PROMOTING AGRICULTURE IN YOUR COUNTY
A Special Report from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Future of Farming

Mark Alger
President

A. Douglas Berwanger
Chairman

Stephen J. Acquario
Executive Director

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The New York State Association of Counties Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Future of Farming in New York State is a group of more than 50 county officials working together to make a positive impact on farming and agriculture in New York State.

The stories contributed for this report came directly from the following Blue Ribbon Task Force members. We thank them for their input and ongoing service. We also want to thank and acknowledge NYSAC’s Liaison to the Task Force, Katy Vescio, who was instrumental in pulling this report together.

- Hon. Kathleen Jimino, Rensselaer County Executive
  KJimino@rensco.com
- Hon. Alan Grattidge, Saratoga County Chairman
  supervisor@townofcharlton.org
- Hon. Morris Sorbello, Oswego County Legislator
  msorbello@twcny.rr.com
- Jan Blaire, Vice Chair, Westchester County Soil and Water Board
  envirojb@gmail.com
- Hon. Doug Berwanger, Wyoming County Chairman
  adberwanger@wyomingco.net
- Hon. Jim Brick, Wyoming County Supervisor
  townofpe@rochester.rr.com
- Hon. Thomas Ryan, Steuben County Legislator
  tsryan@verizon.net
- Hon. Rochelle Stein, Genesee County Legislator
  rstein@co.genesee.ny.us

NYSAC Blue Ribbon Task Force members meeting at the Empire Farm Days.
Since its inception in 2010, the Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Future of Farming has met to discuss challenges facing New York’s farms and devise strategies for helping to promote agriculture in New York State. During a recent roundtable discussion held by the Task Force, our members shared stories of successful agriculture initiatives in their county. The goal of this exercise was to help other county leaders learn about new ways to help promote farming and agriculture locally.

From branding campaigns, to economic development strategies, these stories from across New York State present a cross-section of ideas that offer inspiration to others looking for ways to support local farms and bolster agricultural initiatives in their own communities.

Many of the stories shared here include examples of farm tours as ways to engage the public or key policy makers. The American Dairy Association and the Ad Council have developed a “Farm Tour Checklist” as a useful tool when planning for and preparing your own farm tour. This document is provided in Appendix A.

Saratoga County

Sundae on the Farm

Saratoga County each year, pulls together a cooperative effort to showcase a working farm. “Sundae on the Farm” celebrated their 18th year as a project to help with education and outreach to the public in order to broaden understanding of and appreciation for local farms and agriculture industries. The “Sundae on the Farm” effort is overseen by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County. It is held on Father’s Day weekend each year and attracts more than 3000 people. The event is open to the public, free, and designed to minimize the impact on the farm. A trolley system brings participants to the farm from designated parking areas. This gives the opportunity for visitors to hear a talk during the trolley ride on the history of the farm. The 2013 tour highlighted a working horse farm in order to bring attention to the equine industry and further public outreach to that agricultural sector. Among the many goals of “Sundae on the Farm” are to educate the public on where their food comes from, and highlight local products and regionally significant agriculture ventures. More information is available online at: http://www.ccesaratoga.org/

For more information about agricultural initiatives underway in Saratoga County, contact Hon. Alan Grattidge, Chairman of the Saratoga Board of Supervisors.

Saratoga County Chairman Alan Grattidge addresses the county’s 2013 Sundae on the Farm.
Genesee County

Genesee Valley Agri-Business Park

Genesee County has developed a 200 acre industrial park with all the proper infrastructure and zoning to attract agricultural businesses. The Genesee Valley Agri-Business Park is dedicated to Agri-Business and Renewable Energy and is the first of its kind in New York State. Park residents enjoy low cost water delivered via the local aquifer, which can provide up to 6 million gallons per day. In addition, a wastewater pretreatment facility sits on the site. The park is serviced by Transmission, Sub-Transmission and Distribution level electric and up to 8” gas lines are available. Businesses located in the park are: Alpina, a Columbian-Swiss based venture producing greek style yogurt; Muller, a Quaker Dairy partnership of Theo Muller of Germany and UK and Pepsi brand products producing greek style yogurt; and Martec, a local dairy industry labeling enterprise. In partnership with Cornell University, local economic developers, the Genesee County Community College and various agricultural manufactures, the business park was rated by Business Facilities magazine as “Top 3 in Metro/ Food Processing Industry Growth”. An important element of this project was ensuring that educational institutions could help fill the gaps in needed workforce skills so that companies who moved into the Park were able to find the skilled workers they needed. More information is available at: http://www.gcedc.com/pdf/marketing/GeneseeAg-08_06_12-low.pdf

“Celebrate Agriculture” Dinner

The success of Genesee County’s “Celebrate Agriculture Dinner” is largely due to the partnership created between the county and local agriculture groups. This event is coordinated by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Genesee County, Genesee County Chamber of Commerce, Genesee County Soil & Water Conservation District and Genesee County Farm Bureau. Promotion for this even has grown and it has become a popular community tradition to bring individuals together to socialize before the beginning of the growing season. Revenue generated by this event is used to fund the Ag Decision-makers’ Forum. For more information, visit Genesee County’s Cooperative Extension website: https://genesee.shutterfly.com
Agriculture Decision Makers’ Forum

The goal of this event is to bring about a broader understanding of farming and agriculture by elected officials representing Genesee County. The event is geared to all elected local officials that levy taxes on property, including school board members, county legislators, town board, village, fire district commissioners and library boards. The forum involves a free tour and interaction with young entrepreneurs.

The forum tackles global agriculture issues as well as local issues, such as immigration, cost of services studies, career opportunities, hydro-fracking, public water access, GIS and GPS propelled farm equipment. By bringing policy-makers onto a working farm, or into an agribusiness operation, the tour organizers are able to explain the impacts of specific policy decisions on working farmers. The tour changes every year - 2014 will be the 25th year of this forum. From animal care to soil dynamics, this tour has worked to educate the public about the salient issues facing agriculture in the county. More information is available by contacting the Genesee County Chamber of Commerce Agricultural Committee. www.geneseeny.com/.

For more information on any of the initiatives underway in Genesee County, contact Hon. Shelly Stein, Genesee County Legislator.

Wyoming County

Agri-palooza

This event is held on a Sunday from 12-4pm. It attracts 2000-3000 people, and is cosponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Chamber of Commerce. Wyoming County has also closely worked with the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC) to promote their agricultural industries and farms. Executives from Wegmans (co-chair of the council) worked with John Nobel and the Governor’s office to do local site visits on a dairy farm to give members of the FLREDC an “on-farm” perspective of what the agriculture industry means to that area.

Agri-palooza celebrates Wyoming County’s #1 industry: agriculture. The event, held annually is free, family-friendly and has activities for participants of all ages. The event includes guided farm tours, children’s educational activities including a hay maze, a corn dig, animal exhibits and farm equipment displays. A special focus is placed on Wyoming County products, highlighted through the farmer’s market.
The event is organized by the Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Wyoming County. More information is available online at www.agripalooza.com.

For additional details on this and other initiatives in Wyoming County, contact Hon. Doug Berwanger, Chair of the Board, Wyoming County or Hon. Jim Brick, Wyoming County Supervisor.

Steuben County

Steuben County Farm-City Day

Farm-City Day is an educational, fun filled day on the farm where the public can get a firsthand, behind the scenes look at how a modern dairy farm operates. This event is public, held on a Saturday and is designed specifically for children to gain further appreciation for farming. Visitors can pet baby calves, pick a pumpkin, take a wagon ride, get lost in a corn maze, milk a cow by hand, hold a baby chick, and play in a giant pile of corn. The event also has local farmers and farm business owners on hand to answer questions. Local growers feature fresh farm products to sample and sell. For more information visit the Farm-City Day website at www.steubencountyfarmday.com.

Farmland Preservation Plan and Economic Development

In the 2011 Steuben County Economic Development Plan, the Steuben County Industrial Development Agency identified Value Added Agriculture as a growth engine for the Steuben County economy. In 2013, the Industrial Development Agency took steps to advance their efforts to grow the agricultural base of the economy by partnering with Steuben County to support an updated Farmland Preservation Plan with the goal of focusing on the development of new agricultural markets. The effort will identify opportunities in agriculture with the focus of advancing projects through the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and the Consolidated Funding Application.

Farm-to-Table and Local Markets

Discussions are underway between the Steuben County Planning Department, Steuben County Conference and Visitors Bureau, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning Board, and IDA staff to advance a local farm to table and local markets imitative as part of the work being done with the Farmland Preservation Plan. The work proposed would expand on the original plan’s efforts to identify new markets outside the county. The additional effort would focus on existing production and would seek to look at local needs to establish a farm to table distribution
system and target additional opportunities for local growers to provide products currently imported from outside the local economic development area.

For additional details on Farm City Day and Steuben County initiatives, contact Hon. Tom Ryan, Steuben County Legislator.

Westchester County

Feasibility Study – Using a Food Barge to Transport Upstate Food Products

Lower Hudson-Long Island Resource Conservation & Development Council, whose board includes Westchester County, conducted a feasibility study on use of a barge to transport agricultural products to the New York City market as a way to create new market opportunities for upstate producers without adding truck traffic to the region. The study, funded through a partnership with NYSERDA, looked at transporting food from Central New York to Hunts Point Terminal Market in the Bronx via the Hudson River. The study found that barge transport was suitable for heavier, hardier foods such as cabbage, potatoes, and apples, and that there was a threshold quantity above which energy and cost savings and emissions reductions accrue. Significant factors affecting the viability of barge transport include location of the origin port in relation to producers, backhaul, and operational structure. The study is informing decision-makers throughout the state and heightening awareness of New York State products. More information is available at http://lhlircd.net/.

Agri-tourism and Farm Mapping

Westchester County is an agricultural county also known for being densely populated and conveniently located in close proximity to New York City. To capitalize on these features, the county’s Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, in partnership with Westchester County Tourism & Film, is creating a Farm & Orchards tour route and itineraries. The goal is to increase visibility and promote Westchester County farms as agro-tourism destinations, and to bring information on local farms into the densely populated areas. The initiative gives visitors an opportunity to appreciate first-hand Westchester County’s working farms and orchards.

For more information, contact Jan Blaire of the Westchester County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board.
**Oswego County**

**Creating a County Brand**

Oswego County has realized success by using branding to highlight their locally grown onions. This effort has helped to promote the unique qualities of onions grown in Oswego County, as well as create a cooperative to help onion farmers collectively market their onions and onion products. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County helped develop a logo, brand name, and marketing strategy to engage retail sellers and wholesalers. The result was the “New York Bold” campaign. For more details on the New York Bold Onion brand, visit: [http://www.newyorkbold.com/](http://www.newyorkbold.com/)

**Rensselaer County**

**Raising Awareness among State Lawmakers**

Rensselaer County has been instrumental in broadening the awareness about farming among members of the New York State Legislature. Due to the proximity between the New York State Capitol Building in Albany, and many vibrant local farms, Rensselaer County Executive Kathleen Jimino partnered with State Senator Roy McDonald to bring a group of State Senators and Assembly members to three Rensselaer County farms. The farm tour was held during the legislative session on a day when lawmakers were already in Albany. By organizing brief site visits on three farms only a short distance drive from the Capitol, lawmakers (mostly from downstate regions) were able to see firsthand the impacts of statewide policy decision on local farm business owners. The first tour, held in May 2011, brought State Lawmakers to Herrington Dairy Farm, Gould Orchards (apples, cider and wine), and Duncan Farms, a small dairy operation. The Rensselaer County Farm Tour stops at Duncan Farm.

*For more information on the Rensselaer County Farm Tour for State Lawmakers, contact Hon. Kathy Jimino, Rensselaer County Executive.*
**Farm Tour Checklist**  
*(provided by the American Dairy Association and the Ad Council)*

### 1 Month Before Tour:
- Contact teacher/school/community leader to confirm details:
  - Number of children in group
  - Number of adults in group
  - What is their role?
  - Age range
  - What time will the students arrive? Depart?
  - Group’s interests/special requests to cover during the tour
  - Are members of the media (school newsletter) participating in the tour? If yes, determine spokesperson for your farm
  - Provide directions to your dairy farm and parking information (don’t count on GPS)
  - Will the group bring food to eat at the farm?
  - Review appropriate clothing choices for tour participants (i.e., play clothes)
    - Do they need boot covers?
  - Rain plan
- Contact American Dairy Association and Dairy Council (ADADC) to receive promotional items for the tour  
  (315) 472-9143

### 2 Weeks Before Tour:
- Practice your presentation  
  (practice what you will say at each section during your normal chores)
- Continue farm clean-up
- Consider your hand washing plan  
  (sink, water, and soap easily accessible or hand sanitizer and wipes)
- Develop signs stating what is restricted

### 3 Weeks Before Tour:
- Draft an outline for the tour and identify YOUR goals (e.g., educate children about milk production; strengthen relationships with community leaders; etc.)
- Determine which areas of the farm will/will not be included in the tour
- Decide where to host the group when they arrive to give a farm overview
- If other family members or staff will be assisting with the tour, meet with them to review the outline and share your key messages to communicate during the tour
- Do a farm tour walk-through
  - Pick up wires, tires, etc. that the visitors could trip or fall over

### 2 Days Before Tour:
- Finalize tour  
  (presentation and route traveled)
- Check in with teacher/school/community leader to confirm details
- Notify appropriate family members and staff of when tour participants will arrive

### Day of Tour:
- Conduct final walk through to confirm cleanliness and safety—make sure paths are clear, animals are fed/watered and looking healthy
- Set up hand washing station
- Change into clean clothes—perhaps a shirt with the farm name  
  (no manure or blood stains)
- Smile and have fun! You are the best person to tell your story!
Farming Task Force