



HARVEST NEW YORK QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS Q1 2021

Harvest New York is an innovative Cornell Cooperative Extension team that focuses on workforce development and business expansion projects that increase profitability and investment in key sectors of New York's agriculture industry.



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Risk Management for Improved Viability of the Northeast Hemp Industry

Harvest NY Awarded a Grant to Evaluate Solutions to Risks Associated with the New Hemp Industry

The hemp industry in New York and Vermont is still very new and experiences much fluctuation. Hemp growers and processors are excited about the hemp industry for the opportunities it offers. However, with any new agriculture commodity there is risk for growers and processors.

Lindsey Pashow of Harvest NY and John Hanchar of the CCE Northwest NY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops program were awarded \$29,220 from the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education grant. The grant focuses on working with hemp growers and processors in New York and Vermont to evaluate solutions to risks associated with the new hemp industry. Hemp growers and processors will supply insight into the risks associated with the hemp industry in the areas of production, marketing, financial constraints, legal concerns, and labor issues.

The proposed grant outcomes include:

1. Increase hemp growers' and processors' understanding of risks and increase awareness of risks faced by supply chain firms. Three priority risks will be identified.
2. Small hemp grower and processor working groups will analyze risks by assessing and evaluating alternative strategies to mitigate risk. They will then choose the best set of strategies.
3. Hemp growers and processors will become aware of and learn about solutions identified by the small working groups.
4. Hemp growers and processors will create and document risk management plans.
5. Hemp growers and processors will implement risk management plans to mitigate priority risks leading to improved economic viability of hemp enterprises.

Throughout the grant, Pashow and Hanchar will be working with Heather Darby from The University of Vermont for outreach and educational opportunities. The grant period is April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022.



Providing Berry Extension Locally and Nationwide From Behind a Screen

With all regional and national produce industry conferences going virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many new opportunities to attend and present at winter meetings in early 2021. Harvest NY's Esther Kibbe spoke at a number of these events. Kibbe presented her 2020 blueberry Spotted Wing Drosophila research at the Empire State Producers Expo in January. She also shared a presentation on managing blueberry insect pests at the CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program's Winter Conference. Kibbe then joined a panel of presenters from across the country talking about the state of caneberry production for the North American Raspberry and Blackberry Association. Each of these conferences was well-attended and provided opportunities for discussion and follow-up with participants.

Closer to home, Kibbe presented two virtual classes for Master Gardeners in Erie and Genesee counties. These covered topics of pest and disease management in strawberry, and an introduction to growing systems across all berries. She also wrote articles for the Erie Ag News, Lake Ontario Fruit Team's Fruit Facts and the Cornell Vegetable Program's VegEdge newsletter. Additionally, Kibbe is publishing sporadic articles on the berry blog, reminding growers to get ready for the new production season. While the plants are still dormant, Kibbe provides regular support to growers by phone, emails and texting. Questions include variety selection, weed management, fertilizer recommendations and many more. Several contacts have come from individuals seeking information on starting new berry farms. Growers usually find Kibbe by referrals from county educators, fellow growers and from hearing her speak at meetings.

With warmer weather, Kibbe has started making farm visits, helping growers with pruning, early season weed management, and working on plans for this season's research projects. She looks forward to getting started with regular pest and disease scouting and an exciting WNY exclusion netting demonstration.



Esther Kibbe's virtual presentation at the National Raspberry and Blackberry Association conference.

Harvest NY Launches the Farm to School Regional Coordinator Program

To ensure smart, strategic, and sustainable farm to school expansion, Harvest NY, with funding from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, is launching a New York Farm to School Regional Coordinator Program focused on the following regions: North Country, Hudson Valley, Catskills, and Long Island. The Regional Coordinator Program will coalesce existing efforts and expand upon Farm to School support being led by Harvest NY Specialist Cheryl Bilinski and supported by Becky O'Connor, Western NY Farm to Institution Coordinator.

It is our intention through this program to provide coordinated and comprehensive support to Farm to School stakeholders, including farmers, school food authorities (SFAs), food manufacturers, distributors, processors, food hubs, and educators. The primary goal of this program is to increase the volume and variety of local farm products purchased by SFAs for use in child nutrition programs. Other goals include facilitating idea sharing between regions, assisting schools to meet procurement regulations, and coordinating local connections between farmers and producers.

For more information on the initiative, please see the Department of Agriculture & Markets [press release](#). In addition to naming the Regional Coordinator Program, the press release announces performance-based awards to 55 of the 57 SFAs that were successful in the 30% NYS Initiative during the 2019-20 school year. Please direct specific questions regarding the Regional Coordinator Program to Cheryl Bilinski, cbt32@cornell.edu.

Farm to School Program Work Team Webinar Series

In March, the Farm to School Program Work Team hosted two webinars highlighting how Farm to School programming has been adapted during COVID-19. In the first webinar, [Adapting NYS Local Food Procurement During COVID-19](#), Food Service Directors from two School Food Authorities shared how they have continued to serve and promote local foods, and strategies for procuring local products within their budgetary constraints. Headwater Food Hub also shared how they have worked to meet the needs of schools during emergency feeding. For the second webinar, [Adapting Farm to School Education and Programming During COVID-19](#), we heard from a CCE educator, a Food Service Director, a high school teacher, and a non-profit about how they continued to engage students in meaningful programming despite pandemic challenges. 78 participants attended the first webinar, and 70 attended the second.

The Eastern Broccoli Market Opportunity Assessment for New York State

Is there an opportunity for New York growers and marketers to invest in broccoli production and distribution as a way to diversify and strengthen their businesses, while adding jobs, dollars, and resilience to the economy and rural communities?

[The Eastern Broccoli Market Opportunity Assessment for New York State](#) sought to answer this very question. The study was made possible by the initiative of three partner organizations: Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation, Red Tomato, and the Eastern Broccoli Project, with funding provided by Empire State Development. The report is be posted on the Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation's website.





Fluid Milk Processing for Quality and Safety Training

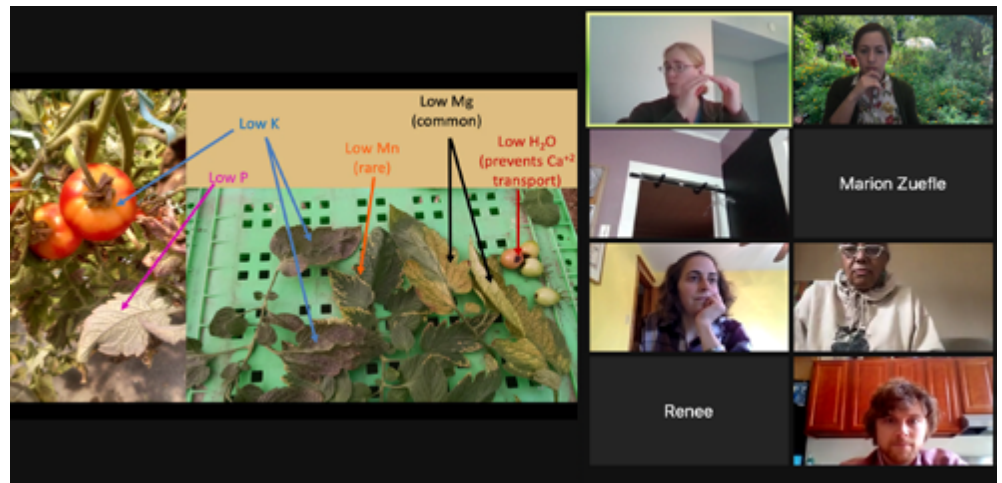
Despite the many struggles brought by the pandemic, a bright spot is the accessibility of online programming to audiences that were formerly difficult to reach for in-person programming. The first quarter of 2021 brings continued success of online course offerings for our dairy processing workshops. Two key workshops were delivered online in quarter 1: Preventive Controls for Human Food (PCQI), and Fluid Milk Processing for Quality and Safety. Eighteen participants from 11 organizations across New York State joined us for our PCQI course in February, and 25 participants from 12 different facilities/organizations attended our Fluid Milk course in March.

The Fluid Milk Processing for Quality and Safety course was a hybrid course delivered partially through self-paced, online modules, followed by a live virtual session. To enhance the hands-on experience for this course, each participant was shipped fluid milk samples to taste during the sensory component of the workshop. This approach has been a smashing success that we look forward to carrying on.



Boxes of fluid milk samples on their way to participants of the Fluid Milk workshop.

Advancing Sustainable Pest Management for NY Urban Farmers



Urban farmers are unique among agriculturalists as they operate on a smaller scale in settings with less biological diversity and have fewer pest management options available. Harvest NY Urban Ag Specialists Yolanda Gonzalez and Sam Anderson have conducted more than 200 farm visits in New York City to date and observed that growers are challenged by pests that are not typically significant in rural NY settings, like harlequin bug, two-spotted spider mite, and cabbage whitefly. While pests are problematic for all agricultural producers, challenges in urban areas are unique and include lack of scale-appropriate IPM inputs, limited research on urban ag pests, and historically limited technical support from farm service providers.

As a response to this growing demand for technical assistance and guidance tailored to sustainable pest management practices for urban farms, Anderson and Gonzalez co-wrote and received 5 grants within the past year related to urban ag IPM, collaborating with colleagues from the CCE Cornell Vegetable Program, the CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program, the Cornell School of Integrative Plant Science, and the NYS IPM program. One of these, “SARE LNE21-421, Sustainable Pest Management for New York Urban Farmers,” is a 3-year project focused on evaluating the suitability of certain controls (exclusion, biological controls, varietal resistance, intercropping), partnering with urban farms in NYC and Buffalo to carry out on farm trials. Another, “Pest Management using non-pesticide approaches: Conservation biocontrol on urban farms in New York City,” works in partnership with NYS IPM to help NYC farmers improve their management of arthropod pests by attracting and conserving natural enemies.

IPM is already central to Harvest NY’s work with urban farmers in NYC. In early 2021, Anderson hosted 3 virtual farmer-to-farmer sessions focusing on key pest and disease issues of vegetables in NYC, sharing findings with over 75 urban farmers and other stakeholders and providing a forum for farmers to compare notes and form new collaborations. And Gonzalez and Anderson co-hosted an Intro to Urban Ag IPM workshop with CCE and NYSIPM colleagues on March 26, drawing over 20 participants from across the state.

URBAN AGRICULTURE

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