

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

2013 YEAR IN REVIEW

HARVEST NEW YORK!

Growing New York's
Agriculture and Food Economy

Harvest New York is a pilot program in Western NY designed to expand and enhance existing regional agriculture extension programs with the addition of three new areas of expertise: agricultural economic development, dairy modernization, and dairy food processing. Maximizing connections to the research and resources of Cornell and Cooperative Extension, responding to emerging issues, and developing new opportunities, Cornell Cooperative Extension's newest regional team members will help increase the profitability of the New York agricultural industry.



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

"Field & Fork Network's partnership with Harvest NY has been invaluable. Since 2013, this partnership has allowed us to move forward and secure funding for two important economic development initiatives in WNY. The Ready To Grow: WNY Food Hub Planning Project has been an important step in better understanding the barriers that exist between local growers and wholesale buyers and what types of infrastructure we need in our region to connect more of our small and mid-size growers to more market opportunities. Cheryl Thayer [Harvest NY] has been a key partner in outreach efforts on both sides of the equation. The Double Up Food Bucks! WNY program pilot has also become a reality for launch in 2014 through Cheryl's focused research and grant writing in securing funds for this important and impactful initiative. The Double Up Food Bucks program pilot goal is to increase access to healthy food for low-income individuals and allows for the redirection of federal assistance dollars into the pockets of our local produce growers. This program is a win-win for the entire Western NY community."

— Lisa Tucker, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Field & Fork Network

"Tristan Zuber [Harvest NY] was extremely helpful when Genesee Community College was writing the SUNY High Needs grant for the creation of the Food Processing Technology program. She researched and provided information regarding the field of Food Processing and helped to gather letters of support from the Food Processing industry in our area. The grant was successfully approved and we are waiting for State Ed approval to launch the program."

— Dr. Rafael Alicea-Maldonado, Dean of Math & Science Department,
Genesee Community College

"Production of food and agriculture plays a vital part in Western New York's economy. This economic grant award [Ready To Grow: WNY Food Hub Planning Project] will plant the seeds for Field and Fork Network to connect our agri-business industries to new market opportunities so that jobs and our economy can flourish."

— Senator Michael Ranzenhofer



With the support of Harvest NY,
363 people were sent through various
dairy foods processing trainings in 2013
as part of the Cornell Dairy Foods
Certificate Program



Harvest NY is facilitating projects on 6
Western NY dairy farms, using funds
from the Dairy Acceleration Program, to
develop environmentally conscious
business plans and facility designs,
leading to higher milk production and
milk sales



Partnering with Field & Fork Network,
Harvest NY will complete a food hub
feasibility study, a critical step in
connecting more locally grown produce
to the wholesale market in Western NY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE GROWING DAIRY FOODS PROCESSING INDUSTRY

With the growth of the dairy processing industry, there has been a significant need to develop a trained workforce. With the support of Harvest NY, 363 people were sent through various training programs in 2013 as part of the Cornell Dairy Foods Certificate Program. Many of these programs were also brought out to on-site locations in Western NY, which allowed the training of 148 additional people who were either new employees in Dairy Foods Processing or employees looking to expand their roles within their company. These training programs cover skills including dairy food safety, dairy manufacturing, regulatory compliance, and hazard analysis and critical control points.



Dairy
Processing
Equipment
Training

Harvest NY also teamed up with community colleges to begin developing certificate and degree programs in Food Processing Technology to support the need for more workers in the food and dairy processing industry. Harvest NY assisted both Genesee Community College (GCC) and Erie Community College by supporting grant writing efforts and curriculum development. As a result, Erie Community College has developed a 10-month Food Processing Technology certificate track as part of their Biomanufacturing Certificate Program, which will start in Fall 2014. Additionally, Genesee Community College received \$238,719 in SUNY High Needs Funds to support the development of an AAS Degree in Food Processing Technology. The AAS Degree has been approved by the GCC Board of Trustees and SUNY and is finalizing approval in the State Education department, with plans to start in Fall 2014.

Additionally, Harvest NY teamed up with the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership to develop curriculum to teach food science in the newly created Agribusiness Academy. As well, over 300 high school students were introduced to careers in the food industry through the Harvest Festival. Harvest NY also assisted with setting up tours of food processors for high school guidance counselors in the Genesee Region to show the careers in the food and dairy processing industry in Western NY.

HARVEST NY TEAMS WITH MILK QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TO OBTAIN GRANT TO RESEARCH AND EDUCATE FARMERS ON PROTOCOLS THAT WILL BENEFIT WESTERN NY DAIRY PROCESSORS

The New York Farm Viability Institute recently awarded \$148,598 to the Milk Quality Improvement Program and Harvest NY for a project involving source identification and education on entry of sporeforming bacteria at the dairy farm level. Sporeforming bacteria are ubiquitous in the natural dairy farm environment and have been shown to enter the milk continuum on the farm. They survive processing and may cause quality deterioration in finished products, such as cheese, fluid milk and dairy powders, leading to significant economic losses to processors.

The project involves selecting NYS farms of varying management practices and sample environmental sources along with raw bulk tank milk on a quarterly basis. Sporeforming bacteria will then be identified using plating and DNA fingerprinting techniques and be correlated with respective environmental sources. Once environmental sources of contamination are identified, best management practices will be developed to reduce the transmission of sporeformers to raw milk. Regional workshops will then be held in collaboration with cooperatives and farmer-based organizations to educate the dairy production industry on control of these spore-forming bacteria that affect finished dairy product quality. The project will be completed by December 2015. This project will benefit the NYS dairy industry and dairy farmers in particular by providing the tools needed to produce raw milk with low spore counts.

HARVEST NY MAXIMIZES RESOURCES FOR WESTERN NY DAIRIES

An objective of the Dairy Modernization Specialist has been to support growth and reinvestment in NYS dairy farms by connecting farm operators to available resources. Recent state initiatives are providing exciting opportunities for NYS farmers, and Harvest NY specialists are working to match needs with the funds and expertise to improve immediate and long-term profitability and sustainability. Efforts towards this have proved fruitful, with the Dairy Modernization Specialist helping to develop and coordinate the promotion of the Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP).

To date, DAP has provided nearly 50 grants for business planning to dairy farms with funds allocated by Governor Cuomo, to stimulate growth and modernization of NYS's dairy industry. Harvest NY is facilitating projects using funds from DAP to develop business plans, facility designs, and updated environmental plans on 6 Harvest NY dairy farms. These farms had estimated 2013 milk sales of \$5.4 million, and are planning capital investment projects resulting in higher milk production and proposed growth exceeding 600 cows and \$2 million in additional milk sales revenue. These projects are analyzing investments in cattle, waste and feed facilities with projected investment exceeding three million dollars over the next two years, and will utilize services from across the Western NY dairy industry. With the recent announcement from Governor Cuomo to increase funding to the DAP by \$850,000, we can look forward to another 40 dairy farms benefiting from business plans for their environmentally conscious growth.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH IN WESTERN NY FARMERS' MARKETS

In partnership with lead agency, Field & Fork Network, Harvest NY has forged a national partnership with Fair Food Network to pilot their highly successful program, Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb), in Western NY farmers' markets. Using philanthropic funds, DUFb matches Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets, up to \$20 per visit, to be used on fresh fruit and vegetables grown in NYS.

The success of Fair Food Network's DUFb program in Michigan is tremendous. What began in a handful of markets in 2009 has since expanded to over 100 markets statewide.

Michigan leads the country in SNAP sales at farmers markets, with a reported \$1.53M in 2012-almost triple the amount of SNAP sales in 2010. As a result of the DUFb program, 83% of Michigan farmers reported an increase in revenue and 78% of market customers reported an increase in the purchase of healthy fruits and vegetables. Field & Fork Network and Harvest NY are confident that similar results will be realized in NYS through the pilot launch and subsequent expansion of the program across NYS.



With full funding, the Western NY pilot will launch in 8 farmers' markets throughout Erie, Niagara and Chautauqua county farmers' markets for the 2014 season. Total SNAP expenditures within the 3-county range in 2013 was over \$346M, which suggests a major opportunity for the redirection of federal funds to support greater healthy food access for underserved communities and improved profits for the community's farmers. Through the generous support of the John R. Oishei Foundation, 30% of the total budget has been secured at this time. It is expected that the support of this well-respected Western NY foundation will help to leverage the remaining funding from other foundations and donors.

WESTERN NY FOOD HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY TO COMMENCE

Harvest NY has partnered with lead agency, Field and Fork network, to commence a food hub feasibility study and business plan for Western NY. Funded through a \$175,000 grant from Farm Credit Northeast and the Western NY Power Proceeds Allocation Fund, the feasibility study will include a thorough market analysis, agricultural production analysis and infrastructure analysis to best determine the feasibility of a food hub. Conditional on a favorable outcome, a full business plan, to include an industry analysis, market analysis, marketing plan, operations plan, development plan, and financial plan will be developed. Identified by numerous regional planning efforts, this project is viewed as a critical step in connecting more locally grown produce to the wholesale market in Western NY.

GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAPs) TRAININGS PROVIDED BY HARVEST NY SPECIALIST

An increasing number of wholesale and institutional buyers require fruit and vegetable producers to adopt food safety practices. Overwhelmingly, these buyers require producers to implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) on the farm. The objective of GAPs is to focus on best agricultural practices to verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards.

To help producers navigate these new food safety requirements and ensure they maintain existing markets, the Harvest NY team partnered with the Cornell Vegetable Program, the Cornell Lake Ontario Fruit Team, the Produce Safety Alliance, and the Cornell National GAPs Program, with assistance from NY Ag & Markets and partial funding from the Genesee Valley Regional Market Authority, to present a two day training on farm food safety, GAPs and Harmonized GAPs. The first day of training focused on assessing farm food safety risks, how to address those risks, how GAPs works, and how to implement these practices on the farm. The second day of training focused on writing a farm food safety plan designed by individual farms to address their specific risks.

HARVEST NY HELPS FAMILY FARM TO SEE BIG RETURNS FROM FACILITY INVESTMENT

As dairy farms grow and improve their operations, construction of new facilities, and renovation of old are often involved in the business plan. Kevetta Dairy Farm in Livingston County is one such family farm. Kevin and Annetta invested in a new barn large enough to house their herd of 45 cattle on a bedded pack, with room to nearly double should they choose to do so in the future.

Their next target after the new barn was to update the aging, labor-intensive flat barn where the cattle are milked. Their goal is to reduce the physical demands of this style of milking by investing in a pit parlor, allowing them to milk their herd in a faster, more efficient manner. With the help of Harvest NY specialist, designs for a new parlor have been researched and developed. The couple was able to visit local dairymen who have constructed milking facilities in similar conditions, and with input from Cornell Pro Dairy engineers who visited the farm, be assured their design is compatible with the older barn. The farm has engaged local service providers to begin construction and significant remodeling needed to turn their barn into a low cost, clean and efficient 12 cow milking parlor that will cut their labor needs in half, and allow for additional cows in the future. Construction began this winter, and is expected to be complete by summer, giving the Herrington's moderate investment, a big return.

Cheryl Thayer – *Agriculture Economic Development Specialist*

607-592-9507

cdt32@cornell.edu

Tristan Zuber – *Dairy Processing Specialist*

607-227-7398

tjz2@cornell.edu

Beth Dahl – *Dairy Modernization Specialist*

607-592-5345

aed49@cornell.edu

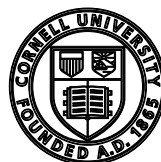
Elizabeth Newbold – *Local Foods Systems Specialist*

315-536-5123

ejn22@cornell.edu

www.harvestny.cce.cornell.edu

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension