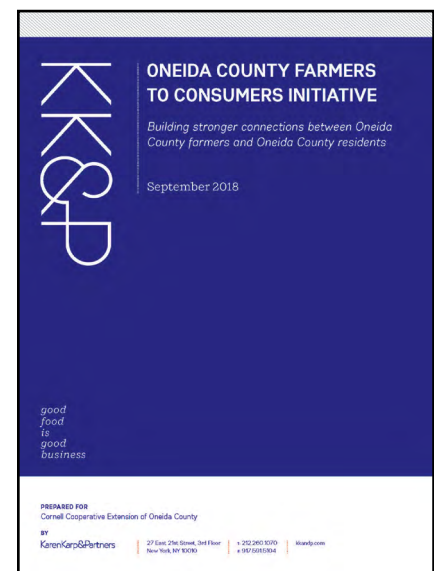
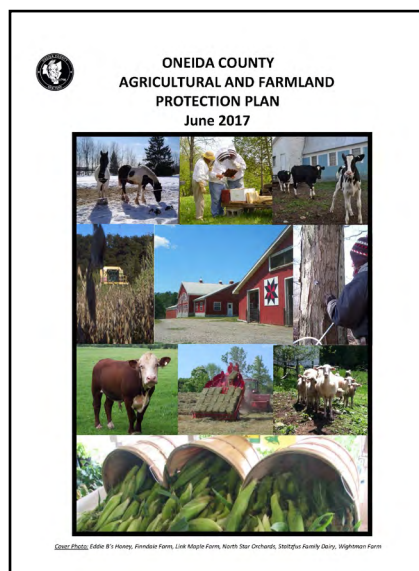
County: A Municipal Guide to Planning for Agriculture (June 2021), a document intended for municipal officials within Oneida County to help guide their municipalities in supporting agriculture. This guide includes discussion of tools such as agricultural districts, agricultural assessments, comprehensive plans, land use planning and zoning, and policy development to break down actionable steps that municipalities can take to become more agriculture-friendly.

The 2017 OC AFPP also established two overarching strategies -- "Sustain and increase agriculture's contributions to the local economy," and "Sustain and increase agriculture's contributions to the quality of life in the County, preserving rural landscapes, a clean environment, and access to fresh food." These strategies are supported by five goals:

1. Support new farm- and agriculture-related businesses;
2. Connect local farms with local consumers;
3. Bring new people into agriculture careers through education initiatives;
4. Increase public awareness and focus local policy on protecting and strengthening agriculture; and
5. Protect important farmland resources.

ONEIDA COUNTY FARMERS TO CONSUMERS INITIATIVE

To further the goal of connecting local farms with local consumers (Goal #2 of the 2017 OC AFPP), Oneida County commissioned the Oneida County Farmers to Consumers Initiative (September 2018), a plan developed by food system consulting firm Karp Associates. Using the 2017 OC AFPP as momentum for moving forward and as a source of background research, this plan identifies specific action items for developing stronger local and regional food supply chain connections for Oneida County farmers and consumers. The recommended actions aim to regionalize the approach to marketing local food, reposition the county's animal-based agriculture strengths for emerging markets, innovate with new consumer-facing marketing initiatives, and expand local institutional procurement with a tactical approach. The plan includes a matrix to guide implementation over the course of two years and provides several examples of implementation



actions in other parts of New York State and the northeastern United States that could be taken in Oneida County and the Mohawk Valley. The plan includes a matrix to guide implementation over the course of two years and provides several examples of implementation actions in other parts of New York State and the northeastern United States that could be taken in Oneida County and the Mohawk Valley.

DAIRY SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

Acknowledging that dairy is the predominant agricultural industry in Oneida County, the Oneida County Executive announced in 2018 that his administration would hold a forum to hear the concerns of dairy farmers and work with CCE of Oneida County to develop an action plan. The vision of the Dairy Sustainability Action Plan (2018) is to “create a competitive dairy farm culture by cultivating agribusiness by alleviating hurdles confronting Oneida County Dairy Farmers.” This plan acknowledges the importance of dairy farming to Oneida County and imagines a future where the dairy industry continues to be a keystone in the county’s agricultural economy through evolving and innovating action items. Goals of this plan include: long-term planning; economic development and marketing; infrastructure, environment, and safety; education and training; tax policy; and developing a legislative agenda.

Part of the Dairy Sustainability Action Plan is a review of agricultural projects in Oneida County that are currently ongoing or were ongoing in 2018. Projects

include:

- Ambassadors in Agriculture, a youth agricultural education and internship program
- Careers in Agriculture Day, hosted in both 2017 and 2018, which exposes students to potential career opportunities;
- CCE Farm Fest, an annual event which attracts between 1,500 to 5,000 members of the public and primary school children;
- Ag Friendly Initiative, a series of standards developed to assist Oneida County municipalities in becoming more agriculture-friendly. (The initiative’s report, Agriculture-Friendly Oneida County: A Municipal Guide to Planning for Agriculture, was published in June 2021.);
- Farm to School, which is a state- and nation-wide initiative to procure more locally produced food for school lunches and provide trainings for food service workers;
- Farm and Food Business Incubator, also known as the ThINCubator, which is a partnership between Oneida County, CCE Oneida, Mohawk

Valley Community College, and SUNY Cobleskill;

- Aspiring Farmers Academy, a training seminar for new farmers; and
- Farm to Consumer Grant, a grant being used to fund an assessment of local food systems in Oneida County to support a “virtual food hub” and “Farm to Institution” initiative

Several of these actions were included in the 2017 OC AFPP as potential endeavors to pursue, such as supporting Farm Fest, developing an agriculture career day, and encouraging towns with tools and information that help them improve the farm-friendliness of local regulations, among others.



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ANALYSIS OF ACTIONS AND SWOT ANALYSIS

In all, the AFPP, Farmer to Consumer and Dairy Sustainability Action Plan contain 171 actions (Strategies, Recommendations, Actions, Implementation steps; terminology differed plan to plan) and the AFPP SWOT had 57 points of feedback (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) – 288 items in total.

A discussion and analysis of past plan actions and SWOT points of feedback was undertaken in four virtual meetings with a working group consisting of representatives from Oneida County and CCE, facilitated by LaBella staff. Most of the opportunities in the SWOT were identified as recommended actions in the protection plan or subsequent plans. The LaBella consulting team considered those points of feedback when formulating evaluative criteria used to identify strategies and priority projects.

In those virtual meetings, members of the working group reflected on the status of action items – those that have advanced or those that stalled. A status of “some progress, active,” “some progress, lapsed,” “complete, ongoing,” “complete, lapsed,” “complete, concluded,” or “no progress” was assigned to each action and working group members shared perspectives on the successes and challenges encountered when planning for and implementing action steps. Since some past plan actions were a series of dependent actions, discretion was used in determining which actions to assign statuses to.

After all actions were discussed and considered, a shortlist of

56 actions was identified by the consulting team using the following criteria:

- Initial costs required to implement the project or initiative.
- Recurring costs associated with maintaining the project or initiative.
- Duration needed to complete the project or see tangible results.
- Technical or logistical difficulty of implementing the project.
- Availability of necessary resources such as manpower, expertise, or technology.
- Potential for the project to generate revenue or lead to significant cost savings.
- Degree to which the project aligns with the organization’s long-term strategic goals.
- Potential for the project to enhance educational outcomes or quality of life.
- Potential for the project to be expanded or replicated in other areas.
- Level of support or demand from the public or community for the project.

The qualitative criteria applied in this evaluation were based on discussions during the review of past plan actions, projects noted in the County Executive’s State of the County addresses from 2019 forward, trends identified

through the analysis of those actions, and the inherent mission, authority, and core capabilities of County government and Cornell Cooperative Extension. For quantitative evaluation, data from the Census of Agriculture, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Lightcast were applied to the evaluation criteria.

To compare how these actions align with the topic areas identified in the Oneida County RFP, each action on the short list was also assigned to a relevant topic area category. The consulting team added “Land Protection and Policy” as a topic area since several actions fell into that category.

An analysis of the shortlist actions revealed the following trends:

MUCH HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, BUT MUCH REMAINS ON YOUR PLATES.

Of the 56 actions included in the shortlist, 24 actions are a status of “complete, ongoing” and 16 are a status of “some progress, active.” That means a total of 40 actions – 70% of the short list actions – still require County or CCE time, effort, and resources to maintain. By contrast, only three actions are “complete, concluded.” Any new projects or incremental investments in existing projects



need to be considered along with the commitments that remain on the County's plate.

ACTION ITEM OWNERSHIPS MATTERS.

Different stakeholders have different missions, different capacities, and different commitments that combine to influence their desire and ability to execute on recommended actions. For all the past plans, the County or CCE have been the principal client that commissioned the plans, provided primary engagement with the consultant, and, unsurprisingly, received the lion's share of action assignments in the respective implementation sections of plans. Also, unsurprisingly, the County and CCE own the majority of actions that were completed or advanced. Actions assigned to MV Edge, MVCC, and AED comprise a higher percentage of the "no progress" or "some progress, lapsed" actions. Oneida County IDA is also not mentioned as a funding or economic development owner/partner in AFPP or Farmers to Consumers; they are identified in the Dairy Sustainability Action Plan.

There is a natural accountability that develops from the time and effort a principal or highly involved organization puts into a plan and its recommendation. There is also a more natural mission fit for CCE and County departments to address agricultural priorities than there might be with other partners and stakeholders. An owner's capabilities, mission fit, and commitment level should be considered when making assignments and clear expectations,

There is a natural accountability that develops from the time and effort a principal or highly involved organization puts into a plan and its recommendation. There is also a more natural mission fit for CCE and County departments to address agricultural priorities than there might be with other partners and stakeholders. An owner's capabilities, mission fit, and commitment level should be considered when making assignments and clear expectations, timelines, and milestones should be built into assignments so owner organizations understand what objectives they are responsible for achieving along with a schedule for progress check-ins or reports.

YOUR ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDLY ABOUT CURRENT PRIORITIES.

When the strategic plan topic area categories are applied to the shortlist actions, the distribution of actions makes clear that Oneida County is currently more focused on some topic areas than others. Past plan efforts cluster around Supply Chain, Land Protection and Policy, and Marketing. Performance, as measured by status, differs within these categories.

| Topic Area | Count |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Economic Development | 3 |
| Infrastructure | 1 |
| Investment/ Finance | 3 |
| Land Protection and Policy | 13 |
| Marketing | 11 |
| Supply Chain | 21 |
| Workforce Development | 4 |
| Total | 56 |

METHODS CHANGED, GOALS REMAINED CONSTANT.

Much of the conversation around progress made on past plan actions revealed that Oneida County partners have made progress towards overarching goals (Farm to Institution, Marketing, etc.) but the methods used to advance recommended strategies and actions were not necessarily those identified in plans. While this could indicate a tendency to stray from a plan of action, these adjustments more often indicated the County's ability and willingness to respond to new challenges (like COVID-19) or opportunities (like the Upstate/Downstate initiative) in an agile manner.

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RESOURCES



ONEIDA COUNTY

The Oneida County Department of Planning plays a crucial role in the development and management of the county's resources and infrastructure. The Department is involved in various planning activities, including transportation planning, land use and zoning, human services planning, water resources, environmental planning, agricultural planning, and economic development. The department collaborates with the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program and the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council to provide regional planning services.

The department's 2024 Adopted General Fund budget is \$1.1 million - \$722,000 of which is dedicated to salaries. The 2024 total budget is a 106% increase for the department's 2022 budget. Total salaries have increased 138%.

Major budget allocations overseen by Planning also include the Bus Lines (\$1 million), Animal Protection (\$200,000), Snowmobile Association (\$200,000), Oneida Herkimer Economic Development Zones (\$49,000), Regional Assistance (\$1.1 million), and \$1.9 million in

Joint Activity Funding for various programs and initiatives including planning studies.

Oneida County Economic Development is spearheaded by Oneida County Planning, MV Edge, and the County Executive's office via the Director of Economic Development.

ONEIDA COUNTY CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Oneida County is a key organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents through a variety of educational and community-based programs. CCE focuses on several critical areas, including agriculture, horticulture, youth development, nutrition, and economic development. Among its many initiatives, CCE Oneida offers the 4-H Youth Development program, which engages young people in hands-on learning experiences to build leadership and life skills. Additionally, the agriculture and horticulture programs provide essential resources and support to local farmers and gardeners, promoting sustainable practices and economic growth. The nutrition education programs,

such as SNAP-Ed, aim to enhance community health through better nutrition and physical activity.

CCE Oneida operates with a budget of approximately \$6 million, funded by federal, state, and county sources, as well as grants and private contributions. The 2024 Oneida County allocation to CCE is \$885,000, up slightly from 2022. The organization employs a dedicated team of 68 professionals who work across various programs to deliver educational services and support to the community.

The extension maintains a close relationship with the Oneida County government, ensuring that its programs align with county goals and policies. This partnership helps to support broader community development objectives, such as improving local agriculture, enhancing youth education, and promoting public health. Through this collaboration, CCE Oneida plays a vital role in fostering a thriving and resilient community.

A breakdown of CCE staff by organizational area is as follows (categories were defined by the consultant team):

| Oneida CCE Staff Categories | # of Staff |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| 4-H Youth Development | 3 |
| Administration | 11 |
| Ag Economic Development | 3 |
| Agriculture | 12 |
| Agriculture/4-H Youth Development | 1 |
| Community Energy | 8 |
| Early Childhood Education | 10 |
| Family Development | 8 |
| Nutrition | 12 |
| Total | 68 |

Aligning staffing with funding opportunities and County priorities is a constant, evolving challenge, which this strategic planning effort will help inform.

ONEIDA COUNTY TOURISM

Oneida County Tourism (OCT) is dedicated to promoting the region as a premier travel destination, enhancing the local economy through tourism. OCT oversees various programs aimed at attracting visitors, including marketing campaigns, event promotions, and partnerships with local businesses and attractions.

OCT presently has five staff members and a 19 member board. OCT plays a significant role in the county's economic development by generating substantial revenue and supporting local employment. In 2023, visitor spending in Oneida County totaled approximately \$3.7 billion, contributing \$161 million in county tax revenue and supporting \$1.5 billion in local employment income. This financial impact helps reduce the tax burden on residents and supports a wide range of community amenities and services.

OCT works closely with the Oneida County government. This collaboration ensures

that tourism initiatives align with broader county goals and policies, fostering a cohesive approach to regional development.

PARTNERS AND DEPARTMENTS

Partnerships, committees, and task forces play a vital role in expanding capacity, aligning resources, and reducing redundancies for agricultural initiatives in Oneida County. Over the past decade, Oneida County has collaborated with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to build a robust network of community partners. These relationships bring together stakeholders from local government, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and private industry, creating a collaborative environment that supports the unique needs of the county's agricultural sector. Such partnerships have been essential for leveraging expertise, securing funding, and implementing programs aimed at promoting local food production, expanding market access, enhancing food security, and preserving farmland.



Notably, several partners identified in past plans have continuously contributed to strengthening agricultural efforts within the county, forming a foundation for various agricultural and economic development strategies. The table below reflects a selection of these established and emerging partnerships that collectively enhance Oneida County's agricultural capacity.

Going forward, sustaining and expanding these partnerships will be crucial to meeting emerging challenges, including climate resilience, sustainable land management, and enhanced market access for local producers. The growth and diversification of Oneida County's agricultural partner network demonstrate a shared commitment to a resilient and vibrant food system, capable of supporting the economic, environmental, and social well-being of the region.

To maximize the impact of these collaborations, stakeholders may consider further integrating resources, increasing investment in technological and educational advancements, and exploring additional opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.

| Name | Type | Relevance |
|---|------------------------|--|
| CNY Fresh | Government | Agri-Tourism and Local Branding |
| Farmers Market Federation | Private | Agri-Tourism and Local Branding |
| K-12 Schools | Government | Workforce Development and Education |
| Local Farms | Private | All |
| Local Universities and Colleges | Government/ Private | Workforce Development and Education |
| Mohawk Valley Farm and Agribusiness Network | Private | Agri-Tourism and Local Branding |
| Mohawk Valley Resources Center for Refugees | Private | Workforce Development and Education |
| Mohawk Valley Economic Development District | Government | Economic Development and Business Support |
| MV Edge | Government | Economic Development and Business Support |
| MV Food Policy Advisory Council | Private | No Longer Operating |
| NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation | Government | Land Protection |
| OHM BOCES | Government | Economic Development and Business Support; Workforce Development and Education |
| Oneida County Farmland Protection Board | Government | Land Protection |
| Oneida County Public Market | Private | Economic Development and Business Support |
| Oneida County Tourism | Private | Agri-Tourism and Local Branding |
| Upstate Growers and Packers | Private | Supply Chain, Farm to Institution |
| Utica Greens | Private | No Longer Operating |
| Waterville First | Private | Economic Development and Business Support |

GRANT FUNDS

Oneida County government or related partners and stakeholder groups are active in pursuing grants to support operating capacity and to fund programming and special projects. Since 2018, the County has brought in \$155 million in grant funding from a range of State agencies and funding programs. Below is a breakdown of funding by organization and state agency/funding source:

| Organization/Funding Source | Current Contract Amount |
|--|-------------------------|
| CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF ONEIDA COUNTY | \$24,065,967 |
| Department of Agriculture & Markets | \$1,151,954 |
| Department of Health | \$1,380,925 |
| Office of Children & Family Services | \$17,280,087 |
| Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance | \$4,253,001 |
| ONEIDA COUNTY | \$125,934,770 |
| Board of Elections | \$1,135,234 |
| Department of Environmental Conservation | \$337,903 |
| Department of Health | \$9,252,442 |
| Department of Labor | \$101,820 |
| Department of Transportation | \$43,617,085 |
| Division of Criminal Justice Services | \$6,298,699 |
| Governor's Traffic Safety Committee | \$117,825 |
| Office of Children & Family Services | \$1,734,809 |
| Office of Court Administration - Fifth District Administration | \$22,281,122 |
| Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services | \$9,185,433 |
| Office of Indigent Legal Services | \$27,570,664 |
| Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance | \$2,525,131 |
| Victim Services, Office of | \$1,776,602 |
| ONEIDA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT | \$3,023,178 |
| Department of Agriculture & Markets | \$2,794,340 |
| Department of Environmental Conservation | \$131,338 |
| Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services | \$97,500 |
| ONEIDA COUNTY VOLUNTEER FIREMENS ASSOC | \$33,000 |
| Division of Criminal Justice Services | \$33,000 |
| PARKWAY DRUGS OF ONEIDA COUNTY SOUTH INC | \$2,029,501 |
| SUNY - Upstate Medical University | \$2,029,501 |
| STEVENS-SWAN HUMANE SOCIETY OF ONEIDA COUNTY INC | \$373,500 |
| Department of Agriculture & Markets | \$373,500 |
| Total | \$155,459,916 |

COUNTY FUNDING

County governments face numerous funding demands. State and federal mandates often increase while the aid to offset these costs declines, yet the scope and costs remain unchanged. The County aims to remain competitive in attracting and retaining quality employees and avoid raising taxes that would increase the cost of living for residents and businesses. This generally means limited internal resources for new priorities. However, many counties allocate small but meaningful portions of their sales and occupancy taxes to fund key priorities.

From 2020 to 2023, total sales and use taxes increased by 36% to \$200 million, making up just over 32% of the County's total revenue. Of this, \$55 million was distributed to local municipalities in 2023, leaving \$145 million for Oneida County to allocate. In 2023, occupancy taxes contributed \$3.7 million to the County's overall \$200 million in sales and use taxes. The County applies a 5% occupancy tax on overnight stays, a standard rate across the state.

Across the state, counties have established opportunity funds, revolving loan funds, and dedicated funding streams to support priorities. For example, the Schenectady Metroplex Development Authority is partially funded through county sales tax, receiving 0.5% of the County's sales tax revenue, which equated to roughly \$500,000 in 2022. Ulster County dedicates 25% of its annual occupancy tax revenues to their Housing Action Fund, projected to reach \$1.5 million in 2024. Local discretionary funding can be leveraged as gap funding, match funding, or revolving loan seed funding, significantly multiplying the value and impact of the initial investment.





ECONOMIC AND MARKET CONTEXT

Oneida County's strategic decisions cannot be made in a vacuum. The agricultural and food industries are primarily for-profit enterprises that need to consider structural issues, competition, and ultimately profitability. While this strategic planning exercise is not intended to be an exhaustive market analysis of the priority projects under consideration, it is important to make strategic decisions with a general understanding of market dynamics. Some key takeaways are offered below.

Data in this analysis is sourced from the USDA Census of Agriculture, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Lightcast data sourced from Mohawk Valley DOL Labor Analyst, and general industry research.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOOD DOLLAR ACROSS THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Efforts to localize more of the agricultural and food industry value within the supply chain continuum need to begin with an understanding of where value is distributed across the supply chain. The USDA's food dollar series is an invaluable tool to gain

this understanding. In 2022 real dollars, the food dollar series shows that the farm share – the portion of the food dollar that goes to farm establishments for the sales of raw food commodities – comprised 15.7%. The marketing share – the portion of the food dollar that goes to food supply chain establishments that transform raw food into finished food products – captured the lion's share of value with 84.3%.¹ The 2022 15.7% farm share is the lowest farm share percentage recorded since the food dollar study began in 1993.

The Industry Group Dollar chart further details what costs are added to the food dollar by each supply chain industry group.

While core farm production activities will always factor prominently in agriculture-related planning and strategies, clearly efforts and energy are needed to build the related industries in Oneida County if more value is to be captured. These could include: supporting farms' abilities to vertically integrate by owning and operating farm to table food service experience or processing activities; strengthening farm to table and processing relationships and capacities with third party establishments in the County; and strengthening relationships and capacities with retail and wholesale establishments. A strategy that supports these connections within the agricultural and food industries would strengthen the



1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (n.d.). Food Dollar Series. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17885&reportPath=/FoodDollar/Real>

portion of the supply chain where 79% of the food dollar's overall value is distributed, versus only 9% of the value within food production. This strategy would also leverage the local multiplier effect. By localizing more of the supply chain, more money circulates within the local economy for longer, as demonstrated in the graphic from American Independent Business Alliance.²

**AGRICULTURE IN ONEIDA COUNTY:
STATE COMPARISON**

Oneida County is a major player in New York State's agricultural output and is a stand-out performer in several product categories. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Oneida County ranks in 18th in the total market value of products sold in New York State – up from 21st in 2017. The County has one category (Aquaculture) that is top five in the state and seven in the top 20. Of the seven categories that are in the top 20 in the state, four categories – “milk from cows”; “grain oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas”; “other crops and hay”; and “vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes” - are top five categories within Oneida County based on total value in 2022.

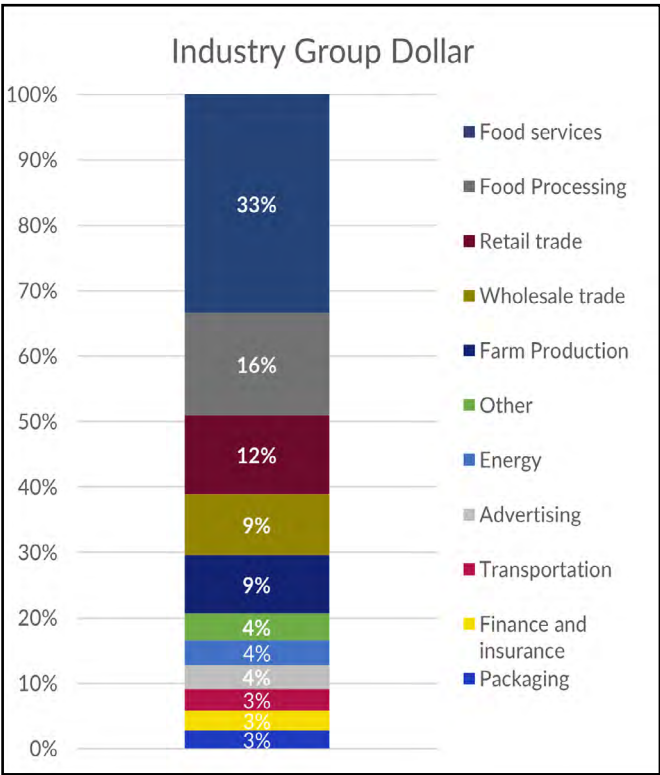
This data points towards several strategic opportunities or areas of continued exploration:

- Milk from cows - by far the County's largest category – ranks 14th in New York State, underlining the size and strength of the industry and the strategic opportunities that the County's central location presents for processing and distribution.
- The County's relative strength in vegetables and fruit are also notable given the storage, processing, and distribution capabilities it has built since the 2017 Ag Protection Plan. This apparent strength in production and post-farm processing bears further investigation to understand why, given those factors, so few Oneida County specialized vegetable producers are currently selling into institutional markets through Upstate Growers and Packers or K-12 schools, as mentioned in stakeholder interview calls with Luke George and Kate Dorr. The disconnect is also perplexing given that across all production categories, Oneida County direct to consumer sales fell by 17%, while sales to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs grew by

112% from 2017 to 2022 according to Census of Agriculture data (detailed on page 20-21).

- The absolute and relative growth of the “horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys” category within Oneida County and compared to other NYS counties is notable. The industry grew a remarkable 441% from 2017 to 2022, capturing almost \$1.5 million in market value in 2022. It also rose from 25 to 13th in New York State. While the equine industry clearly shares many of the same characteristics as other agricultural industries, the industry and its producers are often overlooked by planning and economic development efforts. This may be due to the different professional and social networks occupied by equine farmers and because of the industry's orientation towards recreation and sport rather than production. The same dynamics that make the equine industry unique are the same reasons why agriculture planning needs to have a customized approach to engage with and support the industry.

The following pages present several tables exploring the state of Oneida County's agriculture based on data from the 2022 Census of Agriculture.



2. American Independent Business Alliance. (n.d.). Local Multiplier Effect. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from <https://amiba.net/local-multiplier/>

Figure: Oneida County Ag Category NYS Ranking by Market Value of Products, 2017-2022, Sorted by 2022 Ranking

| Category | Rank in State 2017 | Rank in State 2022 | Total Change | 2022 Market Value (\$1,000s) |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Aquaculture | 5 | 5 | 0 | D |
| Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas | 16 | 9 | 7 | \$37,780 |
| Other crops and hay | 19 | 9 | 10 | \$13,274 |
| Cultivated Christmas trees, short rotation woody crops | 12 | 13 | -1 | \$567 |
| Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys | 25 | 13 | 12 | \$1,471 |
| Vegetables, melons, potatoes, sweet potatoes | 26 | 14 | 12 | \$11,009 |
| Milk from cows | 16 | 14 | 2 | \$108,937 |
| Fruits, tree nuts, berries | 20 | 21 | -1 | \$11,604 |
| Cattle and calves | 19 | 21 | -2 | \$8,805 |
| Hogs and pigs | 18 | 21 | -3 | \$11,604 |
| Poultry and eggs | 36 | 24 | 12 | \$599 |
| Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, milk | 22 | 33 | -11 | \$180 |
| Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, sod | 28 | 35 | -7 | \$1,681 |
| Other animals and animal products | 12 | 35 | -23 | \$194 |

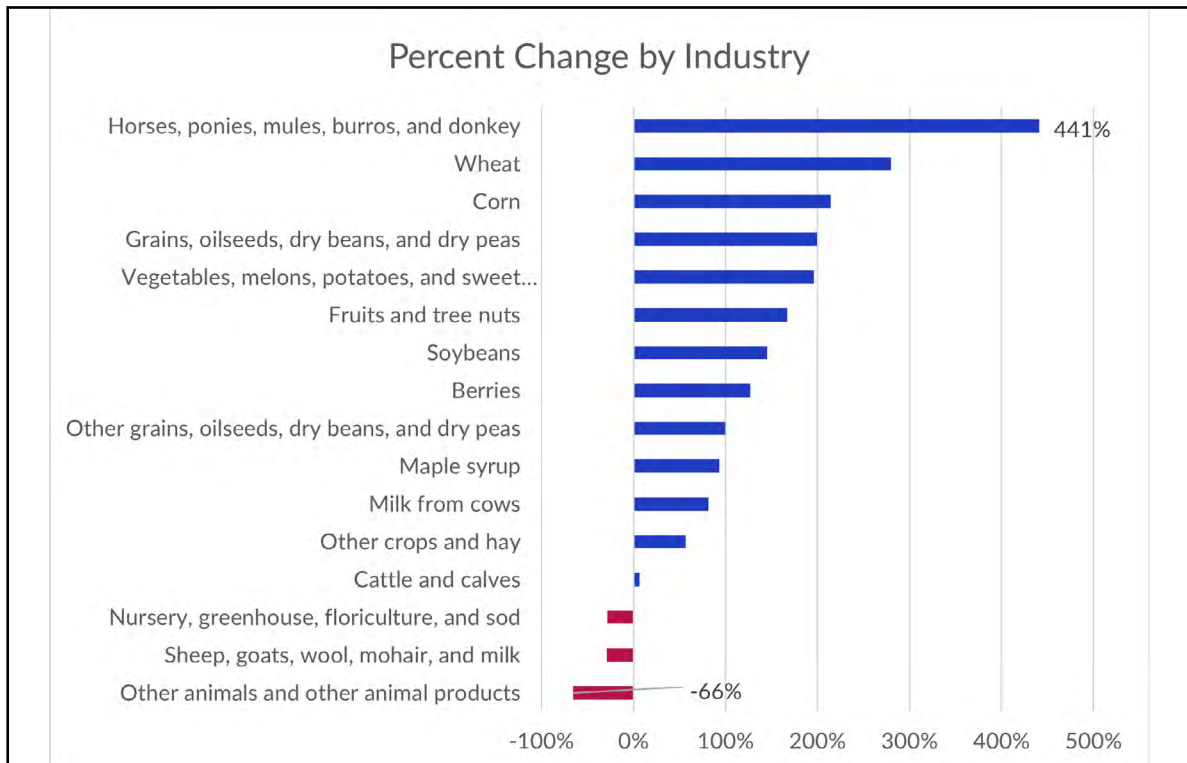
Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

Figure: Oneida County Establishments and Value of Products, 2022, sorted by value percent of total

| Item | # Establishments | Percent of Total | Value of Products (in \$1,000) | Percent of Total |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Milk from cows | 90 | 11% | \$108,937 | 57% |
| Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas | 194 | 23% | \$37,780 | 20% |
| Corn | 162 | 19% | \$27,918 | 15% |
| Other crops and hay | 340 | 41% | \$13,274 | 7% |
| Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes | 69 | 8% | \$11,009 | 6% |
| Fruits and tree nuts | 49 | 6% | \$9,832 | 5% |
| Cattle and calves | 266 | 32% | \$8,805 | 5% |
| Soybeans | 84 | 10% | \$7,520 | 4% |
| Berries | 44 | 5% | \$1,772 | 1% |
| Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod | 55 | 7% | \$1,681 | 1% |
| Wheat | 44 | 5% | \$1,577 | 1% |
| Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys | 15 | 2% | \$1,471 | 1% |
| Poultry and eggs | 151 | 18% | \$599 | 0% |
| Cultivated Christmas Trees | 21 | 3% | \$567 | 0% |
| Other grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas | 54 | 6% | \$425 | 0% |
| Maple syrup | 33 | 4% | \$358 | 0% |
| Other animals and other animal products | 52 | 6% | \$194 | 0% |
| Sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk | 44 | 5% | \$180 | 0% |
| Short rotation woody crops | 0 | 0% | \$0 | 0% |
| Sorghum | 5 | 1% | D ³ | D |
| Barley | 9 | 1% | D | D |
| Hogs and pigs | 44 | 5% | D | D |
| Aquaculture | 1 | 0% | D | D |
| Total | 834 | | \$190,072 | |

Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

Agriculture's decades long trend towards consolidation and larger producers continued from 2017 to 2022. Oneida County's highest grossing producers, those earning \$500,000 or more in annual market value, grew from 33 operations to 65 and from 53% to 82% of the County's agricultural market value.



Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

Figure: Oneida County Farm by Market Value, 2022

| Range of Annual Market Value of Products Sold | Farms | Percent of Total | Value in \$1,000s | Percent of Total |
|---|-------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Less than \$1,000 | 190 | 23% | \$25 | 0.01% |
| \$1,000 to \$2,499 | 62 | 7% | \$103 | 0.05% |
| \$2,500 to \$4,999 | 73 | 9% | \$266 | 0.14% |
| \$5,000 to \$9,999 | 84 | 10% | \$594 | 0.31% |
| \$10,000 to \$19,999 | 93 | 11% | \$1,315 | 1% |
| \$20,000 to \$24,999 | 29 | 3% | \$629 | 0.33% |
| \$25,000 to \$39,999 | 60 | 7% | \$1,945 | 1% |
| \$40,000 to \$49,999 | 26 | 3% | \$1,157 | 1% |
| \$50,000 to \$99,999 | 58 | 7% | \$4,350 | 2% |
| \$100,000 to \$249,999 | 53 | 6% | \$9,075 | 5% |
| \$250,000 to \$499,999 | 41 | 5% | \$14,266 | 8% |
| \$500,000 or more | 65 | 8% | \$156,347 | 82% |
| Total | 834 | 100% | \$190,072 | 100% |

Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

3. A "D" indicates that the data has been withheld to avoid disclosing information about individual operations. This typically happens when there are very few producers of a particular commodity in a specific area, and publishing the data could potentially reveal confidential information about those producers.

Oneida's total acres in production fell by 133 acres between 2017 and 2022 (14% decline). Statewide, agricultural acres declined by five percent over the same period. In that period, farms with 50-69 acres, 1,000-1,999 acres, and 2,000+ acres were the only ranges of acres in production that grew in Oneida County (22%, 69%, and 25% respectively). This trend towards larger land holdings is also occurring at the state level. Farms with 1,000 to 1,999 acres or 2,000+ acres were the only ranges to grow from 2017 to 2022. The three largest acreage ranges accounted for nine percent of farms and 51% of acres in production in Oneida County in 2022; Statewide, the distribution was nine percent and 55%.

Figure: Oneida County Farm by Number of Acres in Production, 2022

| Number of Acres in Production | 2022 Oneida # of Farms | 2022 Percent of Total Farms | 2022 Oneida Acres | 2022 Percent of Total Acres |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 to 9 | 66 | 8% | 296 | 0% |
| 10 to 49 | 191 | 23% | 4,689 | 2% |
| 50 to 69 | 88 | 11% | 5,051 | 3% |
| 70 to 99 | 83 | 10% | 6,799 | 4% |
| 100 to 139 | 86 | 10% | 9,914 | 5% |
| 140 to 179 | 68 | 8% | 10,879 | 6% |
| 180 to 219 | 51 | 6% | 9,969 | 5% |
| 220 to 259 | 20 | 2% | 4,841 | 3% |
| 260 to 499 | 108 | 13% | 39,358 | 21% |
| 500 to 999 | 36 | 4% | 26,084 | 14% |
| 1,000 to 1,999 | 27 | 3% | 32,637 | 17% |
| 2,000+ | 10 | 1% | 37,155 | 20% |
| Total | 834 | 100% | 187,672 | 100% |

Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

ONEIDA COUNTY AGRICULTURE: INDUSTRY COMPARISON

ECONOMIC OUTPUT

Agriculture's size and impact relative to other economic industries in Oneida County is another important factor in developing strategies and committing resources. When measured by several economic indicators as detailed in the chart below (values are in thousands), agriculture tends to rank towards the bottom as compared to the twenty-one other industry sectors. For example, in 2022, agriculture's \$144 million in Gross Regional Product (GRP) comprised 0.93% of the County's \$15 billion in overall GRP. Government, Oneida County's largest industry by GRP, comprises 22%. GRP measures the total economic output of a specific region, such as a county. It represents the value of all goods and services produced within that area over a certain period, usually a year. Essentially, GRP is the regional equivalent of a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), providing insight into the economic health and productivity of the county.

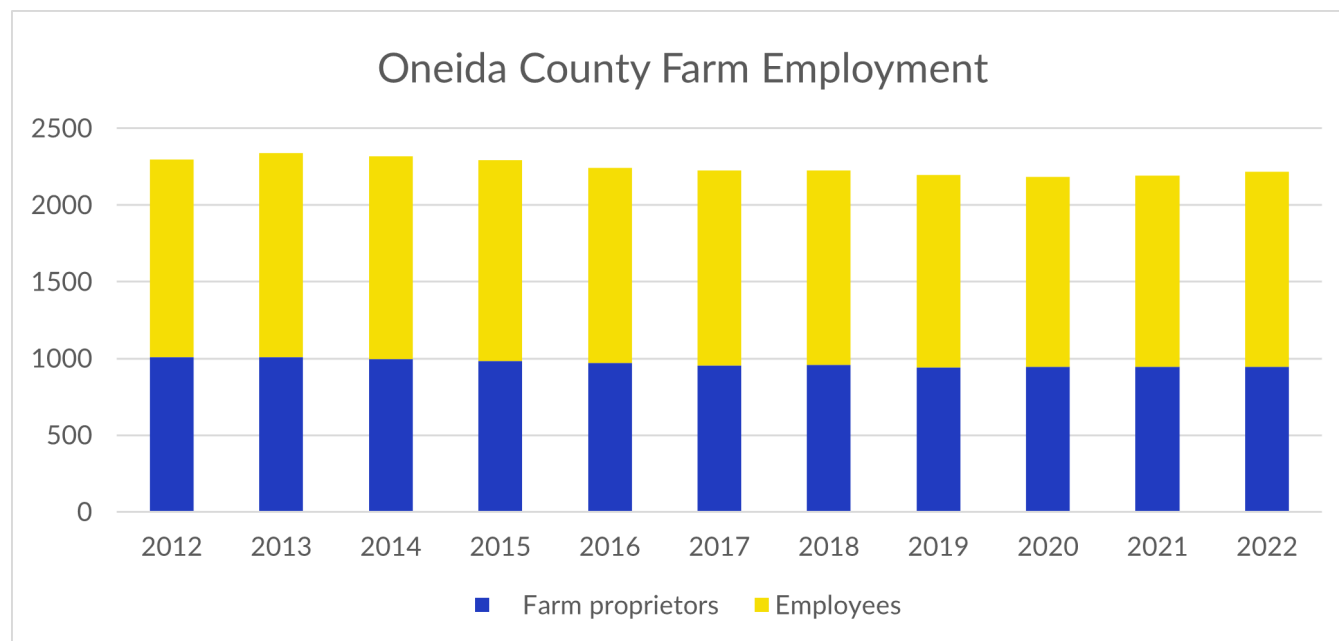
EMPLOYMENT

Farm employment was relatively stable in Oneida County from 2012-2022 according to BEA data. Overall farm employment declined four percent, driven by a 1% decline in farm employees and a 6% decline in farm proprietors). By comparison, overall employment across all Oneida County industries increased one percent. Over the ten-year period, real estate and rental and leasing and construction experienced the largest increase in employment – 33% and 27% respectively; mining and information experienced the largest decline – 52% and 45% respectively.)

As of 2022, agriculture accounted for 2% of the County's 129,412 jobs and was 16th of 21 industries in employee employment. Important to note is that these figures may not account for H2A labor contracted through brokers.

These figures do not account for establishments engaged in farm services or in supporting agriculture-related industries (for example, trucking), however, they serve as a good snapshot of how many people are directly involved in agriculture production.

Figure: Agricultural employment in Oneida County, 2012-2022



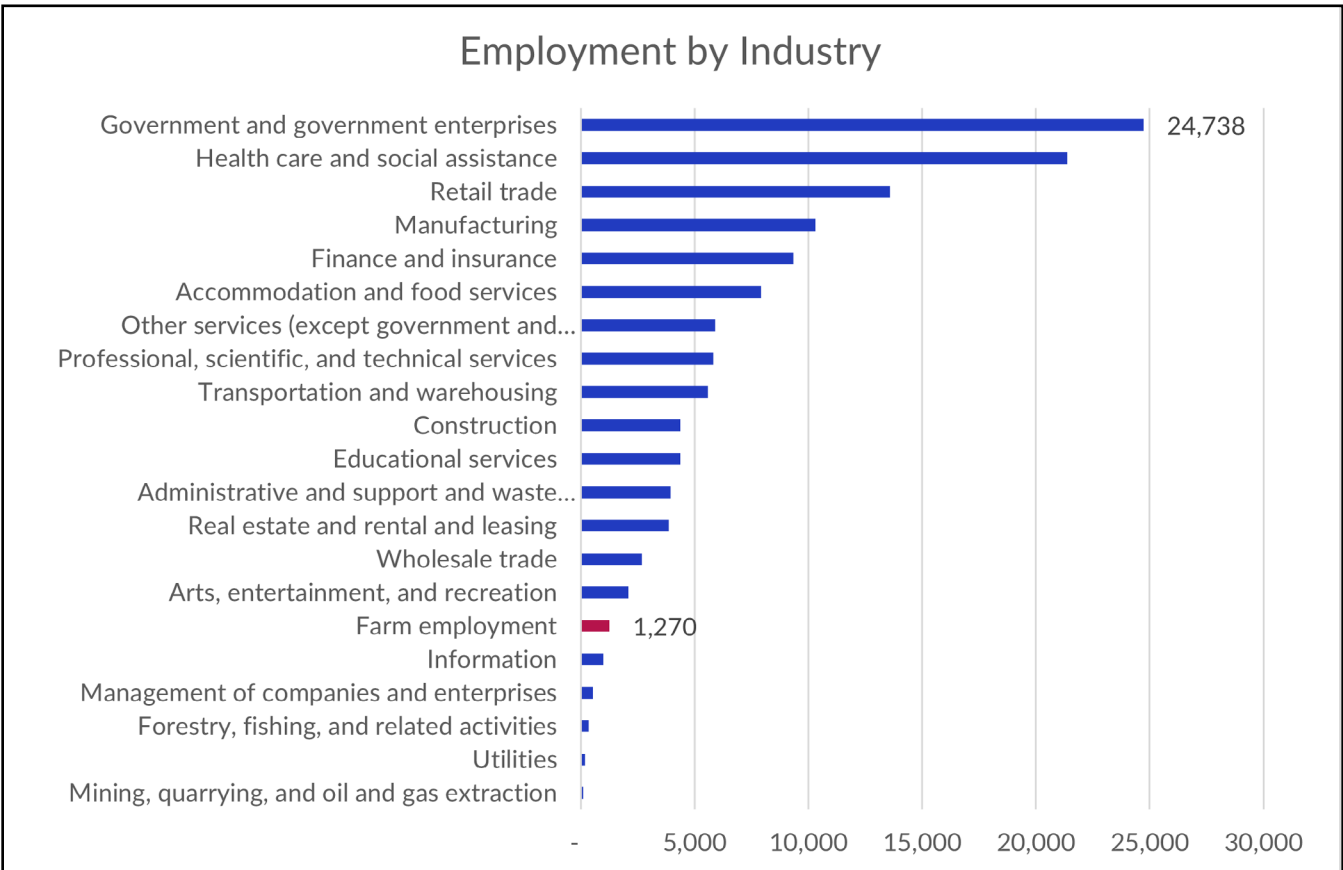
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, CAEMP25N

Figure: Oneida County Industry Performance, 2023, Sorted by GRP (\$1,000s)

| Industry | Earnings | # | Property Income | # | Taxes | # | Subsidies | # | GRP | # |
|--|-------------|----|-----------------|----|-------------|----|-----------|----|--------------|----|
| Government | \$2,711,041 | 1 | \$694,400 | 4 | \$0 | 21 | (\$603) | 7 | \$3,404,839 | 1 |
| Manufacturing | \$856,439 | 3 | \$978,825 | 2 | \$88,150 | 5 | (\$6,456) | 19 | \$1,916,959 | 2 |
| Finance and Insurance | \$781,796 | 4 | \$751,156 | 3 | \$90,996 | 4 | (\$594) | 6 | \$1,623,353 | 3 |
| Other Vectors | \$0 | 21 | \$1,358,028 | 1 | \$189,781 | 2 | (\$5,439) | 18 | \$1,542,370 | 4 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | \$1,341,769 | 2 | \$162,720 | 8 | \$38,891 | 8 | (\$9,700) | 21 | \$1,533,679 | 5 |
| Retail Trade | \$560,995 | 5 | \$381,619 | 5 | \$275,145 | 1 | (\$3,726) | 17 | \$1,214,034 | 6 |
| Wholesale Trade | \$273,591 | 7 | \$271,104 | 6 | \$108,589 | 3 | (\$1,191) | 9 | \$652,093 | 7 |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | \$453,928 | 6 | \$84,142 | 13 | \$20,531 | 11 | (\$2,269) | 14 | \$556,332 | 8 |
| Accommodation and Food Services | \$228,327 | 11 | \$94,792 | 12 | \$74,349 | 6 | (\$9,543) | 20 | \$387,925 | 9 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | \$230,392 | 10 | \$114,715 | 9 | \$26,274 | 10 | (\$2,824) | 16 | \$368,557 | 10 |
| Transportation and Warehousing | \$235,856 | 9 | \$98,010 | 11 | \$11,349 | 15 | (\$1,407) | 12 | \$343,808 | 11 |
| Construction | \$256,612 | 8 | \$74,305 | 15 | \$8,471 | 17 | (\$2,627) | 15 | \$336,761 | 12 |
| Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | \$227,229 | 12 | \$57,896 | 16 | \$11,916 | 14 | (\$843) | 8 | \$296,197 | 13 |
| Utilities | \$48,017 | 18 | \$193,760 | 7 | \$50,381 | 7 | (\$20) | 3 | \$292,137 | 14 |
| Other Services (except Public Administration) | \$202,213 | 13 | \$16,472 | 18 | \$27,066 | 9 | (\$1,821) | 13 | \$243,930 | 15 |
| Educational Services | \$166,528 | 14 | \$27,805 | 17 | \$12,604 | 13 | (\$592) | 5 | \$206,345 | 16 |
| Information | \$62,539 | 17 | \$108,102 | 10 | \$16,790 | 12 | (\$254) | 4 | \$187,177 | 17 |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | \$65,661 | 16 | \$75,168 | 14 | \$4,550 | 18 | (\$1,315) | 10 | \$144,064 | 18 |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | \$76,244 | 15 | \$4,920 | 21 | \$2,476 | 20 | (\$19) | 1 | \$83,621 | 19 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | \$43,776 | 19 | \$11,372 | 20 | \$10,308 | 16 | (\$1,321) | 11 | \$64,134 | 20 |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | \$5,784 | 20 | \$15,816 | 19 | \$3,615 | 19 | (\$19) | 2 | \$25,196 | 21 |
| Total | \$8,828,736 | | \$5,575,129 | | \$1,072,232 | | (\$2,921) | | \$15,423,513 | |

Source: Lightcast

Figure: Oneida County Employment by Industry, 2022



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, CAEMP25N

ONEIDA COUNTY FARM BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

PER FARM AVERAGES

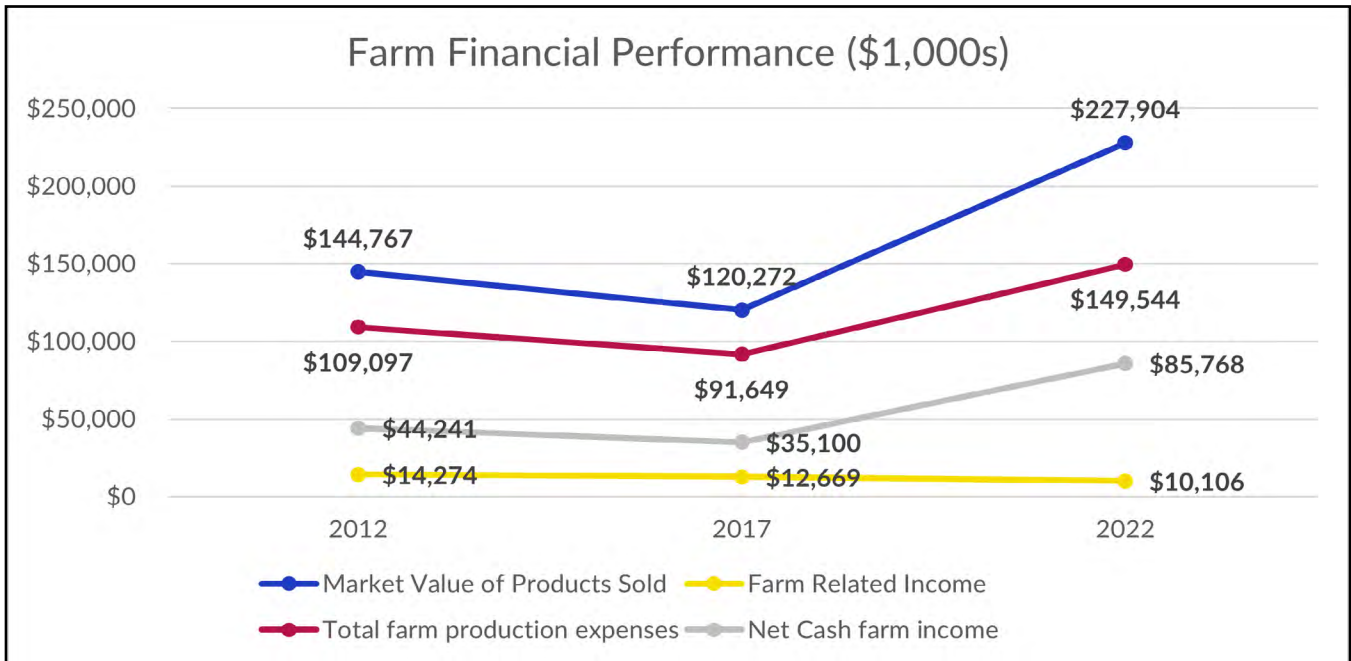
The U.S. Census of Agriculture tracks farm financial performance on a per farm average basis in four categories: Market Value of Products Sold, Total Farm Production Expenses, Net Cash Farm Income, and Farm Related Income. Market Value and Expenses are self-explanatory. Net Cash Farm Income represents the cash income generated from farming activities. It includes cash receipts from the sale of crops and livestock, as well as cash farm-related income (such as government payments), minus cash expenses. It does not account for non-cash items like changes in inventories, depreciation, or the imputed rental value of operator dwellings. Farm Related Income encompasses income derived from activities related to farming but not directly from the sale of agricultural products. Examples include custom work, machine hire, and other farm-related services. It is part of the broader category of gross cash farm income, which also includes cash

receipts from farming and government payments. Overall farm financial performance grew between 2012 and 2022 in all Census of Agriculture financial categories except for farm related income. It should be noted that 2022 was a particularly strong year for agricultural prices, especially for dairy, so performance within these categories has likely declined since these Census of Agriculture averages were calculated.

FOOD MARKETING PRACTICES

The Census of Agriculture tracks data associated with what they call "Food Marketing Practices," which fall into three types of sales: direct to consumer, business and institutional, and value-added. "Value of food sold directly to consumers" includes sales through farmers markets, on-farm stores, and CSAs. "Value of food sold directly to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs for local or regionally branded products" covers sales to supermarkets, restaurants, schools, and food hubs. Lastly, the "value of processed or value-added agricultural products" refers to sales of items (like cheese, wine, and jams, for example) that have

Figure: Oneida County Employment by Industry, 2022



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, CAEMP25N

been processed from raw goods to increase their value. Value-added processing can occur off the farm and still be credited to the farm's activity and sales value, provided the product is sold under the farm brand. This contrasts with selling products through a white-label processor, where the farm's brand is not used.

As seen in the chart below, the Census of Agriculture began tracking data for business and institutional and value-added sales in 2017, so data from 2012 are not available.

FARM TO SCHOOL

In 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul signed Executive Order 32 directing State agencies, including school districts, to increase the percentage of food sourced from New York farmers and producers to 30% of their total purchases within 5 years. While a school district's ability to reach the 30% threshold is not the only measure of progress regarding the interest in and ability to incorporate New York State and local products, it is one way to view the relative performance of other Counties and school districts.

The percentage of NYS food purchases among the schools that reached the 30 percent threshold varies widely. The average percentage achieved by the 59 schools that reached the 30 percent

threshold is 38 percent. The chart below provides data for top 20 schools by percentage of NYS products purchased, including the amount spent, the percentage reached, and the school's enrollment, which provides a glimpse into the geographies within NYS finding success, the size of the schools, and, ultimately, the financial impact flowing through to NYS producers.

For example, the Corning City SD spent the highest amount of any top 20 school district - \$256,612. However, Buffalo Public Schools, which falls outside of the top 20 when ranked by percentage, spent \$2,377,030, representing only 32% of its total food spend on NYS products. The next closest school district to Buffalo in terms of spend - Middletown City SD - spent \$341,624, over \$2 million less than Buffalo.

There are likely many schools that fell short of the 30 percent threshold that also spent more on NYS products than many of the schools that did reach the 30 percent threshold. While reaching that target threshold has important implications for the school district in terms of the increased reimbursement rate, it does not capture the impact school purchases are having on NYS agriculture on a gross basis. Meeting the target threshold is also not the only motivating factor behind schools' desires to source more of their food from local and NYS producers.

Figure: Oneida County Food Marketing Practices, 2012-2022 (Adjusted for Inflation)

| Category | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 | Total Change 2017-2022 | Percent Change 2017-2022 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Value of food sold directly to consumers | | | | | |
| Farms | 165 | 152 | 150 | -2 | -1% |
| Sales | \$3,622,498 | \$5,703,847 | \$4,721,000 | (\$982,847) | -17% |
| Value of food sold directly to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs for local or regionally branded products | | | | | |
| Farms | N/A | 19 | 31 | 12 | 63% |
| Sales | N/A | \$1,386,261 | \$2,938,000 | \$1,551,739 | 112% |
| Value of processed or value-added agricultural products sold | | | | | |
| Farms | N/A | 60 | 45 | -15 | -25% |
| Sales | N/A | \$604,176 | \$1,892,000 | \$1,287,824 | 213% |

Source: 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture

Figure: Top 20 School Districts by Percentage of NYS Products Purchased

| Based on 2022-2023 SY Purchases | County | Amount Spent on NYS Food Products for Lunch | Percentage of NYS Products Purchased | Enrollment |
|---|------------|--|---|------------|
| Clinton-Essex-Warren- Washington BOCES | Clinton | \$18,621 | 73% | 239 |
| Chenango Forks CSD | Broome | \$81,122 | 63% | 1,352 |
| Alexandria CSD | Jefferson | \$56,956 | 55% | 491 |
| Livingston Manor | Sullivan | \$35,676 | 54% | 440 |
| Avoca CSD | Steuben | \$40,533 | 51% | 396 |
| Prattsburgh CSD | Steuben | \$33,486 | 49% | 366 |
| Bradford CSD | Steuben | \$25,241 | 48% | 266 |
| Hammondsport CSD | Steuben | \$31,962 | 46% | 380 |
| Jasper-Troupsburg CSD | Steuben | \$33,426 | 45% | 391 |
| Corning City SD | Steuben | \$256,612 | 43% | 4,585 |
| Campbell-Savona CSD | Steuben | \$55,982 | 43% | 820 |
| Forestville CSD | Chautauqua | \$31,627 | 43% | 438 |
| Bath CSD | Steuben | \$126,434 | 43% | 1,503 |
| Red Hook CSD | Dutchess | \$43,989 | 42% | 1,612 |
| Alfred-Almond CSD | Allegany | \$25,925 | 40% | 558 |
| Union-Endicott CSD | Broome | \$188,270 | 40% | 3,879 |
| Odessa-Montour CSD | Schuyler | \$44,183 | 40% | 777 |
| Canaseraga CSD | Allegany | \$13,309 | 39% | 212 |
| Horseheads CSD | Chemung | \$204,960 | 39% | 4,343 |
| Watkins Glen CSD | Schuyler | \$54,132 | 39% | 909 |

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

CHOBANI'S 2025 ROME, NY DAIRY PLANT EXPANSION - IMPACT AND STRATEGIC RESPONSE

NEW DAIRY PROCESSING FACILITY IN ROME: NATURE AND CAPABILITIES

Chobani is investing in a massive new dairy processing plant at the Griffiss Business & Technology Park in Rome (Oneida County), NY. The facility will span 1.4 million square feet on a 150-acre site and serve as Chobani's third U.S. plant. It is a state-of-the-art production center for dairy-based foods (e.g. Greek yogurt and related products), built to meet surging demand for natural, high-protein foods. Key capabilities announced for the Rome plant include up to 28 processing lines and capacity to handle approximately 12 million pounds of milk per day, enabling output of over 1 billion pounds of dairy products per year. This scale will make it one of the largest dairy manufacturing facilities in the nation. The facilities specifications are outlined in the table below:

| FACILITY ASPECT | DETAILS (ROME, NY PLANT) |
|--------------------------|--|
| Facility Type | Dairy processing (yogurt & other dairy products) |
| Size & Footprint | ~1.4 million sq. ft. on 150 acres |
| Production Lines | Up to 28 lines (state-of-the-art automation) |
| Milk Processing Capacity | ~12 million lbs. of milk per day at full capacity |
| Annual Output | >1 billion lbs. of finished dairy products |
| Chobani's U.S. Plants | 3rd U.S. plant (others in South Edmeston, NY and Twin Falls, ID) |
| Products | Greek yogurt (flagship), dairy-based drinks, creamers, etc. |

As shown above, the Rome facility is designed to dramatically expand Chobani's processing capability. It will roughly double Chobani's New York State production footprint . Beyond production technology, the site is envisioned as a hub of food innovation with partnerships involving local farmers, colleges, and entrepreneurs to create an "ecosystem" of innovation around it.

INVESTMENT, CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE, AND JOB CREATION

Chobani's Rome facility represents a \$1.2 billion capital investment—the largest of its kind in U.S. natural food manufacturing. Groundbreaking occurred in April 2025, with full construction scheduled for late 2025 and operations expected to begin by 2027. The facility will create over 1,000 full-time jobs in food processing, logistics, quality control, and related fields, effectively doubling Chobani's New York workforce and significantly increasing regional manufacturing employment.

MILK DEMAND AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DAIRY PRODUCERS

At full capacity, the Rome plant will process up to 12 million pounds of milk per day—approximately six times Chobani's current procurement in New York. This increase represents over 25% of the state's total daily milk production. The resulting demand may stabilize prices and create long-term contracts for producers across Oneida and neighboring counties. Similar to other large facilities in the region, this may prompt herd expansion, infrastructure investment, and modernization across the local dairy sector. Meeting this demand will require additional labor, capital, and environmental compliance capacity on farms.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT

In addition to job creation, the project is expected to generate new demand in trucking, warehousing, equipment maintenance, and related sectors. Approximately 200 inbound milk truck trips per day will increase traffic through the region's freight corridors. The \$23 million FAST NY grant is funding site infrastructure upgrades at Griffiss Business & Technology Park, including roads, utilities, and future rail or air freight capacity. Additional utility improvements will be required to accommodate the plant's energy, water, and wastewater needs. Together, these investments reinforce Oneida County's position in the state's dairy supply chain and food manufacturing economy.

Chobani's investment in Oneida County cements its role as a significant contributor to New York's agricultural and food economy. New York was already the nation's #1 yogurt producer and a top-5 milk producer; this plant reinforces that status. With strategic partnerships and targeted investments in dairy farms and ancillary businesses, Oneida County can maximize Chobani's expansion for sustainable, long-term economic benefits.





KEY AREAS FOR STRATEGY



FARM TO INSTITUTION

As demonstrated through the evaluation of past plan actions, Oneida County, through the efforts of CCE, Oneida County, farms, and distributors, has made substantial progress on farm to institution efforts. The Upstate/Downstate initiative has gained traction and increased sales year over year. The Oneida Public Market in person and online markets give producers and food retailers a local market and an opportunity for expanding online direct to consumer sales. Oneida-Herkimer-Mohawk BOCES is a committed partner that desires to source more NYS and local food. Upstate Growers and Packers is a growing node in the New York Food Hub Collaborative - a statewide network of food hubs with goals of growing its capacities and capabilities.

These are positive developments for a number of strategic reasons:

- The supply chain relationships, infrastructure, and know-how that the current initiatives have built can be scaled and expanded to add volume through existing institutional channels or new channels.
- These linkages within the supply chain are accomplishing the local capture of value across more of the food dollar distribution.
- Institutional markets have government support that incentivize New York State and local products.
 - The NY 30% initiative increases K-12 school meal reimbursements from \$0.08 to \$0.25 per breakfast and lunch meal once a school sources 30% of its menu of food grown or 51% processed in NYS.
 - Within the emergency food space, NY Food for NY Families has received \$90 million since it was introduced in 2020. Like NY 30%, these funds need to be spent on NYS produced or processed food and, while emergency feeding organizations need are mindful of costs so they can meet the historic need they are facing, they are also mindful of the mission and community relations appeal supporting specific local producers can have in their marketing and fundraising.
- While Executive Order 32 is new and lacks guidance on incentives or consequences for failing to meet the guidelines it lays out, it will likely expand the opportunities for NYS producers to sell to buyers that are more motivated to source NYS and local food over time.

UPSTATE/ DOWNSTATE INITIATIVE

The Upstate Downstate Project, initiated in 2021 and funded through the Governor's budget, aims to bridge the food network divide between upstate New York farmers and downstate markets, particularly in New York City. Initiated by Martin Broccoli and currently led by Myron Thurston III of CCE Oneida, the project educates farmers on wholesale market distribution, market opportunities, risk management, and necessary certifications. It also fosters understanding between NYC purchasing agents and upstate farmers, providing access to USDA and NY State grant programs.

In 2023, the project achieved significant results, with Upstate Growers and Packers Farms delivering 10,251 cases of product to Hunts Point Market, 3,383 cases to Brooklyn, and 10,560 cases to Grow NYC, totaling 24,194 cases valued at \$603,095. Final fourth quarter sales brought the 2023 total to \$660,000, a 65% increase from 2022 sales (\$400,000). By aggregating products into larger deliveries, the initiative also saved producers \$100,000 in delivery costs.

The initiative has forged key partnerships, including with Harvest New York and Cornell University, to improve logistics for upstate food hub; Matriark Foods to source upcycled produce; and The River Fund in Queens, which is committed to buying produce, dairy, and meat from upstate farmers. Additionally, the Variety Boys and Girls Club of Queens has launched a fresh food box program for 200 families, with plans to expand. These efforts collectively enhance food security and fresh food access in NYC while supporting upstate farmers.

The initiative has also been an opportunity for Oneida County producers to build capabilities and gain the experience required to effectively wholesale products. Participating producers in Oneida County include those listed in the table below.

| Name | Municipality |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Candella's Farm and Greenhouses | Marcy |
| Humphreys Farms | New Hartford |
| North Star Orchards | Westmoreland |
| Juliano Farms | Utica |
| Old McMarley's Apple Farm | Clinton |
| George's Farm Products | Clinton |

K-12 FARM TO SCHOOL

The Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES (OHM BOCES) Food Services Program provides comprehensive management of school meal programs for its component districts, ensuring students receive nutritious and appealing meals. This service includes hiring, training, and supervising staff, menu development, and food procurement and preparation. The program aims to meet and exceed federal and state nutritional guidelines, offering fresh fruits and vegetables regularly. The Oneida County school districts participating in this consortium are Clinton Central, New Hartford Central, New York Mills Central, Oriskany Central, Remsen Central, Sauquoit Valley Central, Waterville Central, and Westmoreland Central School Districts. This collaborative approach helps streamline operations and improve the quality of food services across the districts.

OHM BOCES is expanding its food service contracting options to include collective bids, collective orders, and administrative and reporting support. With these options, schools can remain the direct employers of their food service staff, but can benefit from shared back-office services, streamlining food purchases and

order shipping and receiving, particularly New York State and locally produced items.

OHM BOCES has actively pursued the 30% NYS purchasing goal in the past. However, they have recently de-emphasized this target because most NYS products they had purchased were not from their three participating counties, failing to build relationships between local farms and school communities. Additionally, they were paying a premium for non-local NYS products and still falling short of the threshold, resulting in a loss of additional reimbursement to offset the higher prices.

NEW YORK FOOD HUB COLLABORATIVE

The New York Food Hub Collaborative is an initiative aimed at enhancing the economic viability of mid-tier value chain partners by improving efficiencies, maximizing profits, and increasing demand for New York food products. It brings together 29 local food system stakeholders representing 21 organizations. This collaborative effort is crucial for supporting small and mid-sized producers, ensuring they can compete in state agency and institutional contracts. By fostering strategic business relationships among food hubs, producers, processors, distributors, and markets, the Collaborative promotes organizational interdependence, trust, and transparency. Key partners include Farm Fare, Syracuse University, Upstate Growers & Packers, Eden Valley Growers, Capital Roots, and several others.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

**KATE DORR,
OHM BOCES**

Key Challenges

1. Procurement and Logistics:

- Small and mid-sized farms have difficulty managing procurement processes, especially with formal bids which can be overwhelming. Smaller schools also struggle to add procurement and administrative complexity to their programs.
- Challenges with delivery logistics, including the need to order large quantities far in advance.
- The timing of grower planning and school procurement bids often do not line up and, therefore, farms cannot meet volume requirements within growing cycles.
- To consistently menu food items, food needs to be minimally processed and meet packaging requirements. Individual Quick Frozen (IQF) products are helpful in this regard.
- Many products are not sourced from Oneida County, leading to reliance on suppliers outside the immediate area and limiting the financial impact within the County.

2. Labor and Menu Planning:

- Increased labor demands and complexity in incorporating local produce into school menus.
- The need for additional support and expertise in procurement and menu planning.



3. Financial Constraints:

- While universal free and reduced lunch have helped make school meal programs more profitable and leave them with more financial flexibility to invest in higher priced local options, schools still reach a break-even point where they cannot afford the premium product, especially when delivery fees are factored in.

4. Isolation and Expertise:

- The role of school food directors can be isolating, with many lacking expertise in procurement and farm to school initiatives.
- Difficulty in implementing farm to school programs across multiple buildings and schools. This can be especially true of complementary educational or marketing initiatives.

Key Opportunities

1. Partnerships and Collaborations:

- Collaborations with organizations like Headwater Food Hub and Common Thread Farm to streamline procurement and delivery.
- Opportunities to work with

wellness committees and other school-based initiatives to promote farm to school programs.

- Initiatives like the school CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program, which connects schools with local farms. OHM BOCES is piloting this program. It is not a solution for scaling regularly menued items, but it builds awareness and relationships with local farms.

2. Marketing and Branding:

- Potential for big marketing campaigns to raise awareness and support for farm to school efforts.
- Branding and promotional activities, such as featuring farms on billboards and social media.

3. Educational and Community Engagement:

- Farm to school programs can bring communities together and provide educational opportunities for students.
- Initiatives like taste testing, wellness fairs, and farm to school month activities to engage students and the community.

LUKE GEORGE, UPSTATE GROWERS AND PACKERS

Key Challenges

1. Specialty Vegetables Decline:

There's a decline in specialty vegetable production, impacting availability for school programs.

2. Small Farm Challenges:

Small farms struggle with wholesale integration, often aging out or moving towards direct sales for higher margins.

3. Logistical Hurdles:

Difficulty meeting specific product specifications, such as pack sizes, shelf life, product formulations, etc.

4. Infrastructure Limitations:

Many school districts lack proper equipment like knives and adequate freezer storage, hindering large-scale purchasing and requiring minimally processed and/or pre-cooked food options.

5. Labor and Processing Costs:

High costs of equipment for value-added processing (e.g., commercial dicers) and challenges with custom runs (especially in the IQF world) affect profitability.

Key Opportunities

1. Regional Collaboration:

Collaborative efforts among distributors (e.g., Russo Distributors, Headwater Food Hub) and infrastructure improvements (e.g., facility upgrades in Oneida County, especially at OHM BOCES central warehouse and Upstate Growers and Packers facility) could enhance supply chain efficiency..

2. Government Grants and Support:

Opportunities like the school infrastructure grant offer funding and logistical support for expanding operations.

3. Seasonal and Year-Round Supply:

Focus on producing and storing products year-round (e.g., scratch kit meals, tray meals) to meet school demand consistently. IQF products can be accessed through Headwater Food Hub; Upstate Growers and Packers is working on identifying non-IQF products and processes that can achieve a 1-year shelf life and just-in-time delivery of fresh cut products.

TIM FITZGERALD, MV EDGE

Current Initiatives

1. Dairy Processing:

MV Edge is leading the study on dairy processing. The study is still in its first phase. They are focused on following the data versus going in with conclusions in mind, so they are clear on what opportunities make sense for the County.

2. USDA Grants and Rural Business Development:

MV Edge works with USDA Rural Development grants, which are structured as capital leases, allowing agricultural and small manufacturing businesses to avoid interest costs while MV Edge reuses repayments to support additional projects. These have been successful in acquiring key equipment for business expansions.

Key Opportunities

1. Increased Technical Assistance:

Many farms and food businesses are underprepared for funding

opportunities. Providing technical assistance to enhance preparedness and eligibility could bridge this gap. Assistance should be designed for farms and businesses of different sizes and maturity. Being prepared for a CDBG micro-enterprise grant versus larger CDBG or ESD funding opportunity requires much different levels of preparedness, both for applying and for administering funds.

2. Expanding Dairy and Agri-Business Support:

With a \$20 million state initiative for dairy support recently announced, MV Edge sees potential to leverage this funding for local farms, pending clarity on distribution methods. Additionally, increased awareness and research around USDA sustainability and energy programs could benefit the region's agricultural community and overlap with CCE's Community Energy Hub programming.

3. Expanded Outreach and Marketing:

MV Edge shares funding opportunities with ThINcubator and the Small Business Center, as well as through typical press releases and social media posts, but acknowledge they could expand their outreach to include more traditional agricultural partners or networks such as Farm Bureau.

4. Regular, Agricultural Economic Development Conversations:

Having regular, intentional meetings focused on farm and food related economic development discussions would lead to greater alignment, project identification, and preparedness. Maintaining a project pipeline or dashboard could be a touchstone to review during these meetings.

Key Challenges

1. Business Preparedness and Managing Expectations:

It has been challenging to identify eligible projects during certain rounds of funding. Recipients can also lose patience with the administration and timeline to get through approvals and to receive disbursements.

2. Staff Turnover and Knowledge Transfer:

Turnover has, at times, led to disruptions and affected continuity. More could be done to cross train, establish intentional redundancies, and document standard operating procedures.

Outstanding Questions

1. Emergency Funds for Dairy Operations:

Unsure of what the current status of that fund or funding is. It was well received when announced as part of the 2023 State of the County address.

2. Dedicated County Funding:

Unsure whether dedicated County funding through occupancy tax, sales tax, or some other general fund source would be a viable source of funding because of State approvals and general consensus building.

PIETRA YOZZO, ONEIDA COUNTY TOURISM

Pietra is serving as interim President during Sarah Calero's leave and acknowledged that she had limited background on the collaborations between the County, CCE, and Tourism.

Current Initiatives

1. Beverage and Cheese trails are both active and popular. The beverage trails are part of a regional Central NY trail and are a

digital-only program. The cheese trail is Oneida County only and is a paper-based program. Both programs have an onboarding process for businesses to get added. Businesses on the tour, especially when they are first added, benefit from considerable PR and exposure.

2. Supporting marketing and promotion of County farmer's markets.

3. Supporting Taste of CNY, especially with marketing cross promotion.

4. Supporting and, in many cases, leading marketing campaigns for Visit Central NY, for example, "Beyond the Big Apple" – a new campaign targeted at international visitors to highlight the opportunities outside of New York City. Oneida County Tourism is a leader in the region, sets a lot of the regional agendas, and can use their voice to highlight additional Ag related initiatives.

Key Opportunities

1. Expanding farm and food marketing to include farmer's markets, farm to table events, and farm stays.

2. Potentially adding a weekend tour for key farm and food sectors in addition to trail, such as a weekend cheese tour, beverage tour, fiber tour, etc.

3. Further leveraging cross promotion, Tourism's social media reach (30,000 Facebook users), and Tourism's marketing skills.

4. Further leveraging Tourism's marketing agency. Their contract and relationship with the marketing agency allows for flexibility, which can allow for adaptive and responsive marketing campaigns. They

support website design, digital ads, online payment and sign-ups, photo and video content, and more. When high impact ag tourism opportunities are identified, this partner can be called into action to support the development of campaigns or generate key content.

5. Updating databases related to farm and food businesses, especially with a mapping feature, would allow Tourism to align and update their marketing assets in a timelier manner. This would also allow for more streamlined updating and maintenance of assets like the Oneida Agritourism Map.

6. Partnering farms and food businesses with Oneida Tourism and their marketing agency to level up branding, marketing, and e-commerce abilities. Some farms, like Collins Farm and Creamery, are adept at marketing already, but many struggle with this aspect of running a business. Trainings and best practices coming from Tourism could not only improve farm and food business abilities but would allow for natural alignment and integration with overarching marketing initiatives.

Key Challenges

1. Engagement with farm proprietors.
2. Small farm marketing skills, knowledge, and resources.

PRIORITIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

DEFINING SUCCESS

How will success be defined? Gross revenue? Net profit? Consumers educated? Food insecurity reduced? Food deserts eliminated? Key minority communities engaged and supported? While farming and food ventures are primarily for-profit, driven by the need to be economically sustainable, governmental entities like the County and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) have a broader mandate to address social issues and seize economic opportunities within these industries. This mandate may broaden the outcomes that define success. When identifying priority projects, initiatives, and benchmarks to track progress, it is essential to ask: Who is this for? What is this for?

REALISM IN CAPACITY, RESOURCES, AND EXECUTION

Given the County's and CCE's existing project portfolios, and the potential for initiatives like the Oneida Public Market and Dairy Processing Report actions to become major projects, we need a realistic approach to capacity and resources. Maintaining essential programs and growing effective models requires careful consideration of time, effort, and resources. In addition to identifying top priorities, this strategic planning process also provides an opportunity to evaluate lower-impact projects that may be suitable for outsourcing or winding down. Creating a "stop-doing" list can be as valuable as identifying new opportunities.

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS AND PROVEN MODELS

Achieving proof of concept is often the most challenging phase in a project or program's life cycle. Navigating the "fuzzy front end" to establish clarity, definition, and basic standard operating procedures requires significant effort and, despite those efforts, projects can still fail or fail to deliver a minimum return on investment. Building on established strengths and successful models will enhance the County's ability to replicate and scale initiatives effectively, while avoiding the trial and error involved in standing up programs and initiatives from scratch.

INVESTING IN YOUNG LEADERS

Oneida County is fortunate to have young leaders in key roles, including Luke George, Kate Dorr, Sarah Calero, and others within the County and CCE. These individuals bring strong expertise in their fields, and their sustained involvement in agriculture and food initiatives could ensure valuable relationships and continuity for decades. Investing in their organizational growth and professional development gives Oneida County a competitive advantage, especially as many other seek the next generation of leaders—Oneida County has already found several of theirs.

DETERMINING SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM ROLES

While Oneida County government and CCE have operational capacities and regularly manage events, programs, and business-related activities, each organization should carefully consider its role

in leading or supporting identified priority projects. Traditionally, governments and CCE offices support the agricultural industry through professional services, technical assistance, coordination, communication, partner convening, and funding guidance as opposed to the more operational aspects of the food economy. If a pilot project requires operational involvement, it is essential to determine whether this role will be sustained long-term or eventually transferred to a business or nonprofit partner.

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STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION



STRATEGIC THEMES

We identified the following themes as most strategic for Oneida County government and Oneida County Cornell Cooperative Extension to focus on:

1. *Farmland Preservation and Protection*

Goal: Protect the county's high-quality farmland from solar and other development pressures.

2. *Economic Development and Business Support*

Goal: Support the local agricultural economy including farm production, processing, distribution and support services.

3. *Agritourism and Local Food Promotion*

Goal: Promote agritourism and direct-to-consumer sales to build markets for local food, increase revenue on farms, and promote public appreciation of agriculture.

4. *Workforce Development and Farm Transition*

Goal: Cultivate the next generation of farmers through skills training and assistance with farm transition/ succession planning.

5. *Sustainability and Climate Resilience*

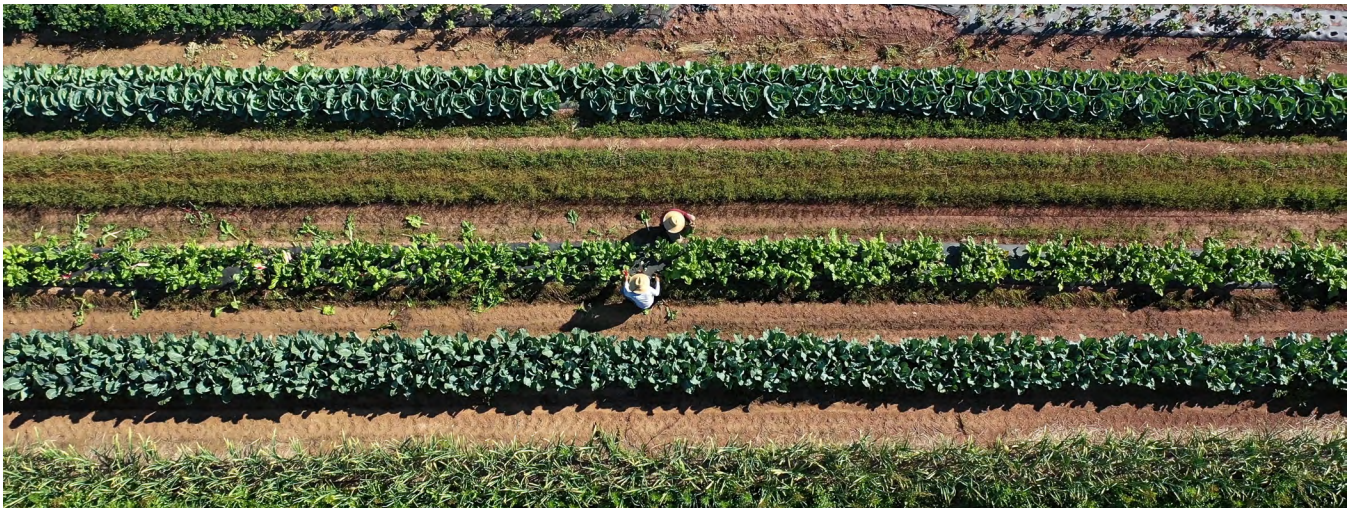
Goal: Support implementation of agricultural practices that help farms reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect soil and water quality and adapt to climate change.

These themes and goals are not comprehensive. That is by design. Oneida County and Cornell Cooperative Extension will continue to provide services and support across a range of other areas that support Oneida County's agricultural economy. The theme areas are those operational areas where the County possesses capabilities and competitive advantages within areas of the agricultural economy that have a high impact on future outcomes. The key themes will help you weigh the pros and cons of current and future commitments to stay within your strategic lanes. They are meant to serve as filter for considering new resource commitments, reallocating existing resources and staff, and a way to protect capacity essential to execute in these areas.

It is easier to say 'No' to low value opportunities when you know what your 'Yes' is.



1. FARMLAND PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION



GOAL

Protect the county's high-quality farmland from urban and solar development pressures.

WHY

Farmland is the foundation of Oneida County's agricultural future. Protecting prime farmland is critical with growing pressures from residential and other development as well as renewable energy projects (e.g., solar energy).

Project 1.1: Work with municipalities to improve solar laws to limit or mitigate development of solar energy facilities on farmland, while protecting the rights of landowners.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The number of acres in farms in Oneida County continues to decrease. The 2017 Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan reported that the acreage in farms decreased from 319,806 acres in 1969 to 205,106 acres in 2012. This trend continued over the past decade, according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, decreasing another 8.5% to 187,672 acres in 2022.

The major driver of farmland conversion in the past has been

conversion of land to residential development, including scattered and large lot developments. While residential development continues to convert farmland, especially land that has been leased to farmers, farms have generally retained the highest quality lands for agricultural use.

The recent growth in demand for solar and other renewable energy development throughout New York State may result in conversion of additional large areas of farmland.

Farmland is well-suited to solar development because it is generally level and without trees or wetlands. Lands within one-half mile or less of transmission lines may be especially vulnerable to being developed for renewable energy.

Large-scale solar energy developments - those with generating capacity of 20MW or more - are under the jurisdiction of the NYS Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) and outside of the direct control of local governments. Local laws to manage solar development may include provisions to discourage siting on active farmland and to require mitigation of impacts when projects take agricultural

land out of production. In addition, Counties that administer Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements for solar projects may require projects to avoid or mitigate impacts on farmland. When projects are constructed on agricultural lands, compliance with NYS Agriculture & Markets Guidelines during construction will help to minimize impacts throughout the lifespan of the solar project to ensure that the site will be suitable for agriculture after construction or decommission, to the extent feasible.

MODEL

The Model Solar Energy Local Law prepared by NYSERDA as a guide to local governments suggests limiting the extent of agricultural lands used in a solar energy system development and other approaches to limit the impact of solar projects on agricultural resources.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Provide information and technical assistance to municipalities seeking to adopt or enhance solar local laws and/or other land use regulations.

Project 1.2: Incentivize or otherwise encourage municipalities to develop new municipal comprehensive plans and farm-friendly land use regulations, utilizing the guidance and criteria from the Ag-Friendly Oneida County municipal planning guide.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Counties do not have direct land use policy making or regulatory authority, but they can incentivize and support actions at the local level that align with County goals. Ag-friendly criteria can both be incorporated into Comprehensive Plans as well as local zoning and subdivision regulations. This leverages the good work that went into Ag-Friendly Oneida County's municipal planning guide by spurring more communities to take action on them.

MODEL

Ulster County Housing Smart Communities Initiative: While this is a solution for a different problem, the general framework is one that can be adapted to allow a County to incentivize and support myriad local actions, including Ag policies and actions. The good news is Oneida County already has the criteria and an understanding of where communities are in their respective journey towards intentional community planning that is Ag-friendly.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Translate the Ag-friendly criteria into a draft scoring rubric and circulate to a few test communities to see if they understand how they would follow it and accomplish actions and what incentives would need to be attached to actions to prompt action.

Project 1.3: Maintain and formalize roles within CCE and Planning Department dedicated to farmland protection and agricultural economic development. Duties would include Agricultural District administration, staff support to the Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board, grant writing and administration, coordination with other agencies, and informational resource development

CURRENT CHALLENGE

A lack of a dedicated staff person or people to agricultural economic development at the County makes it substantially more difficult for the County to make progress on ag-related issues. Employing a full-time, dedicated staff member at the County creates capacity and enables quick responsiveness and flexibility to communicate with County leadership and Legislature, as well as leverage County funds directly. Roles within other organizations such as CCE are equally as valuable but cannot represent or directly access the County and its priorities.

Dedicated staff at CCE dedicated to grant writing and administration, coordination, and resource development specifically for farmland protection and agriculture economic development would also greatly increase capacity. Currently, many staff positions at CCE are grant-funded, so efforts are project-based rather than long-term and consistent. Turnover, lack of funding, and staff time being spent across many obligations reduce CCE's capacity to target specific strategies.

MODELS

Erie County, in Western New York, created an Office of Agriculture in 2020 within the Department of Planning and Environment. The Office is currently staffed by one dedicated agriculture planner that is overseen by senior planners and the commissioner of the department. The Office of Agriculture oversees the Agricultural District Program, implements the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, provides administrative support to the Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, and offers financial support for rural municipalities as they prepare their own Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans. The Office also has a seat on the Erie County Food Policy Council.

Wayne County, located in the Finger Lakes, is a heavily agricultural county which is very productive in terms of fruit, field crops, and dairy. In addition to leadership and administration staff, the Wayne County Department of Planning has two staff planners and one staff Agricultural Development Specialist whose position was created in 1998 by the County Board of Supervisors. Their role includes coordinating the purchase of development rights, working with agricultural loan programs, being the industry contact for the Wayne County Economic Development Office, performing Agricultural District reviews, sitting on the County's Agriculture Development Board, and assisting farmers in obtaining conservation easements.

Jefferson County, located in the North Country of New York State, has a large agricultural industry and is located in a key geographic area for transporting and processing food products



with direct access to Canada and only a few hundred miles from Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City. Jefferson County Economic Development (JCED) is a quasi-governmental agency which leverages county-level resources for business growth and expansion. JCED includes the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency and several other development corporations. JCED has a staff Agriculture Coordinator, whose role it is specifically to coordinate new agricultural projects, attract agricultural companies to the area, administer agricultural loan programs, and serve as a liaison between the IDA, County, and organizations like Cornell Cooperative Extension, among other responsibilities.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Identify best organization for dedicated staff person to work from and identify/advocate for funding sources for the position's permanent retainment (as opposed to short-term grant funds).

Project 1.4: Support land trust farmer outreach and grant writing

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Protection of farmland with

conservation easements through PDR transactions or other means is a powerful tool for reducing the conversion of agricultural parcels and farmland to non-agricultural uses such as housing or commercial. Easements and PDR, in addition to tools like agricultural districts, can permanently protect farmland even if the property is sold or otherwise transitioned to new ownership. However, many farmers are unaware of these programs or are unaware of how to access them. Additionally, grant writing and other forms of paperwork often require specialized knowledge and time that farmers do not have, and they may not be aware of resources to help them.

MODEL

The New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) exemplifies a successful model for collaboration between state agencies and land trusts. This program, a joint effort between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Land Trust Alliance, provides competitive matching grants to New York land trusts. These grants support land conservation, economic development, farmland protection, community

conservation, and recreation and tourism. Since its inception, the NYSCPP has awarded over 1,200 grants totaling more than \$31 million to 94 land trusts, helping conserve tens of thousands of acres of farmland, wildlife habitat, recreational areas, and urban open spaces. This partnership leverages resources and expertise to achieve significant conservation outcomes, demonstrating the power of collaborative efforts in preserving natural resources and enhancing community well-being.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Continue to support the Farmland for a New Generation Regional Navigator position at CCE Oneida and work with funding sources to increase publicizing/advertising and education on options for farmland protection.

Continue to support the Agriculture Economic Development staff at CCE Oneida, both financially and in terms of partnerships and resources, to research grant opportunities, share information, consult with individual farmers and farm business owners, advise and assist on grant applications, and/or identify independent grant writers to assist with grant applications.



2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SUPPORT





GOAL

Support the local agricultural economy through value-added processing and expanded facilities.

WHY

Creating value-added products (e.g., dairy processing, local food processing) will significantly enhance the profitability of farming operations and grow the local economy. Wayne and Lewis Counties emphasize this as a high-impact strategy that ensures economic sustainability.

Project 2.1: Support the development of additional cold storage capabilities, as well as needed processing and other agricultural support facilities, through grant writing, financial incentives, or assistance with siting.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

There is a shortage of freezer and cooler space within the County supply chain, which limits the volume of orders that can be received, stored, and distributed within the food economy.

MODEL

HVADC supports the development of cold storage and processing facilities through grants, low-interest loans, and

technical assistance. This model can be adapted for Oneida County by leveraging similar funding sources and providing targeted support to local farmers and food processors.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Work with operators in the County to increase freezer and cooler space.

Project 2.2: Support Oneida County farms in developing wholesale, processing or other on-farm value-added capabilities through technical assistance, grant writing support, or facilitating cooperative ventures.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Oneida County farms are currently not willing or able to sell into wholesale markets, which means even as Farm to School programs find success, the success doesn't benefit Oneida Farms. Bidding, licensing, volumes, seasonality, delivery logistics all present barriers to entry.

MODEL

The St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) play key roles in fostering economic

development within the county's agricultural sector. The IDA supports agribusiness growth through financial assistance, including low-interest loans, grants, and tax incentives, focusing on infrastructure such as cold storage and processing facilities. By attracting new agribusiness investments, the IDA strengthens the local economy and creates job opportunities. Meanwhile, CCE provides technical assistance to farmers, offering business development resources and helping connect them with market opportunities, such as farm-to-school programs. CCE also aids in securing grant funding for agricultural projects and facilitates the growth of local food systems. Together, the IDA and CCE work to create a thriving agricultural economy by enhancing both the financial and operational capacity of local farms and agribusinesses.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Survey farmers on interest and current wholesaling activities, including asking farms to provide a current wholesale price list.

Project 2.3: Work to attract or grow ancillary businesses that plug into Chobani's supply chain.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The development of Chobani's Rome processing facility presents a significant opportunity to expand Oneida County's agri-business ecosystem. However, many of the inputs and services required by the plant—such as fruit processing, packaging materials, sanitation supplies, and equipment maintenance—would currently be sourced from outside the region. Without proactive efforts to grow or recruit these complementary businesses, the economic benefits of the plant may not fully circulate within the local economy.

MODEL

The Great Lakes Cheese expansion in Cattaraugus County leveraged regional coordination through its IDA and NYS incentives to develop supply-side businesses alongside the primary facility. Similarly, dairy plant expansions in Webster (Fairlife) and Dunkirk (Wells Enterprises) were supported through CFA grants and targeted recruitment of complementary processors, helping to localize input sourcing and drive multiplier effects in the surrounding economy.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Identify and market strategic sites within Oneida County for complementary food and packaging businesses, particularly within proximity to Chobani.

Work with MV Edge and Empire State Development to support site users through CFA funding, tax incentives, or utility support (e.g., infrastructure upgrades,

low-cost power). Facilitate supply chain roundtables or networking events between Chobani and local/regional producers (e.g., fruit processors, dairy powder manufacturers, materials suppliers) to identify opportunities for local sourcing and co-location.

Project 2.4: Support additional produce distribution services, such as a last mile-delivery service to close the cost and logistics gap for buyers and sellers.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Breakeven price points for Oneida County's small and mid-sized specialty vegetable producers are already tough to match with institution's purchasing budgets - delivery fees make it unaffordable for both. K-12 schools alone have 75 buildings and generally require that deliveries are made to each individual building given their storage and staffing constraints.

MODEL

Produce Peddlers, located in Erie County, NY, is a locally focused business that connects regional farms with institutional and retailers through an innovative distribution model. By partnering with local farmers, Produce Peddlers ensures that schools receive fresh, seasonal products while helping to sustain the local agricultural economy.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Identify current food hubs and distributors that are willing to pilot small-scale distribution models with grant support or temporary subsidies.

Project 2.5: Increase participation among farmers and agriculture-

related business in available agricultural economic development programs, such as revolving loan programs, grants, and tax incentives.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Without a specific mandate based on mission, interest, and institutional experience, agriculture is not typically the focus of traditional economic development activities (MV edge does not mention agriculture or farms in either their 2023 or 2022 Annual Reports). Oneida County CCE has the agricultural mission and context but is not endowed with the resources and tools many economic development agencies are. An enhanced AED becomes an ag-grant clearinghouse, establishes and manages revolving loan programs, supports applications to CDBG and other funding programs, and coordinates PILOT and TIF incentives for farms and food producers.

MODEL

Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation: Serving six counties (Washington, Rensselaer, Albany, Columbia, Ulster, Dutchess, Sullivan, and Orange) located along the Hudson River, the organization provides technical assistance, provides ag exclusive loans, and supports emergency feeding operations like food recovery and distribution.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Create a flexible presentation template for an introduction to farm grant and financing resources.

Project 2.6: Develop and Implement Master Plan and Business Plan for Expanded Union Station REA Building

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The Union Station REA building is currently underutilized, and its full potential to support the agricultural supply chain, retail efforts, and serve as a community asset has yet to be realized. There is an opportunity to transform this space into a vibrant hub that can serve the local agricultural community, promote retail activity, and provide a venue for events that strengthen community connections.

MODEL

Farm Fresh Rhode Island (Providence, RI): Farm Fresh Rhode Island is a nonprofit organization that has transformed underutilized spaces into thriving agricultural hubs. The organization manages a network of farmers' markets, a food hub, and a commercial kitchen, providing local farmers with direct access to markets and resources to grow their businesses. This model emphasizes creating a central location for food processing, retail, and community engagement while supporting local agriculture and small businesses.

Glens Falls Business Expo and Regional Market (BEAR): The project involves the development of a regional market that provides retail and wholesale opportunities for local producers, along with space for community events, workshops, and expos. This model integrates business development with agricultural promotion, helping foster a local food economy while boosting regional economic growth.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Develop a master plan for the Union Station REA building that outlines how the space can be reconfigured to support agricultural supply chains, retail

activities, and community events. This would include designing dedicated spaces for food processing, cold storage, and retail markets, as well as areas for hosting local farmer expos, workshops, and educational events. The business plan should identify potential funding sources, market demand for such facilities, and long-term sustainability strategies for maintaining the space as a key community asset.

Project 2.7: Chobani Impacts and Implications

The results and implementation steps associated with this parallel effort will be addressed in this study. The effort and eventual workload that results from the study is noted here for consideration of organization resources, capacity, and priorities.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The results and implementation steps associated with this parallel effort will be addressed in this study. The effort and eventual workload that results from the study is noted here for consideration of organization resources, capacity, and priorities. Chobani's processing plant introduces several major new opportunities and challenges associated with the County's dairy industry and supporting industries. The Dairy Processing Feasibility Study should be adapted to evaluate and detail the ways in which the County and its partners will support the ramp up of dairy farm production in the County, as well as related industries that will need to scale up to support the increased business activities the Chobani project represents.

MODEL

Western New York (Milk & Cheese Plant Investments)

Upstate New York itself has seen several large dairy projects in recent years, and local governments have actively supported them.

Fairlife ultra-filtered milk plant in Webster (Monroe County). Announced in 2022, this \$650 million project is smaller than Chobani's but still significant at 5 million lbs/day processing capacity and ~250 jobs. To land Fairlife, New York State provided \$21 million in Excelsior tax credits, and critically, about \$40 million in state and local aid to build out the site's infrastructure and upgrade the town's wastewater treatment plant. This ensured the facility had adequate sewer capacity for its dairy effluent.

Great Lakes Cheese Factory (Cattaraugus County). In Cattaraugus County, local leaders attracted a new Great Lakes Cheese factory (a \$500–\$600+ million cheddar cheese plant) by assembling a large greenfield site and offering tax abatements and grants. The state chipped in funds for road improvements and job training.

Cayuga Milk Ingredients (Cayuga County). Cayuga Milk Ingredients, a farmer-owned venture, undertook a \$150 million expansion of their milk powder plant in Auburn; they received Empire State Development grants and electric power discounts to support the project. In each of these cases, Empire State Development (ESD) and local Industrial Development Agencies have used combinations of tax incentives, infrastructure grants, utility upgrades, and workforce development programs to support the facility.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Technical and Business

Assistance for Farms: Deploy CCE experts and Cornell PRO-DAIRY resources to work one-on-one with dairy farms on growth plans (e.g. facility expansions, herd health, milk quality).

This echoes the Oneida Dairy Sustainability Action Plan's goal of "long-term planning [and] economic development" for farms. CCE can host workshops on topics like scaling up milk production, modernizing milking systems, and improving efficiency. Assistance with business planning and financial management will be vital so that farmers can confidently invest in more cows or new barns.

For instance, helping farms develop pro-forma financials for expansion and navigate volatile milk price cycles will mitigate risk. Cornell's Dairy Advancement Program and other farm viability programs should be publicized; these provide grants for business planning and engineering studies for farm expansions.

Access to Capital and Grants: Oneida County and MV Edge (Mohawk Valley's economic development agency) should facilitate access to financing for farm improvements. They can promote and assist farmers in applying for relevant funding such as NYS Ag and Markets' Dairy Modernization Grant, which helps dairy farms install new technologies for the transportation and storage of milk, USDA loan programs (e.g. Farm Service Agency loans for expansion or the Farm Storage Facility Loan for milk coolers and silos) and Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) for any on-farm processing or diversification . The County could also utilize its CDBG-funded revolving loan fund to offer low-interest loans to

farms or ag co-ops for expansion projects. Additionally, New York State's new Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure grants (via USDA funding) could potentially support regional dairy supply chain projects (e.g. expanding a milk hauling cooperative or upgrading a local creamery). Proactively connecting farmers with these resources will improve their "readiness" to scale up production.

Project 2.8: Conduct an assessment of local roads and transport logistics for handling increased truck traffic resulting from Chobani's expansion.

The County should identify if any rural roads on milk routes need upgrades (widening, stronger bridges, better surfacing) to carry heavy milk tankers more safely and efficiently. If so, they can pursue funding through programs like the federal USDOT INFRA or RAISE grants or New York State DOT rural road programs to finance these improvements. Even simple steps like optimizing truck routes, adding signage, or adjusting traffic patterns near the plant can smooth logistics. Given Griffiss Park has a rail spur and an airport, exploring rail freight options for inbound supplies or outbound products could be worthwhile (for example, shipping packaged yogurt longer distances by rail could reduce trucking needs).



3. AGRITOURISM & LOCAL BRANDING



GOAL

Promote agritourism and local food systems to increase revenue streams.

WHY

Agritourism offers a strong opportunity for farmers to diversify revenue by leveraging Oneida County's scenic landscapes and local products. Both Yates and Schuyler Counties have demonstrated that agritourism can bring substantial economic benefits while promoting local agriculture when adequately marketed.

Project 3.1: Sustain and Grow the Taste of Central NY Event.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The Taste of Central NY event is a key platform for showcasing local agriculture, food producers, and culinary talent. However, the event struggles with visibility and engagement beyond its immediate audience. Without strategic marketing and stronger partnerships, it risks plateauing in attendance and impact, limiting its ability to generate increased revenue for participating local businesses and strengthen the regional agricultural economy.

MODEL

Farm Fresh Rhode Island (Providence, RI): This model focuses on increasing public awareness through coordinated marketing efforts, partnerships with tourism agencies, and social media campaigns that highlight local food systems and events.

CNY Fresh (Central New York): An initiative that connects regional farmers and food businesses with consumers, CNY Fresh uses collaborative marketing strategies to elevate local agriculture, with a focus on regional food systems and the promotion of agri-tourism.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Strengthen cross-promotion with Oneida County Tourism and CNY Fresh through targeted advertising, including social media purchases and collaborative promotional materials. The goal is to expand the event's reach, ensuring it attracts a broader audience from surrounding regions, and to increase the visibility of local food producers. This strategy would not only grow the event but also enhance awareness of local agricultural products, boosting sales for vendors and strengthening the regional agri-tourism sector.

Project 3.2: Update Agricultural asset map and assign responsibility for keeping it updated. Synchronize asset maps and other agricultural resource documents with Oneida County Tourism and CNY Fresh.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The agricultural asset map developed during the Farm to Consumer Study is a valuable resource but has not been maintained. Advances in GIS mapping, story maps, and data export capabilities (e.g., Excel) make the asset map an ideal tool for creating a dynamic, up-to-date inventory of agricultural assets. This updated map will allow planners and decision-makers to identify gaps and visualize the distribution of assets across the county.

MODEL

The CCE Jefferson County Data Collection and Asset Mapping Program is an innovative initiative that uses GIS technology to create and maintain a comprehensive map of the county's agricultural resources. The program tracks various assets, including farms, food businesses, and support services, offering a dynamic tool for

decision-makers, planners, and farmers. Regular updates to the asset map ensure it accurately reflects the county's agricultural landscape, allowing stakeholders to identify key resources, gaps, and opportunities. This program not only strengthens coordination among local agricultural entities but also supports economic development, land use planning, and the growth of the agricultural sector in Jefferson County.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Update the current asset map and incorporate agricultural directory information to fill in gaps. The map will serve as a dynamic tool, with data export capabilities to Excel for tabular formats. By synchronizing with Oneida County Tourism and CNY Fresh, this resource will provide a comprehensive, centralized inventory of agricultural assets, supporting the following initiatives:

- Tourism Map
- Farmers' Market Map
- Ag Business Directory
- Ag-Friendly Adoption Practices (shading communities by adoption levels)
- Oneida County Ag Tourism Map

Project 3.3: Develop a weekend tour approach to complement the beverage and cheese trails.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

While the trails are popular and receive a lot of engagement, the "do at your own pace" approach also doesn't create urgency, so might make it difficult for people to prioritize it on their calendar. The event-oriented tour would also give farm participants one weekend

to shoot for to roll out the red carpet and make a strong first impression versus trying to create week-in-week out experience that is either overwhelming for the farm or underwhelming for the tour goer.

MODEL

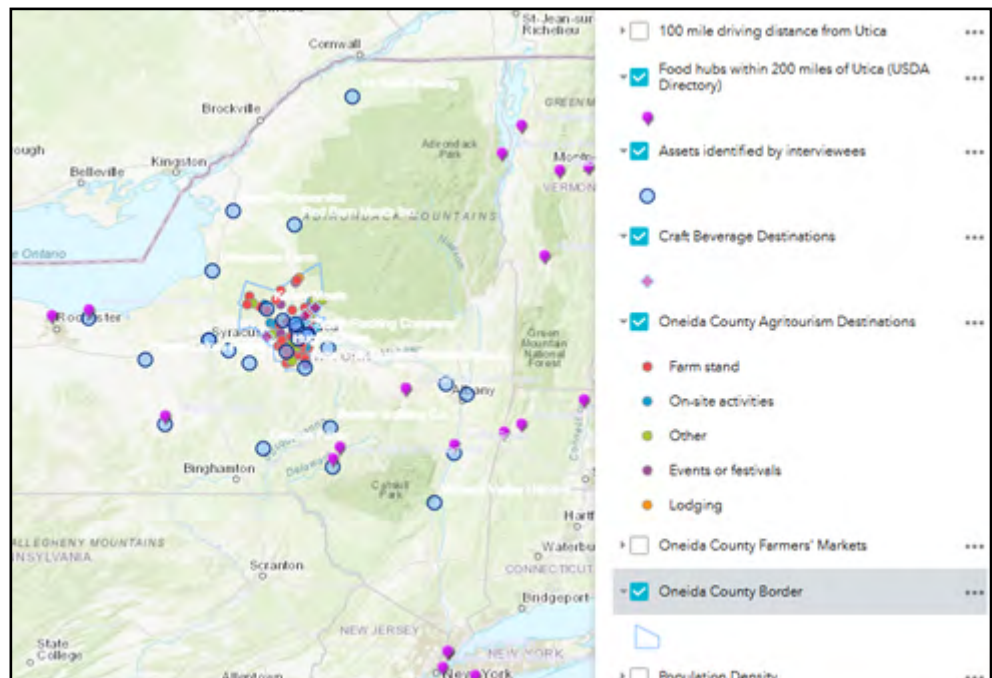
Washington County, New York hosts the Washington County Bounty Tour. Formerly restricted to cheese makers only and founded in 2007, the tour has grown to include many different types of farms. The tour is held over one weekend in September, with set hours for each day (10 am to 4 pm). The tour is available in a digital format (Google Maps) with more information on the tour's website. The tour is self-guided, but a sense of urgency is created by hosting it over only one weekend. Each farm stop hosts attractions such as food trucks, live music, beer and wine, farm animals, farm tours, kid's activities, lawn games, and of course, their own products. Additionally, the Tour is partnered with Comfort Food Community, a food pantry organization based

in the county. Each stop hosts a donation jar for organization.

Washington County also hosts a Fiber Tour, held in a similar format to the County Bounty Tour. Held over a weekend in April with set hours, the tour is also self-guided and includes free events at each farm stop, including spinning, knitting, weaving, and felting demonstrations, shopping for fiber products and cuts of lamb, and a visit to the Battenkill Carding and Spinning Mill.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Choose an ag industry to promote via tour and being to assemble participants. It would probably be easier to start with an existing industry versus starting with a new industry (beverage versus fiber).



Project 3.4: Provide support to farms, food producers and agritourism business to increase participation in county, regional, and state-wide marketing programs and NYS grown and certified.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The County's tours, trails, and guides on dining and experiences support the farm and food economy but focus primarily on food and beverages, leaving other agricultural operators overlooked. Additionally, current collaborations fail to enhance the marketing capabilities or presence of individual farms not participating in the trails.

MODEL

The "See. Taste. Explore." campaign in Washington County, NY, strategically amplifies agriculture by showcasing its vibrant local farms. Through immersive experiences and engaging narratives, the campaign spotlights the county's rich farming heritage and diverse agricultural products. By featuring farm tours, farmers' markets, and culinary events, it invites visitors and locals alike to savor fresh produce and artisanal goods directly from the source. This initiative not only boosts awareness of Washington County's agricultural offerings but also strengthens farms' marketing presence by fostering direct connections between producers and consumers. It emphasizes sustainability, quality, and community engagement, positioning agriculture as a cornerstone of the county's cultural and economic identity.

EXAMPLE ACTION

With updated resource map, add additional Ag assets like farmer's markets, u-picks, and farmstands to Oneida County

Tourism online and print assets. Create marketing templates and collateral that individual farms can adapt for their business marketing purposes.

Project 3.5: Provide support to farms, food producers and agritourism business to increase participation in county and regional farm and food marketing campaigns.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

While Oneida County Tourism and CNY Fresh have built a modern tech forward platform to showcase the areas farms and food businesses, individual farms could better leverage these efforts to mirror branding, tie into marketing efforts (synchronize SEO, cross-promote, develop physical brand assets), and drive consumer choices.

MODEL

Chautauqua County's agricultural marketing initiatives include the Chautauqua Grown Program,

which promotes local farms through a comprehensive directory and online marketing. The Farm-City Day event connects consumers to agriculture with farm tours, demonstrations, and local food showcases. Additionally, the county collaborates with the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau to promote farm-to-table experiences, enhancing agritourism and food product visibility. These efforts strengthen local farms and agritourism businesses, attracting both visitors and residents to explore the region's agricultural offerings.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Training and marketing building with Oneida County Tourism, tying into the "Beyond the Big Apple," Central NY branding effort.





4. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



GOAL

Cultivate the next generation of farmers and engage the community in supporting agriculture.

WHY

Engaging the community and fostering the next generation of farmers is essential for long-term sustainability. While vital, this area may take longer to show measurable impacts compared to farmland protection and value-added agriculture. Lewis County's emphasis on community-driven strategies is a robust model.

Project 4.1: Continue to promote Farm Fest.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Each year, an Oneida County farm opens its gates to local school children to learn about local agriculture on a working farm. During the day, 4th and 5th grade students take a field trip to the farm accompanied by teachers. The students visit different stations that cover a variety of topics and learn about how the farm runs as well as the importance of local agriculture to Oneida County's economy. In the evening, the farm is open to the public for farm tours, hayrides, games, food, vendors, and more. Farm Fest is operated by CCE

Oneida. Currently, challenges related to Farm Fest have to do with awareness and attendance to the event. The event was last held in 2023.

MODEL

The County's existing model is successful. This project proposal simply encourages growing and sustaining the current model.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Leverage relationships with organizations to sponsor and advertise Farm Fest.

Project 4.2: Build shared programming between MVCC and SUNY schools, especially the Food and Farm Incubator.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

MVCC and the thINCubator are valuable educational assets but currently offer limited programming for students interested in farming and food businesses. While SUNY Cobleskill's Institute for Rural Vitality provides cutting-edge education, it is located an hour away from Utica. Other regional SUNY institutions offer agricultural and food service programs that could be incorporated into MVCC's Agriculture or Culinary tracks.

MODEL

SUNY Adirondack has established partnerships with colleges like SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Cobleskill, and Siena College to facilitate seamless transfer opportunities. These collaborations, including 1+1 programs, allow students to transfer credits smoothly between institutions, providing flexible pathways for a four-year degree.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Create scholarships for students interested in the Institute for Rural Vitality's Value-Added Food Product Program and identify local spaces in Oneida County where students can complete coursework without commuting to Cobleskill.

Project 4.3: Support Ag Education from CCE

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Maintaining interest in and appreciation for agriculture among youth, and the non-farming public in general, is crucial for the continued success of the agricultural sector in Oneida County and across the country. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County provides critical agricultural education and other services for

youth, farmers, and the public, including administration of 4-H Youth Development, agriculture economic development, farm business management, crop and soil testing, gardening resources, and many more, including events like Farm Fest and 4-H's presence at the Oneida County Fair.

MODEL

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Suffolk County offers a robust agricultural education program engaging youth and the public. The 4-H Youth Development program provides hands-on learning in animal care, gardening, and environmental stewardship. School-based programs and farm field trips educate students about food production and sustainability. Community events like the Suffolk County Farm and Education Center's Fall Festival feature farm tours and interactive exhibits. These initiatives successfully increase agricultural awareness and appreciation, fostering a stronger connection to local food systems and supporting the agricultural sector's continued success.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Advocate for continued or increased funding for CCE Oneida from the Oneida County Legislature; continue to sponsor or cooperate with CCE Oneida on public-facing agricultural events; seek out and support new partnerships between the County and CCE Oneida to increase and enhance the full breadth of CCE's services and programs.

Project 4.4: Develop a Farming Apprenticeship and Internship Program.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Experienced farmers are aging out and many do not have direct

relatives interested in taking over their farming operations. Apprenticeships can help fill these gaps by providing hands on, industry specific training. Recruiting seasonal employees and retaining employees past a single season is often one of the greatest stressors a farmer faces.

MODEL

Farmer Veteran Coalition, Main Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, and Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship. See project sheet for complete details.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Promote Cornell's Small Farm curriculum and match course graduates to tailored apprenticeship opportunities.

Project 4.5: Build a Comprehensive Dairy Workforce Pipeline

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Chobani's new Rome facility will create over 1,000 new jobs in food manufacturing, while regional dairy farm expansion will increase demand for farm labor. Local institutions must align training, recruitment, and retention efforts to meet workforce needs in both plant and farm settings.

MODEL

The Fairlife project in Monroe County and the Chobani Twin Falls plant both partnered with local colleges, BOCES, and workforce agencies to deliver sector-specific training and recruit underserved populations. These models integrated technical instruction, short-term credentials, and apprenticeships into workforce pipelines for food manufacturing and ag support roles.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Collaborate with MVCC, BOCES, and SUNY to launch certificate or associate programs in dairy processing, plant maintenance, and quality control; leverage Workforce Development Initiative or SUNY training grants to fund instructors or lab equipment.

Establish short-term training and apprenticeship programs in collaboration with Chobani, County Workforce Development, and local nonprofits to recruit and train individuals from underserved populations, including veterans and immigrants.

Expand CCE's agricultural workforce programming to include farm internships and targeted recruitment strategies for dairy labor; integrate retention supports such as transportation coordination or childcare access in partnership with local service providers.

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5. SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

GOAL

Support implementation of agricultural practices that help farms reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect soil and water quality and adapt to climate change.

WHY

Reduce costs, increase operational resiliency and ability to withstand or bounce back from extreme weather, strengthen competitive advantage relative to other regions and countries over time.

Project 5.1: Create a farm and food energy focused community energy advisor within the Community Energy Hub.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

CCE Oneida has unique capabilities as a NYSEDA community energy hub. Farm and Food operations have unique energy needs, equipment, processes, and opportunities to address those energy needs.

MODEL

Ag Energy NY resource can be a source of training for the person identified to be the advisor. Training/advisory support could also include guidance for obtaining energy specific grant funding, which could dovetail with overall grant technical assistance. Potential grant funding sources include the funding through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation; NYSEDA Agriculture Energy Audit Program; and the Rural Energy for America (REAP) Program through USDA Rural Development, and federal tax credits for renewable energy and clean vehicles through the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Create a training program and farm/food energy guide for the person identified to be the Ag Energy Advisor.

Project 5.2: Conduct an agriculture-specific analysis of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to identify risks and mitigation measures for farm operations. Develop a plan to update this analysis in alignment with future updates to the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The County's 2022 Hazard Mitigation Plan offers a comprehensive inventory and analysis of hazards affecting the region. However, it lacks a targeted focus on agricultural risks and mitigation strategies. The current plan identifies the following Ag-related mitigation strategies:

- Work with local partners including Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA agencies and the SWCD to complete an Agricultural Vulnerability Study in order to mitigate hazards such as ice storms, drought, infestation, blight and utility failures.
- Work with producers to plant a diversity of crops to combat disease and droughty conditions.

MODEL

Cayuga County Hazard Mitigation Plan, Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, and Pennsylvania Agricultural Emergency Response Plan. For complete details, see project sheet.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Create a map overlay of risks in the updated Asset map.

Project 5.3: Emergency response training for on farm emergency preparedness and responsiveness.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The County has a Hazard Mitigation Plan, which addresses risks that specifically or generally have the potential to impact farming and food businesses in Oneida County. However, the Plan does not go beyond the identification of those risks, so farm and food businesses and emergency responders arriving to farm or food businesses based incident are unprepared for an actual emergency.

MODEL

NYCAMH has actively collaborated with County Governments and Cornell Cooperative Extensions to enhance agricultural safety. They organized the STAND workshop, bringing together diverse stakeholders to improve dairy farmers' lives. Through the John May Farm Safety Fund, they provided grants for safety equipment and training. NYCAMH also cohosted the New York Farm to School Summit with Cornell Cooperative Extension's Harvest New York team, promoting local food systems. Additionally, they partnered with the Candor Central School District and Cornell Cooperative Extension to acquire an animal handling system, enhancing livestock safety and efficiency.

EXAMPLE ACTION

Develop a farm safety checklist and safety sign templates that can either be downloaded and printed by farms or that can be ordered and delivered for reasonable costs.



PROJECT EVALUATION



Project evaluation took place throughout the development of the plan, through past plan action reviews, conversations, and research. From these efforts, the consulting team developed a slate of 19 potential project concepts, which were discussed by the working group at an 11/15/2024 workshop.

The project concepts are a combination of existing projects from past plan actions, which are recommended to be sustained or expanded, and new projects or initiatives that respond to needs and opportunities identified through evaluation discussions and research.

The slate of 19 projects were selected based on the impact, feasibility, and urgency associated with the activity. Additionally, the consulting team sought to identify projects that represented an overall portfolio of "light lifts" and "heavy lifts" which allow the County and CCE to have short-term, momentum building wins, while advancing more involved mid and long-term projects. The consulting team also sought to achieve a general balance of projects within the five goal areas.

After the projects were presented and discussed, the working group engaged in a scoring exercise. The working group scored each project based on a one through five score for impact, feasibility, and urgency where one was a low score and five is a high score and high scores represent priority projects. The working group also awarded an additional five bonus points for three projects they considered to be the highest priority projects.

| Project ID | Project | Impact | Feasibility | Urgency | Bonus Score | Total Score |
|------------|--|--------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 4.3 | Support Ag Education from CCE | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| 5.3 | Emergency response training | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| 1.3 | Maintain and formalize roles within CCE and Planning Department dedicated to farmland protection and agricultural economic development. Duties would include Agricultural District administration, staff support to the Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board, grant writing and administration, coordination with other agencies, and informational resource development | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 19 |
| 5.2 | Conduct an agriculture-specific analysis of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to identify risks and mitigation measures for farm operations. Develop a plan to update this analysis in alignment with future updates to the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan. | 4 | 5 | 5 | | 14 |
| 2.4 | Facilitate participation among farmers and agriculture-related business in available agricultural economic development programs, such as revolving loan programs, grants, and tax incentives. | 5 | 4 | 4 | | 13 |
| 1.2 | Incentivize or otherwise encourage municipalities to develop new municipal comprehensive plans and farm-friendly land use regulations, utilizing the guidance and criteria from the Ag-Friendly Oneida County municipal planning guide. | 3 | 5 | 4 | | 12 |
| 2.6 | Complete Dairy Processing Feasibility Study and Support Implementation Steps | 4 | 4 | 4 | | 12 |
| 4.2 | Build shared programming between MVCC and SUNY schools, especially the Food and Farm Incubator | 4 | 4 | 4 | | 12 |
| 1.4 | Support land trust farmer outreach and grant writing | 4 | 4 | 3 | | 11 |
| 2.2 | Support Oneida County farms in developing wholesale, processing or other on-farm value-added capabilities through technical assistance, grant writing support, or facilitating cooperative ventures | 4 | 3 | 4 | | 11 |
| 3.1 | Sustain and grow the Taste of Central NY Event | 3 | 5 | 3 | | 11 |

| Project ID | Project | Impact | Feasibility | Urgency | Bonus Score | Total Score |
|------------|--|--------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| 4.1 | Continue to promote Farm Fest | 4 | 5 | 2 | | 11 |
| 4.4 | Develop a Farming Apprenticeship and Internship Program. | 5 | 3 | 3 | | 11 |
| 3.2 | Update Agricultural asset map and assign responsibility for keeping it updated. Synchronize asset maps and other agricultural resource documents with Oneida County Tourism and CNY Fresh | 2 | 5 | 3 | | 10 |
| 1.1 | Work with municipalities to improve solar laws to limit or mitigate development of solar energy facilities on farmland. | 3 | 4 | 2 | | 9 |
| 2.1 | Support the development of additional cold storage capabilities, as well as needed processing and other agricultural support facilities, through grant writing, financial incentives, or assistance with siting. | 4 | 2 | 3 | | 9 |
| 2.3 | Support additional produce distribution services, such as a last mile-delivery service to close the cost and logistics gap for buyers and sellers | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 9 |
| 3.4 | Provide support to farms, food producers and agritourism business to increase participation in county and regional farm and food marketing campaigns. | 2 | 5 | 2 | | 9 |
| 3.3 | Develop a weekend tour approach to complement the beverage and cheese trails. | 3 | 3 | 2 | | 8 |
| 2.5 | Develop and Implement Master Plan and Business Plan for Expanded Union Station REA Building | 5 | 1 | 1 | | 7 |
| 5.1 | Create a Farm and Food Focused Community Energy Advisor within the Community Energy Hub. | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 6 |

Note: The Chobani expansion was announced after the completion of the project evaluation and prioritization process. As such, projects related to the Chobani facility are not reflected in the original scoring matrix. However, given the scale of investment and the potential regional impact, all Chobani-related implementation items developed through this strategic planning effort will receive proportionate attention, coordination, and resources to fully leverage the opportunities presented by the new facility.



PRIORITY PROJECTS

Further Analysis

With project concepts validated and ranked according to the scoring criteria, priority projects were then further analyzed to identify essential implementation steps. This process was started during the 11/15/2024 workshop. The consulting team and working group worked through a Project Planning Canvas, a tool used to capture important project details in key categories in a group setting.

During the workshop, the group decided to analyze project 2.4 and 4.4 with the Project Planning Canvas. After the workshop, the consulting team analyzed project 5.2 and 1.2 and added models and example timelines for all four priority projects.

An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural field. The field is divided into long, straight rows of crops. In the foreground and middle ground, there are rows of green leafy vegetables, possibly lettuce or spinach. Further back, there are rows of red-leafed plants, likely red leaf lettuce. The rows are separated by dark, rich soil. The overall scene is a well-maintained and productive agricultural landscape.

PROJECT 2.4

Facilitate participation among farmers and agriculture-related business in available agricultural economic development programs, such as revolving loan programs, grants, and tax incentives.

EVALUATION

Project Champion

Agricultural Economic Development Cornell Cooperative Extension

Key Partnerships

- MV Edge
- Upstate Growers and Packers
- NYS DAM
- OC Planning
- CADE
- FSA
- Cornell
- Farm Credit East

Key Activities

1. Research grant opportunity
2. Create, populate, maintain grant calendar
3. Share information with stakeholders
4. Consult with farms regarding eligibility, competitiveness, grant requirements, etc.
5. Advise/assist with grant applications
6. Identify and vet grant writers – maintain list, contacts, ability to introduce to stakeholders

Key Resources

- CCE/County Funding for AED
- Cornell small farms
- Strategic projects list
- NYS DAM Food Center Grants
- Informational sheets/resources
- Training program – design, PPT, other support documents to facilitate

Customer/Constituents (Who Benefits?)

- Farmers
- Processors
- Other Ag and Food Related Businesses

Communication Channels

- Farm flash newsletter
- E-mail list (CCE)
- Social media
- Local chambers of commerce
- OC public market vendors
- OC – e-mail, website, Facebook, etc.

Value Proposition (Benefits to Customer/Constituent)

- Financial self-sufficiency and growth
- Free grant education, good entry point
- Access to specialized information and expertise

Return on Investment (Benefits to County, Producer, etc.)

- Oneida county fiscal benefits
- Food system enhancement
- Strengthen economic and business infrastructure

Cost Structure (Initial and Ongoing)

- Personnel
- Outreach, Media
- Materials
- Travel
- Program/events

Revenue Stream (Initial and Ongoing)

- Oneida County – Annual Allocation in Budget
- Grants/Contracts
- Program Revenue (might be modest, but fees create skin in the game for participants)

Model or Best Practice

Ulster County CCE Agricultural Economic Development

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Ulster County supports a robust agricultural economy by helping local farmers find new markets and create more valuable products. They enhance farm competitiveness by sharing research-based information and practices. Key initiatives include business planning, direct marketing, and sustainable farming practices.

CCE Ulster partners with the Ulster County government and the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corp (HVADC) to provide grants, technical assistance, and resources to farmers. This collaboration ensures that farmers have access to financial support and expertise to improve their operations and market reach.

Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corp (HVADC)

HVADC is a non-profit economic development agency focused on the viability of the agricultural economy in the Hudson Valley. They provide business technical assistance, low-interest loans, grants, and marketing opportunities to farmers and food producers.

HVADC's programs support sustainability, climate resiliency, and economic growth. They also administer agribusiness grants and offer a food rescue and donation network called FeedHV.

Suggested Approaches for CCE Oneida County or MV Edge

1. Business Technical Assistance: Like HVADC, CCE Oneida County or MV Edge could offer one-on-one business technical assistance to farmers, helping them with business planning, market analysis, and financial management.
2. Grant Programs: Implementing grant programs similar to HVADC's could provide financial support to local farmers. This includes administering state and federal grants and offering guidance throughout the application process.
3. Marketing and Promotion: Developing a local marketing initiative, akin to HVADC's Hudson Valley Bounty, could help promote Oneida County's agricultural products and connect farmers with new markets.

By adopting these approaches, CCE Oneida County and MV Edge can enhance their support for the agricultural community, fostering economic growth and sustainability.

Timeline of Key Activities

April 2025

1

Research and Planning:

- Research grant opportunities and create a comprehensive grant calendar.
- Identify and establish key partnerships with organizations like MV Edge, Upstate Growers and Packers, and NYS DAM.
- Develop informational sheets and resources for stakeholders.

2

Outreach and Communication:

- Launch communication channels such as newsletters, social media, and email lists.
- Organize initial meetings with stakeholders to share information about available programs and resources.

3

Consultation and Support:

- Consult with farms regarding eligibility, competitiveness, and grant requirements.
- Advise and assist with grant applications, providing hands-on support and guidance.
- Identify and vet grant writers, maintaining a list of contacts for stakeholders.

4

Training and Workshops:

- Design and implement training programs, including presentations and support documents.
- Conduct workshops and training sessions for farmers and agricultural businesses on grant writing and economic development programs.

5

Implementation and Monitoring:

- Facilitate the participation of farmers and businesses in economic development programs.
- Monitor the progress of grant applications and provide ongoing support.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and make necessary adjustments.

6

Reporting and Evaluation:

- Collect data and feedback from participants to assess the impact of the programs.
- Prepare reports for stakeholders and funding agencies.
- Plan for the continuation and expansion of successful initiatives.

September 2026



PROJECT 4.4

Develop a Farming Apprenticeship or Internship Program

EVALUATION

Project Champion Cornell Cooperative Extension

Key Partnerships

- NYS DOL (apprenticeship)
- BOCES & SUNY
 - Workforce development and placement programs; career education coordinator
- DOCCS (corrections)
- Oneida County VA

Key Activities

1. Research current program and requirement for program
2. Facilitate connections with farms/businesses interested in hosting programs
3. Develop curriculum that benefits participants
4. Recruit hosts and participants
5. Develop methodology for evaluation and follow-up

Key Resources

- Cornell Small Farm Curriculum

Customer/Constituents (Who Benefits?)

- Students/ participants
- Farms/businesses
- BOCES
- SUNY schools

Communication Channels

- Agency newsletters
- Social media
- All media outlets
- School districts
- Veterans organizations

Value Proposition (Benefits to Customer/Constituent)

- Farms/Businesses
 - Train workers
 - Support with recruitment of interns and apprenticeships (reduced burden of overall employee recruitment)
- Participants
 - Education and hands-on training
 - Course credits

Return on Investment (Benefits to County, Producer, etc.)

- Oneida county business support, youth employment, workforce development within farm pipeline.

Cost Structure (Initial and Ongoing)

- Personnel
 - Research
 - Outreach/communication
- Payments to hosts

Revenue Stream (Initial and Ongoing)

- Grant (prior beginning farmer grant was unsuccessful but can still serve as a model)
- Leveraged partner assets
- Programs fees (depending on target audience and structure...they could be getting paid for farm labor but be paying for the “classroom” portion of the program or that could just be reflected in the reduced compensation rate).

Model or Best Practice

Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC)

The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) mobilizes veterans to feed America by offering internships and apprenticeships that provide hands-on experience and education in sustainable farming practices. FVC partners with local farms, agricultural organizations, and universities to facilitate these training opportunities. For example, FVC collaborates with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to connect veterans with local farming communities, leveraging CCE's extensive network and resources to provide comprehensive support. Additionally, FVC works with county governments to identify funding opportunities and provide financial assistance to veteran farmers. These partnerships ensure that veterans receive practical skills and knowledge directly from experienced farmers, helping them transition to civilian life while



addressing the need for skilled labor in farming communities.

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) has developed an Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit that serves as a comprehensive guide for creating and improving agricultural apprenticeship programs. MOFGA partners with local farms, universities, and county governments to provide apprentices with a well-rounded education that combines practical experience with theoretical knowledge. For instance, MOFGA collaborates with the University of Maine to offer educational programs and workshops, leveraging the university's expertise in sustainable agriculture. Additionally, MOFGA works with county governments to secure funding and resources for apprenticeship programs. This model not only benefits the apprentices but also helps farms by providing them with motivated and educated workers.

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA)

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) is a registered apprenticeship program that connects aspiring farm managers with established farmers to develop and practice the skills needed for successful farming operations. DGA partners with universities, community-based organizations, and county governments to deliver high-quality work-based training in managed grazing dairy production. For example, DGA collaborates with the University of Wisconsin to provide related instruction and support for apprentices, leveraging the university's resources and expertise in dairy farming. Additionally, DGA works with county governments to identify and address local workforce needs, ensuring that the apprenticeship program aligns with regional agricultural priorities. This structured approach helps to create a pipeline of skilled farm managers who are well-prepared to take on leadership roles in the agricultural sector.

Timeline of Key Activities

April 2025

1

Research and Planning:

- Research current programs and requirements for the apprenticeship program.
- Develop a comprehensive curriculum that benefits participants.
- Identify and establish key partnerships with NYS DOL, BOCES, SUNY, DOCCS, and Oneida County VA.

2

Outreach and Recruitment:

- Facilitate connections with farms and businesses interested in hosting programs.
- Launch communication channels such as newsletters, social media, and outreach to school districts and veterans organizations.
- Recruit hosts and participants for the program.

3

Program Implementation:

- Begin the apprenticeship or internship program with the recruited participants.
- Provide hands-on training and education based on the developed curriculum.
- Offer support and guidance to both hosts and participants throughout the program.

4

Evaluation and Follow-Up:

- Develop a methodology for evaluating the program's effectiveness.
- Collect feedback from participants and hosts to assess the program's impact.
- Make necessary adjustments based on the evaluation results.

5

Ongoing Support and Expansion:

- Continue to support participants and hosts with resources and guidance.
- Expand the program by recruiting additional participants and hosts.
- Promote the program's success through various communication channels to attract more interest and support.

September 2026

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PROJECT 5.2

Conduct an agriculture-specific analysis of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to identify risks and mitigation measures for farm operations. Develop a plan to update this analysis in alignment with future updates to the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan.

EVALUATION

Project Champion

Oneida County Department of Planning

Key Partnerships

- Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Oneida County
- Oneida County Emergency Management
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYS DAM)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Local Farm Bureaus
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Key Activities

1. Research and review existing hazard mitigation plans.
2. Conduct risk assessments specific to agricultural operations.
3. Develop mitigation strategies tailored to farm operations.
4. Facilitate stakeholder meetings and workshops.
5. Integrate findings into the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.
6. Develop a plan for future updates and continuous improvement.

Key Resources

- FEMA's Guides to Expanding Mitigation
- Local hazard maps and climate data
- Expertise from CCE and partner organizations
- Funding from grants and local government

Customer/Constituents (Who Benefits?)

- Farmers and agricultural businesses
- Local government and emergency management agencies
- Community residents

Communication Channels

- CCE newsletters and social media
- Local government websites and bulletins
- Community meetings and workshops

Value Proposition (Benefits to Customer/Constituent)

- Enhanced resilience of farm operations to natural hazards
- Access to tailored risk mitigation strategies
- Improved safety and sustainability of local agriculture
- Return on Investment (Benefits to County, Producer, etc.):
- Reduced economic losses from agricultural disruptions
- Strengthened local food systems and supply chains
- Increased community resilience and preparedness
- Land use regulations that support their operations and growth.

Cost Structure (Initial and Ongoing)

- Personnel for research and coordination
- Outreach and communication materials
- Workshops and stakeholder engagement events

Revenue Stream (Initial and Ongoing)

- Grants from FEMA and NYS DAM
- Local government funding
- Contributions from agricultural organizations



Model or Best Practice

Cayuga County Agricultural Hazard Mitigation Plan (Cayuga County, NY)

The Cayuga County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan addresses agricultural issues by integrating the sector into the broader context of hazard identification and mitigation planning. While there is no standalone section dedicated exclusively to agriculture, several key areas of the plan highlight the risks faced by the agricultural sector and outline strategies to enhance its resilience.

In **Section 5.2: Identification of Hazards of Concern**, the plan identifies natural hazards most likely to impact the community, including those directly affecting agriculture. Hazards such as drought, flooding, severe storms, and harmful algal blooms are highlighted as significant threats to agricultural operations.

The detailed profiles in **Section 5.4: Hazard Profiles** further elaborate on these risks. For example, the subsection on drought examines its frequency and severity in Cayuga County, particularly its implications for water-dependent agricultural activities. Similarly, the subsection on flooding outlines the risks to farmlands, livestock, and crop yields in flood-prone areas. Severe storms are addressed with a focus on their potential to damage crops, equipment, and farming infrastructure, while the profile on harmful algal blooms emphasizes their impact on water quality essential for irrigation and livestock health.

In **Section 6: Mitigation Strategy and Countywide Capability Assessment**, the plan incorporates strategies that are directly relevant to agriculture. It emphasizes the protection of natural resources and the adoption of land-use practices aimed at reducing vulnerability to hazards. These strategies are designed to safeguard agricultural productivity while supporting broader community resilience.

By integrating agricultural concerns across multiple sections, the Cayuga County Hazard Mitigation Plan underscores the importance of the sector and establishes a framework for reducing risks to farming operations. This approach demonstrates how a county-wide hazard mitigation plan can effectively address agricultural vulnerabilities while aligning with broader hazard management goals.

Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (Washington County, NY)

Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan focuses on preserving and enhancing the viability of agriculture within the county while addressing risks posed by natural hazards and economic pressures. The plan emphasizes strategies to protect farmland and support agricultural operations, including considerations for climate-related risks such as flooding, severe weather, and drought. By collaborating with local farmers, community stakeholders, and government agencies, the county developed measures to enhance agricultural resilience and economic sustainability. These include promoting best management practices, improving drainage and irrigation systems, and supporting diversification of farm operations to reduce vulnerability to market and climate changes.

This plan highlights the importance of integrating agricultural protection with broader community resilience efforts, making it a relevant model for counties seeking to address agriculture-specific risks as part of hazard mitigation planning.



Pennsylvania Agricultural Emergency Response Plan (Penn State Extension)

Pennsylvania has developed comprehensive resources to enhance agricultural emergency preparedness. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with various agencies, has established guidelines and training programs to assist farmers in developing emergency response plans. These initiatives focus on safeguarding animal welfare, ensuring continuity of operations, and mitigating risks associated with natural disasters and other emergencies. For instance, Penn State Extension offers resources on building emergency response plans for livestock producers, emphasizing the importance of training and preparedness.

<https://extension.psu.edu/building-an-emergency-response-plan-for-livestock-producers>

Schoharie County Flood Mitigation for Farms (Schoharie County, NY)

Schoharie County has implemented several initiatives to mitigate flood risks affecting agricultural lands. The Schoharie Watershed Stream Management Program focuses on stream and floodplain restoration projects aimed at reducing flood intensity and protecting farmlands. Following the devastating floods from Hurricane Irene in 2011, which caused significant damage to farms and infrastructure, the county conducted comprehensive studies to identify high-priority sites for flood mitigation. The Mohawk Flood Study Report details these efforts and provides strategies for enhancing the resilience of agricultural operations against future flood events.

Timeline of Key Activities

April 2025

1

Research and Planning:

2

Review existing hazard mitigation plans and identify gaps related to agriculture.

3

Conduct initial risk assessments for farm operations.

4

Develop a framework for the agriculture-specific analysis.

5

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Organize meetings with key partners and stakeholders.
- Gather input and feedback on potential risks and mitigation measures.

6

Risk Assessment and Strategy Development:

7

Conduct detailed risk assessments for various agricultural operations.

8

Develop tailored mitigation strategies based on assessment findings.

9

Integrate strategies into the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

10

Communication and Outreach:

- Share findings and strategies with the agricultural community.
- Conduct workshops and training sessions on implementing mitigation measures.

11

Implementation and Monitoring:

- Begin implementing mitigation strategies on selected farms.
- Monitor the effectiveness of implemented measures.
- Collect data and feedback for continuous improvement.

12

Plan for Future Updates:

- Develop a plan for updating the agriculture-specific analysis in alignment with future updates to the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement and communication.

September 2026

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape featuring a patchwork of agricultural fields. The fields are in various stages of growth, with some appearing as vibrant green and others as golden-brown. A network of dirt roads and small clusters of trees are scattered throughout the landscape. The top portion of the image is partially covered by a dark blue rectangular overlay containing text.

PROJECT 1.2

Incentivize or otherwise encourage municipalities to develop new municipal comprehensive plans and farm-friendly land use regulations, utilizing the guidance and criteria from the Ag-Friendly Oneida County municipal planning guide.

EVALUATION

Project Champion

Oneida County Department of Planning

Key Partnerships

- Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Oneida
- Oneida County Legislature
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM)

Key Activities

1. Create an inventory of existing comprehensive plans for all municipalities in Oneida County.
2. Conduct an audit of comprehensive plans for farm-friendly land use regulations.
3. Work with the Legislature and/or NYSDAM to identify funding sources for commissioning new plans, particularly exploring opportunities for ag-specific plans.
4. Advise and assist with grant/funding applications.
5. Advise and assist on plan writing activities and provide guidance specifically on the Ag-Friendly Oneida County Guide.
6. Work with the Legislature and municipalities on plan adoption and follow-through.

Key Resources

- Ag-Friendly Oneida County Municipal Planning Guide
- Expertise from CCE Oneida and NYSDAM
- Funding from grants and local government

Customer/Constituents (Who Benefits?)

- Municipalities, particularly planning and zoning boards, code enforcement officers, and assessors
- Farmers and farm business owners

Communication Channels

- CCE newsletters and social media
- Local government websites and bulletins
- Community meetings and workshops

Value Proposition (Benefits to Customer/Constituent)

- Municipalities receive support in developing comprehensive plans that promote agricultural sustainability.
- Farmers benefit from farm-friendly land use regulations that support their operations and growth.

Return on Investment (Benefits to County, Producer, etc.)

- Enhanced agricultural sustainability and economic growth.
- Improved land use planning that supports the agricultural sector.
- Strengthened relationships between municipalities and the farming community.

Cost Structure (Initial and Ongoing)

- Personnel for research, coordination, and outreach.
- Development and distribution of planning guides and resources.
- Workshops and stakeholder engagement events.

Revenue Stream (Initial and Ongoing)

- Grants from NYSDAM and other state or federal sources.
- Local government funding.
- Contributions from agricultural organizations.





APPENDIX 1

Agriculture Food and Farm Funding and Resources

Funding

| Grant/Loan Program | Description | Relevant Projects | Website |
|--|--|-------------------|---|
| Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) – USDA | Federal grants supporting farmers in developing value-added products and marketing strategies. | Several | rd.usda.gov |
| New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) | Portal to access state-level funding opportunities for agricultural projects, including wholesaling and value-added processing. | Several | apps.cio.n |
| Farm Storage Facility Loan (FSFL) Program Farm Service Agency | The Farm Storage Facility Loan Program provides low-interest loans for on-farm storage and handling facilities, helping producers improve efficiency and reduce post-harvest losses. | Several | https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/farm-storage-facility-loan-fsfl-program |
| Support Beginning and Disadvantaged Farmers | These programs provide funding for start-up, improvement, and expansion of farm operations. They also offer support for marketing, training, and more. | Several | State Agriculture Department Announces \$4.25 Million Available to Support Beginning and Disadvantaged Farmers Agriculture and Markets |
| Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program | This program provides grants for infrastructure projects that expand capacity, create new markets for producers and food processors, and strengthen the New York food system. | Several | State Agriculture Department Announces \$19.3 Million Funding Available to New York State Through USDA to Support Resilient Food System Agriculture and Markets |
| NYS Grown and Certified Cooperative Marketing Program | This program helps increase producer sales through marketing and promotion efforts. It supports New York State agricultural producers who adopt food safety standards and enroll in an environmental management program. | Several | RFA 0331 - New York State Grown & Certified Cooperative Marketing Program Agriculture and Markets |
| New York State Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program | New York State Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program 2024 Round 2: Funds provide the opportunity to build long-term resiliency in New York State's School Food System. | Several | RFP 0358 - New York State Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program Agriculture and Markets |
| Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning And MS4 Mapping Grant | Provides financial assistance to implement best management practices to control and prevent nonpoint source pollution from agricultural activities. | Several | https://dec.ny.gov/get-involved/grant-applications/non-agricultural-nonpoint-source-planning-ms4-mapping-grant |
| SNAP-Ed Community Growers Grant Program | Offers funding to community growers to support the production and distribution of fresh, healthy foods to SNAP recipients. | Several | https://agriculture.ny.gov/rfa-0346-snap-ed-community-growers-grant-program |

| Grant/Loan Program | Description | Relevant Projects | Website |
|---|---|-------------------|---|
| Micro Enterprise Loan Fund Program | The ESD-managed Microloan Program provides small-scale financing to support businesses and economic development initiatives. MV Edge administers the program locally by facilitating loan applications, evaluating business viability, and providing technical assistance to borrowers. This ensures that local entrepreneurs and agricultural enterprises can access flexible, low-interest funding to expand operations, improve infrastructure, and enhance market competitiveness. | Several | https://esd.ny.gov/doing-business-ny/micro-enterprise-loan-fund-program#objective |
| USDA Rural Business Development Grants | The USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program provides funding to support small businesses and economic growth in rural areas. MV Edge administers the program locally by identifying eligible projects, assisting with grant applications, and overseeing fund distribution to support business expansion, workforce development, and infrastructure improvements. This program helps strengthen rural economies by providing critical financial and technical assistance to small businesses and agricultural enterprises. | Several | https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants |
| OCR CDBG Business Expansion and Startup | The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Revolving Loan Fund Program provides low-interest loans to support business development, job creation, and economic growth in Oneida County. MV Edge administers the program by managing loan applications, evaluating project feasibility, and overseeing fund distribution. The program focuses on assisting small businesses, startups, and expanding enterprises, ensuring that funding supports sustainable job creation and economic revitalization in the region. | Several | https://hcr.ny.gov/community-development-block-grant |
| USDA Rural Development Grants and Loans Catalogue | Comprehensive resource of USDA grant and loan programs, filterable by state, program areas, and keywords. | Several | https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs |
| NYS Ag and Markets Grants and Loans Catalogue | Comprehensive resource of NY Ag and Markets grant and loan programs, filterable by state, program areas, and keywords. | Several | https://agriculture.ny.gov/funding-opportunities |

| Grant/Loan Program | Description | Relevant Projects | Website |
|---|---|-------------------|---|
| New York State Conservation Partnership Program | The New York State Conservation Partnership Program offers competitive matching grants to qualified New York land trusts to advance land conservation, economic development, farmland protection, community conservation and recreation and tourism. | 1.4 | https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/connect/field-services/new-york/new-york-state-conservation-partnership-program |
| NYSERDA Agriculture Energy Audit Program | The Agriculture Energy Audit Program offers technical assistance to identify energy efficiency measures for eligible farms and on-farm producers, including but not limited to: dairies, orchards, greenhouses, vegetables, vineyards, grain dryers, and poultry/egg. NYSERDA will assign Flexible Technical Assistance (FlexTech) Program Consultants to perform energy audits for eligible farms. | 5.1 | https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/All-Programs/Agriculture-Energy-Assistance/Agriculture-Energy-Audit |
| NYSERDA REAP Technical Assistance Program | Farms are integral to New York State's economy, food supply, and way of life. Making investments in energy efficiency can help ensure farms continue to thrive while helping meet New York State's climate goals. The REAP Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) provides New York State farmers with no-cost assistance applying to the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). | 5.1 | |
| National Grid Agricultural Discount | The Residential Agricultural Discount Program is an electricity rate discount applied to the electricity delivery charge, available since September 1, 2014, to eligible National Grid residential agricultural customers, as a result of funding through the New York Power Authority (NYPA) ReCharge New York program. | 5.1 | https://www.nationalgridus.com/agricultural-discount |

Resources

| Grant/Loan Program | Description | Relevant Projects | Website |
|---|--|-------------------|---|
| Cornell Small Farms Program | Offers resources, case studies, and technical assistance for New York farmers, including wholesale and value-added opportunities. | Several | smallfarms.cornell.edu |
| MVEDD Agri-Smart Mohawk Valley | Agri-Smart is aimed at helping municipalities, organizations, agribusinesses (including farmers' markets), and agriculture producers connect with available incentives and initiatives, and to provide technical assistance on challenges and concerns facing both farmers and municipalities. | Several | https://mvedd.org/agri-smart-mohawk-valley |
| New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets | Provides funding programs, guides, and technical assistance for agricultural development, including wholesale marketing and processing. | Several | agriculture.ny.gov |
| Farm to Institution New York State (FINYS) | Connects farmers with institutional markets like schools and provides guidance on wholesale requirements. | Several | finys.org |
| New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) | Funds farmer-led research and projects aimed at improving profitability, including value-added processing and wholesale readiness. | Several | nyfvi.org |
| New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health - Farm Safety Services | Provide farm safety services at little or no cost to agricultural operations of all types in New York. Our experienced educators and trainers offer a variety of programs that promote safe and healthy farming by teaching safe work practices to audiences including youth, agribusiness professionals and farm workers. All of our trainings are available in English and in Spanish. | 5.3 | On-Farm Safety Trainings NYCAMH |
| Ag Energy NY | A resource guide for New York Farmers for the implementation of agricultural best practices for energy use and equipment operations to improve energy savings and productivity. | 5.1 | Cornell Cooperative Extension Ag Energy NY Program |
| Climate Smart Commodities | The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funds projects that promote sustainable agriculture, reduce emissions, enhance carbon sequestration, and expand market opportunities for climate-smart products. | Several | https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/priorities/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities/partnerships-climate-smart-commodities-project- |
| EDEN and DART Systems | Emergency response training and support. | 5.2 | Extension Disaster Education Network – Reducing the Impact of Disasters through Education |

| Grant/Loan Program | Description | Relevant Projects | Website |
|--|--|-------------------|---|
| New York State Solar Guidebook | The Solar Guidebook contains information, tools, and step-by-step instructions to support local governments managing solar energy development in their communities. The Guidebook's chapters cover a variety of solar energy topics including, the permitting process, property taxes, model solar energy law and more. | 1.1 | https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Clean-Energy-Siting-Resources/Solar-Guidebook |
| Ulster Housing Smart Communities | Scoring criteria for actions municipalities can take to qualify for funding. Could be used as a model for incentivizing Ag-friendly policy adoption. | 1.2 | https://hsci.ulstercountyny.gov/#:~:text=The%20Ulster%20County%20Housing%20Smart%20Communities |
| Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation | Ag Economic Development agency that can be explored as a model for increased ag economic support. | 2.4 | https://www.hvadc.org/ |
| Oneida County Farmers to Consumers Asset Map | Map produced during Farms to Consumers study – revive, update, and treat as clearinghouse of Ag assets | 3.2 | https://kkp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index . |
| Jefferson County CCE Ag Asset Mapping | Four-county initiative (Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, and Oswego) to centralize Ag data and asset information into a GIS Map | 3.2 | https://ccejefferson.org/local-foods/nny-food-hub/data-collection-and-asset-mapping |
| Farm Tour Examples – Washington County | The Washington County “County Bounty” Tour and “Fiber Tour.” | 3.4 | https://countybountytour.com/ https://washingtoncountyfibertour.org |
| Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau | Good example of a County/Regional effort to highlight food, beverage, and ag experiences within overall tourism efforts | 3.4 | https://www.tourchautauqua.com/ |
| USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service | NRCS offers financial assistance and one-on-one technical support through voluntary conservation programs. Several NRCS conservation programs directly support climate-smart agriculture and forestry, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Conservation Technical Assistance. | 5.1 | https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/climate |



APPENDIX 2

Implementation Matrix



| Project/ Goal | Description | Owner | Partner | Priority Score (High Score = 20 Low Score = 6) |
|------------------|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Farmland Preservation and Protection: Goal: Protect the county's high-quality farmland from urban and solar development pressures. | | | |
| 1.1 | Work with municipalities to improve solar laws to limit or mitigate development of solar energy facilities on farmland , while protecting the rights of landowners. | County Planning | Municipalities | 9 |
| 1.2 | Incentivize or otherwise encourage municipalities to develop new municipal comprehensive plans and farm-friendly land use regulations, utilizing the guidance and criteria from the Ag-Friendly Oneida County municipal planning guide. | County Planning | Municipalities | 12 |
| 1.3 | Maintain and formalize roles within CCE and Planning Department dedicated to farmland protection and agricultural economic development. Duties would include Agricultural District administration, staff support to the Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board, grant writing and administration, coordination with other agencies, and informational resource development. | County and Oneida County CCE | None | 19 |
| 1.4 | Support land trust farmer outreach and grant writing. | Oneida County CCE | County Planning, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, NY Agricultural Land Trust | 11 |
| 2 | Economic Development and Business Support: Goal: Support the local agricultural economy through value-added processing and expanded facilities. | | | |
| 2.1 | Support the development of additional cold storage capabilities, as well as needed processing and other agricultural support facilities, through grant writing, financial incentives, or assistance with siting. | Oneida County CCE | County, MV Edge | 9 |
| 2.2 | Support Oneida County farms in developing wholesale, processing or other on-farm value-added capabilities through technical assistance, grant writing support, or facilitating cooperative ventures. | Oneida County CCE | County, MV Edge | 11 |
| 2.3 | Work to attract or grow ancillary businesses that plug into Chobani's supply chain. | Oneida County CCE AED | MV Edge, Oneida County, Empire State Development | N/A |
| 2.4 | Support additional produce distribution services, such as a last mile-delivery service to close the cost and logistics gap for buyers and sellers | Oneida County CCE | County, MV Edge | 9 |

| Project/ Goal | Description | Owner | Partner | Priority Score (High Score = 20 Low Score = 6) |
|------------------|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| 2.5 | Facilitate participation among farmers and agriculture-related business in available agricultural economic development programs, such as revolving loan programs, grants, and tax incentives. | Oneida County CCE | County, MV Edge | 13 |
| 2.6 | Develop and Implement Master Plan and Business Plan for Expanded Union Station REA Building | County | None | 7 |
| 2.7 | Complete Dairy Processing Feasibility Study – Update with Chobani Impacts and Implications | County MV Edge | None | 12 |
| 2.8 | Conduct an assessment of local roads and transport logistics for handling increased truck traffic resulting from Chobani’s expansion. | County Planning and DPW | NYSDOT | N/A |
| 3 | Agritourism & Local Branding: Goal: Promote agritourism and local food systems to increase revenue streams | | | |
| 3.1 | Sustain and grow the Taste of Central NY Event. | Oneida County CCE | Oneida County Tourism, CNY Fresh | 11 |
| 3.2 | Update Agricultural asset map and assign responsibility for keeping it updated. Synchronize asset maps and other agricultural resource documents with Oneida County Tourism and CNY Fresh. | County Planning | Oneida County Tourism, CNY Fresh, Oneida County CCE | 10 |
| 3.3 | Develop a weekend tour approach to complement the beverage and cheese trails. | Oneida County CCE | Oneida County Tourism, CNY Fresh | 8 |
| 3.4 | Provide support to farms, food producers and agritourism business to increase participation in county, regional, and statewide marketing programs and NYS grown and certified. | Oneida County CCE | Oneida County Tourism, CNY Fresh | 9 |
| 4 | Workforce Development and Education: Goal: Cultivate the next generation of farmers and engage the community in supporting agriculture. | | | |
| 4.1 | Continue to promote Farm Fest. | Oneida County CCE | Oneida County Tourism, CNY Fresh | 11 |
| 4.2 | Build shared programming between MVCC and SUNY schools, especially the Food and Farm Incubator. | Oneida County CCE | MVCC, SUNY | 12 |
| 4.3 | Support Ag Education from CCE. | Oneida County | Oneida County CCE, K-12 schools | 20 |

| Project/ Goal | Description | Owner | Partner | Priority Score (High Score = 20 Low Score = 6) |
|------------------|---|-------------------|---|--|
| 4.4 | Develop a Farming Apprenticeship and Internship Program. | Oneida County CCE | County, SUNY | 11 |
| 4.5 | Build a Comprehensive Dairy Workforce Pipeline | Oneida County CCE | Oneida County, Workforce Development | N/A |
| 5 | Sustainability and Climate Resilience: Goal: Support implementation of agricultural practices that help farms reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect soil and water quality and adapt to climate change. | | | |
| 5.1 | Create a Farm and Food Focused Community Energy Advisor within the Community Energy Hub. | Oneida County CCE | County, NYSERDA | 6 |
| 5.2 | Conduct an agriculture-specific analysis of the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan to identify risks and mitigation measures for farm operations. Develop a plan to update this analysis in alignment with future updates to the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan. | County Planning | Oneida County Emergency Services, Oneida County CCE | 14 |
| 5.3 | Emergency response training for on farm emergency preparedness and responsiveness. | County Planning | Oneida County Emergency Services, Oneida County CCE | 20 |