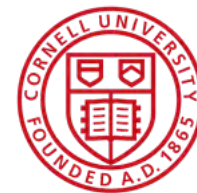


Cornell Cooperative Extension Harvest New York



An innovative Cornell Cooperative Extension team that focuses on development projects in the Farm and Food Industries of rural and urban New York.

Quarterly Highlights Q1 2024



Berry and fruit twilight meetings will be returning in 2024! See page 6 for details.
Harvest NY's Anya Osatuke at a twilight meeting hosted by Burnap Farm Market and Garden Cafe in Sodus, NY in 2023. Photo: Anna Wallis, NYSIPM

- **Developing Farmer-to-Farmer Networks in New York City**
- **Cultivating Connections in Urban Agriculture**
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- **On-farm Biochar Demonstration Trial to be Established in the Hudson Valley**
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- **Buffalo Farm Shares Program**
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Developing Farmer-to-Farmer Networks in New York City

With over 60 urban farms and a growing number of farm owners, managers, seasonal crew, educators, and other staff—not to mention hundreds of youth participants, farm volunteers, and aspiring farmers, plus thousands of gardeners—New York City’s urban agriculture scene is dynamic, diverse, and very large. Yet there has historically been little opportunity for NYC’s urban farmers to connect with other farms, resulting in missed opportunities to share resources and a great deal of wheel-reinvention.

After frequently hearing urban farmers voice this need, Urban Agriculture Specialists Sam Anderson and Yolanda Gonzalez set about reviving the NYC chapter of CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training). This farmer-to-farmer group centers around an annual series of farm visits, hosted at different urban farms throughout the year, giving farm staff the opportunity to visit other operations and meet other growers. At the same time, beginning in 2020, Harvest New York’s urban agriculture program began organizing what would become an annual event: The Urban Farmer-to-Farmer Summit (TUFFS).

The 4th annual TUFFS took place in January of 2024, drawing over 60 urban farmers and other stakeholders for semi-structured share-outs of technical innovations and challenges on their farms and networking with others doing similar work. Hosted by The Farm at the Javits Center, operated by Brooklyn Grange, visitors got a snowy tour of the unique rooftop farm, including a half-acre vegetable field, a quarter-acre orchard, and a 3,500 square foot greenhouse. Originally a standalone event, this marked the first year of folding TUFFS into the NYC CRAFT calendar, combining the city’s farmer-to-farmer fixtures under the same umbrella.

NYC CRAFT also includes an email list, which in less than two years of existence has already taken on a life of its own. In 2024 the list topped 200 members, and it has become a go-to place for everything from job postings to coordinating bulk purchases. Perhaps even more than the events, this represents the spirit of a farmer-to-farmer project, one which is both by the farmers and for the farmers.



Farm Manager Orion Ashmore leads a group of participants from TUFFS on a wintry tour of The Farm at the Javits Center.

Cultivating Connections in Urban Agriculture

The USDA is continuing its rollout of the urban county committee and service center in New York. The Farm Service Agency (FSA), an agency within the USDA, is leading this effort and investing outreach resources to drive awareness of FSA initiatives among urban growers across the state. FSA outreach partners Monti Lawson (Founder and Lead Land Steward at Catalyst Collaborative Farm and former NYC FSA urban county committee member) and Farm School NYC (NYC agricultural education non-profit and FSA cooperator) hosted “Cultivating Connections” on March 27 with the goal of increasing the accessibility of USDA programs for BIPOC and underserved growers.

Kyle Karnuta of Harvest NY is working closely with her counterparts at FSA, including Farm School NYC and urban county committee members, to develop an urban agriculture training for USDA as part of the USDA’s urban agriculture pilot program. She was invited to participate as a speaker at this event to highlight how the CCE Harvest NY urban agriculture team supports urban growers across the state. She created a template PowerPoint deck featuring one project from every Harvest NY urban agriculture educator which can be used for future presentations. As part of the presentation, Kyle highlighted Cornell Cooperative Extension’s recently published [Urban Agriculture report](#), Cornell Small Farms’ urban agriculture resources, and NYC’s C.R.A.F.T. chapter which is overseen by NYC-based CCE educators.

The flyer is titled "CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS" in large white letters on a purple background. In the top right corner is the Catalyst Collaborative Farm logo. Below the title are three portrait photos of the speakers: Dr. Loutrina Staley, Kyle Karnuta, and Mirem Villamil. Under each photo is their name in bold yellow text and their title in smaller white text. The event date and time are listed as "WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27TH 2024 6PM - 7:30PM". Below this is an orange banner that says "REGISTER NOW!". At the bottom are logos for Farm School NYC, FSA (Farm Service Agency), Black Farmers United of New York State, and the National Association of Conservation Districts (Pecan Street).

The flyer from the March 27 event.

Other featured speakers for the event included Dr. Loutrina Staley (Equity and Outreach Program Analyst at the National Association of Conservation Districts) and Mirem Villamil (County Executive Director at FSA’s New York City service center). The event was attended by 27 growers.



Recognizing Resilient Gardens Across NYS

There are approximately 3,000 community gardens recognized throughout the state. Community gardens provide access to multifunctional green spaces and hyper local fresh food in historically underserved communities, but throughout the state, gardeners face unique challenges.

After several months of an asset-based and participatory research process in 2023, the Seed to Supper program identified themes around relevant garden challenges in NYS. Some topics that emerged from the data gathering process are:

- seed libraries
- managing fruit trees in cities
- urban gardening nuisances
- community garden site assessment
- attracting pollinators
- healthy soils & contaminants
- season extension techniques
- asset-based community development surveys
- container, vertical and square foot gardening



To intentionally support gardeners working towards food sovereignty in their respective communities, Ashley Helmholdt from Seed to Supper and Makela Elvy from Harvest NY will host a Resilient Gardens Symposium in NYC to address some of the garden challenges.

In late 2023, Elvy and Helmholdt began organizing the first S2S Resilient Gardens Symposium. In March 2024, Elvy secured a partnership with Barnard's Office of Sustainability who will host the symposium at Barnard College on August 10th, the final day of Barnard's Summer Food Institute program. This partnership makes it possible to engage students interested in volunteer opportunities and local food production, feature both local community gardeners and industry experts as presenters, provide space for intergenerational knowledge exchanges, and connect the resources of S2S and the Master Gardener programs with key leaders of the community garden and urban agriculture network.

Exploring the Intersection of Food Justice and Policy

Harvest NY Urban Garden Specialist Kwesi Joseph attended the “Understanding, Measuring, and Addressing Racism in the Food System” conference in Chicago, an enlightening event hosted by Sheelah Muhammad of S M pact Consulting and Dr. Angela Odoms-Young, who leads the Nutrition Liberation, Food Sovereignty, and Justice Laboratory at the Division of Nutritional Sciences, College of Human Ecology, Cornell University. Over four impactful days, this convening offered Joseph and other attendees a platform for critical conversations, interactive panels, and participatory dialogues



focused on the complexities of racism within the agriculture and food sectors. As part of a diverse assembly of stakeholders committed to systemic reform, Joseph participated in discussions aimed at dismantling systemic barriers in food access, nutrition, and broader socio-economic outcomes.

The final day of the conference, co-hosted by ChangeLab Solutions and Cornell University, delved deeper into policy aspects. The discussions, which covered solutions applying an anti-racist praxis and multisectoral approaches to achieving fidelity, equity, and dignity, highlighted the intricate relationship between food justice and policy. Engaging with Edgar Camero, a Planner at ChangeLab and Jamila Simon, a Civic Engagement Specialist at the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research, Joseph gained valuable insights into the role of policy in shaping equitable food systems. These sessions, along with dialogues on justice-centered philanthropy and transformative investment strategies, highlighted the importance of integrating policy change in efforts to address racism in the food system. Through interactions with experts and advocates at the forefront of food justice, Kwesi Joseph began to understand the critical role of policy in advancing racial justice and equity within the U.S. food system.

Collaboration Plants the Seeds at Three Gardens in the City of Rochester

Through collaboration and partnership on a project funded by Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District, three community sites were able to build or expand their community gardens this past summer.

Mallory Hohl, Urban Garden Specialist with Harvest NY, worked with technicians from the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District (MCSWCD) and CCE Monroe’s Agriculture and Food Systems Educator, to release and evaluate an ask to community groups for support of their urban growing efforts. After receiving more than 20 applications, three groups were chosen based on an objective rubric developed for the project: RSD School 42, prison outreach housing unit Spiritus Christi Nielsen House, and Living Word Temple of Restoration parish garden. These groups received personalized recommendations for starting or expanding gardens at their sites and funding for supplies such as raised beds, soil, compost, seedlings, berry bushes, tools, and fencing. Workshops were also conducted by CCE Monroe around topics chosen by the community at those gardens, in addition to continued support and follow up by CCE Harvest NY and MCSWCD through and after last year’s growing season.

Through the efforts and funding of this project, over 1,600 pounds of produce were yielded from the added 14 raised beds across those sites. This produce was shared with neighbors during church giveaway events, school work and volunteer days, and used in the kitchen for community meals at the prison outreach center. A garden club has been formed at School 42, and all sites have expressed interest in expanding and continuing their growing efforts in 2024.

Berry and Fruit Twilight Meetings Return for 2024

Berry and fruit twilight meetings will be returning in 2024! These workshops are an opportunity to discuss berry and fruit crop phenology, pest management, and novel technologies debuting in the industry.

Meetings are held every last Thursday of the month April through July, from 7:00PM – 8:30PM.

1.5 DEC credits are requested for each meeting, and in 2024, pizza and refreshments will be provided by Valent.

Below is the schedule for the 2024 Twilight Meetings:

April 25th at The Apple Shed
3391 Fairville Maple Ridge Rd, Newark, NY

May 30th at Coulter Farms
3871 Ridge Rd., Lockport, NY

June 27th at location TBD in Penn Yan, NY

July 25th at Simpelaar Fruit Farms
6018 State Rt. 3, Mexico, NY

Meetings are free and no pre-registration is required. Growers interested in DEC credit are requested to arrive at 6:45PM for DEC sign-in.

This meeting series is organized in partnership by Janet Van Zoeren of the Lake Ontario Fruit Team and Anya Osatuke of Harvest NY.

2023 Twilight Meeting hosted by Reality Research in Lyons, NY. Photo: Anna Wallis, NYSIPM



Cannabis sativa Hemp Continues Strong in NY

The SUNY Cannabis Conference at SUNY Niagara County Community College in January was a total success. The Niagara Falls Culinary Institute had cooking demos, information sessions, and a competition. The first of its kind cannabis and culinary merger, provides an example of how academic institutions can support the local new and promising cannabis industry.



White chocolate embellishment on the dessert plate at the SUNY Cannabis Conference (left); Ashley Baron of Snowbelt Cannabis, a high-cannabinoid company in Jamestown, NY, and Daniela Vergara of Harvest NY at the Conference (right).

Another CBD hemp company that continues to thrive is Nuponix, with more R&D on the different aquaponics cultivation methods for their plants. Their preliminary results include comparisons of high CBD plants grown in different treatments, including deep water culture.



Steve Pomerleau, General Manager at Nuponix, presenting results in a poster session at a conference along with Emerging Crops Specialist Dr. Daniela Vergara, Harvest NY.

Harvest NY Celebrates Women's History Month with Minority and Women-Owned Businesses

Like in many parts of the country, minority and women entrepreneurs in New York faced significant barriers to entry and success in business for much of the state's history. Discriminatory practices, lack of access to capital, and systemic biases hindered their ability to compete on a level playing field. In recent years, New York State has continued to prioritize MWBEs through capacity building, networking opportunities, and participation in contracting and procurement. However, while these efforts have been successful for medium to large businesses, small businesses, particularly farm and food entrepreneurs, have not experienced the same benefits.

To celebrate Women's History Month, Harvest NY in collaboration with Taste NY and CCE Cayuga hosted a two-day event at the New York State Equal Rights Heritage Center aimed at promoting local food procurement and providing a platform for farm and food businesses to network and collaborate. This event was hosted between Friday, March 8th and Saturday, March 9th. The first day of the event, attended by small business owners, Women's Opportunity Center, Empire State Development, and a representative from the Food Safety Inspections office of the Department of Agriculture was focused on teaching them about the resources available for MWBEs. This included 3 workshops on MWBE certification and resources, Value Added Product Development with the Cornell Food Venture Center, and Doing Business with Taste NY.

Day 2 was a Vendor Showcase that allowed businesses to display and sell their products to the Equal Rights Heritage Center visitors. Over 20 vendors were in attendance from across the state, including Auburn-based companies Doughlicious, XL Cookie Company, the Sterling Sage, and White Rabbit Coffee, as well as Stay Golden Soy (Onondaga, NY), Montour Falls Tea Company (Montour Falls), and Amish Agriculture (Waterloo, NY). Saturday's event also featured live music by the Bob Piorun Trio featuring Bob Piorun, Julie Howard, and Michael Doyle. This performance was sponsored by the Music Performance Trust Fund in conjunction with local 78 of the American Federation of Musicians.





On-farm Biochar Demonstration Trial to be Established in the Hudson Valley

The introduction of new federal and state funding for climate-resilient practices has sparked increased attention in biochar among farmers and other stakeholders in the Hudson Valley. Biochar is a charcoal-like carbon soil amendment produced through the pyrolysis of organic material with the capability of increasing soil cation exchange capacity and improving water retention among other benefits (New York Soil Health). Importantly, it serves as a long-term carbon sink and is recognized by the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as an official Conservation Practice Standard (CSP: Soil Carbon Amendment Code 808). Though funding is available and there is abundant farmer interest in the practice, a lack of knowledge on how to appropriately install biochar and little formalized data from on-farm trials in the Hudson Valley have hindered the adoption of the practice. Installation is not risk-free as improper “charging” and/or over-application can inhibit soil nutrients, resulting in deleterious impacts on plant health and crop yield.

To bridge this knowledge gap, Ag Climate Resiliency Specialist Savanna Shelnuttt is partnering with Scenic Hudson, The Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming, and Cornell’s Soil Health Program to establish an on-farm biochar demonstration site that will be key in providing outreach and education to regional farmers. Funding and cooperation from our partners will enable data collection for at least three years. Plans for programming include an installation demonstration field day in late June, the development of factsheets for Hudson Valley farmers, and additional events in future years as the trial progresses. Follow our social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)) for updates and field day registration announcements.

Citations:

New York Soil Health - <https://www.newyorksoilhealth.org/resources/biochar/>

CSP: Soil Carbon Amendment Code 808 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/Soil%20Carbon%20Amendment.pdf>

Harvest NY Welcomes New Statewide Ag Climate Resiliency Specialist

Dr. Kitty O'Neil joins the Harvest NY team as its newest Ag Climate Resiliency Specialist, joining Savanna Shelnutt in providing programming and research projects that will increase farm resiliency and empower producers to actively mitigate and adapt to climate change. O'Neil comes to Harvest NY after serving the dairy, livestock, and cash crop farms of Northern NY with field crops and soils programs and research since 2013 as a CCE regional specialist.

Kitty O'Neil has been working on climate resilience while in her previous role and welcomes the opportunity to now work on ag climate resilience as her sole focus. She was invited to participate in the original Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Climate Smart Farming team (climatesmartfarming.org) in 2015 and continues to collaborate with that group on development of agricultural decision support tools and other resources to help farmers and technical advisors manage climate risks. She initiated the establishment of CCE's new Ag & Climate Resilience Program Work Team in early 2023. This work team currently includes 60 members from CCE and 8 other agencies and has spun off 4 subgroups working on specific projects or problems somewhere in NYS. O'Neil also was part of the planning committee for the enormously successful 2023 Climate Symposium that was held at the end of the annual Ag and Food Systems In-Service conference on campus.

Kitty is currently part of the leadership team on a USDA Northeast Climate Hub and Cornell University Dairy Climate Adaptation Fellowship project assisting a small cohort of dairy producers and their technical advisors from Maine, New York and Pennsylvania develop a climate adaptation plan unique to their farms. This project will conclude in early 2025. Kitty is also continuing research on soil compaction across NYS farms. She currently has a NY Farm Viability Institute grant through 2025 to work on commercial farms across western, central and northern NY examining the relationship between soil compaction severity and historical crop yield, an integrated resilience response variable.

While both Kitty and Savanna can assist with any climate-related request anywhere in NYS, they will apply their complementary skillsets somewhat topically and geographically. Kitty will focus her main efforts on dairy, livestock, field crops and soils management, to complement Savanna's expertise with fruit, berry, vegetable and hemp systems. Savanna will concentrate her efforts primarily within the 10-county Hudson Valley region while Kitty will support farms and ag businesses across the state. Together, they will work across organizations and county associations to connect any agricultural climate need with an appropriate solution.





Buffalo Farm Shares Program

On January 6, 200 families attending Community School programming at Buffalo Public School District's Futures Academy (school #37) went home with bags filled with NY grown food. This free distribution was part of the new \$2M Buffalo Farm Shares program, funded by NYS Department of Agriculture and Market's NY Food for NY Families initiative. The goal of the program is to purchase foods grown, raised, and produced by NY farmers and producers and distribute them to families in need. In Buffalo, this means setting up Saturday "markets" in 22 of the district's schools over the next year. Community partners including Back to Basics, West Side Community Services, and Community Action Organization will host markets in July, August, and September before the district picks up again for October 2024–March 2025. Right now, these community partners help distribute any food not taken by families during the markets by bringing them directly to the homes of families in need or offering them at their locations.

When a snowstorm forced the district to call off the four markets scheduled for January 20, these partners quickly organized to be able to receive deliveries of NY foods that had been slated to go to the district's buildings and commissary. They transformed 8 of their community locations into markets, distributing Buffalo Farm Shares to 100 neighbors and community members, most of whom lived in walking distance of the pop-up markets. When school resumed after the weeklong snow recovery, including driving bans, a BPS student told his teacher his family was lucky to be able to get to the first Buffalo Farm Shares market because it was the only food they had during the snowstorm.

6,400 Buffalo Farm Shares were distributed at 14 community sites and 25 community school programs from January–March. The Buffalo Farm Shares featured a variety of New York products: ground beef, beef patties, hot dogs, chicken, eggs, hydroponic lettuce, apples, onions, potatoes, cabbage, frozen corn and green beans, yogurt, cheese curds, butter, apple cider, dried black beans, canned red beans, raw honey and chips. What's offered remains the same for one calendar month, but the menu differs month to month and highlights seasonally available foods. There are currently 5 socially disadvantaged producers providing food for the program, and 2 more will be featured during the growing season.



The CCE Buffalo Farm Shares Coordinator is working with the district to source NY products, develop the monthly menu, schedule the markets at schools and community sites, coordinate food deliveries, assist with market distributions, complete grant reports, and ensure the grant goals are achieved. CCE will provide evaluation of the program through surveys and procurement data.

Bridget O'Brien Wood Joins Harvest NY as Buffalo Farm Shares Coordinator

Harvest NY welcomes Bridget O'Brien Wood as the [Buffalo Farm Shares](#) Coordinator. Prior to joining Harvest NY, Bridget served as the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) Food Service Director, an illustrious career spanning over three decades. During her tenure at BPS, Bridget led the development of the Buffalo Farm to School initiative, a nationally lauded program whose mission is to bring healthy, local, and fresh food to schools in Buffalo. The initiative connects schools, farms, and community partners to improve student nutrition through agriculture, health, and nutrition education; and to strengthen NY's economy by supporting local farmers and food producers. In her new role, Bridget will be working closely with BPS, with the goal of providing fresh, local, and healthy food to the Buffalo community.

Bridget O'Brien Wood (left) with Harvest NY's Cheryl Bilinski and local farmer Paul Fenton. Photo: Josh Baldo



NEW YORK FARM TO SCHOOL SUMMIT 2024

IT TAKES A VILLAGE CULTIVATING COMMUNITY IN FARM TO SCHOOL

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20 - FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22

SYRACUSE, NY THE ONCENTER AND SURROUNDING AREAS

- Field trips • Lightning talks • Panels • Hands-on learning • Trade show with NY food products • Networking opportunities

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Cultivating Community in Farm to School

The inaugural NY Farm to School Summit will take place in Syracuse, NY on November 21-22, 2024 with optional pre-summit field trips on November 20. The Summit will have sessions for all Farm to School stakeholders including farmers and producers, food service directors, educators, school administrators, and more! The sessions will be wide-ranging and suitable for stakeholders just starting out in their Farm to School journeys, or those who have been working in the field for many years.

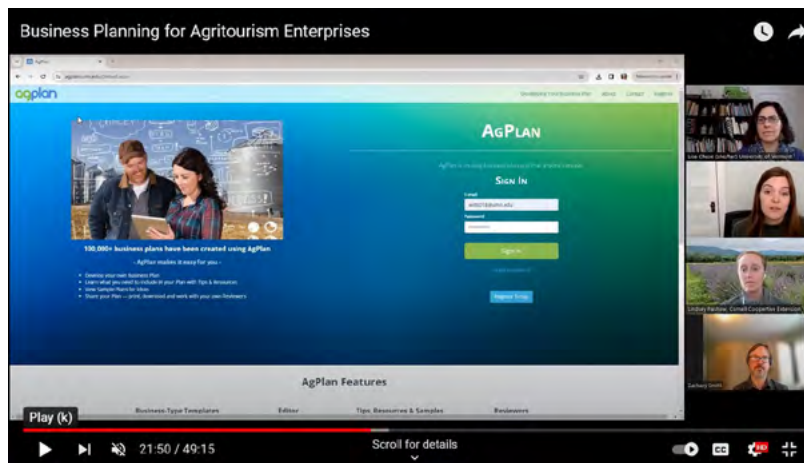
We are seeking proposals for high-quality educational workshops that allow for information sharing and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Workshops should be tangible, practical, and give attendees a call to action. Proposals must be submitted by May 1, 2024. Click for [more details or to submit a proposal](#).

The Summit is made possible thanks to USDA Federal Formula Funds and the NYS Education Department.

Agritourism Business Plan Template Developed

Having a business plan is very important in order to build a successful business. In 2007, The University of Minnesota's Center for Farm Financial Management created AgPlan—an online business planning template for agriculture businesses. Over 75,000 business plans have been initiated through the AgPlan system. However, a business plan template for agritourism operation had not been created until recently.

In October 2023, Lindsey Pashow from Harvest NY became a collaborator with the University of Vermont on their Northeast Extension Risk Management grant “Agritourism Business Planning”. The project is focused around creating an agritourism business planning template through AgPlan. In addition to the development of an agritourism business planning template, the project provides educational webinars and farmer one-on-one support to farmers interested in developing an agritourism business plan.



Pashow joined the launch of the AgPlan Agritourism Business Plan on January 23, 2024 which had 321 participants. In mid-February, a 7-week webinar series was launched. The webinar series breaks down a business plan by the specific sections of the plan. This includes Executive Summary, Description, Operations, Marketing, Management & Organization, and Financial. Pashow was a presenter for the Operations section (112 participants) and Executive Summary (48 participants). The [webinar series recordings](#) are available on YouTube.

Agriculture Marketing Webinar Series

Agricultural marketing serves as a vital link between farmers, producers, and consumers. It involves a diverse range of activities aimed at promoting, distributing, adding value, and selling agricultural products profitably. In a competitive market where consumer preferences are constantly evolving, the significance of strategic agricultural marketing cannot be overstated. By understanding and leveraging marketing principles, farmers and agricultural businesses can not only increase their profitability but also enhance market access.

In the first quarter of 2024, Lindsey Pashow and Precious Tshabalala from Harvest NY launched a 7-part Agricultural Marketing Webinar Series aimed at providing valuable insights and strategies to enhance marketing endeavors within the agricultural sector. The webinar series had a total of 7 contact hours and 310 participants. Here is a breakdown of the webinar series:

- General Marketing: 56 Participants
- Developing Marketing Plan: 45 Participants
- Finding Markets: 53 Participants
- Market Evaluation: 38 Participants
- Working with Wholesale Buyer's: 31 Participants
- Online Marketing: 48 Participants
- Value Added Products: 39 Participants

Moreover, recognizing the value of accessibility and convenience, all sessions were recorded and are now accessible for viewing on the [CCE Harvest NY YouTube Channel](#). This ensures that the invaluable insights shared throughout the series remain readily available for those unable to participate in real-time or seeking to revisit key concepts at their convenience.

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