

Discussion of Issues



The largest John Deere tractor east of the Mississippi is in Ulster County
photo courtesy of Tom Mahoney, May '97 Country Folks Grower

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

ISSUE: AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY

Active, viable agricultural operations ensure open space. The local economy benefits from a strong agricultural base. Farmers contribute far more in taxes for community services received than do nonfarmers. Farmers spend more dollars locally than do most businesses. Much of the local tourism trade may be attributed to farming's aesthetic contributions.

Agriculture is an integral part of the county's economic base. Cash receipts from agricultural product sales exceeded \$55 million in 1995. Our leading agricultural product is fruit. In 1992, 10,000 acres produced apples, 622 acres were in pears. Ulster County ranks first in the state for pear production and second in the state for apple sales. Ulster County is second only to Suffolk in the number of direct farm marketing operations in the metro region.

Farming in Ulster County faces a multitude of challenges from suburban and urban development, increased taxation and regulation, and changed economic markets. Ways of increasing viability include, but are not limited to: increasing market shares, utilizing existing management resources, and reforming taxation and regulation. The following objectives and implementation strategies may be used to achieve agricultural viability:

Marketing

Ulster County is located about 75 miles from New York City with its eight million inhabitants. Many New Yorkers travel to Ulster County on day or weekend trips to hike in the mountains, attend fairs and festivals and shop at picturesque farm stands. Ulster County is an attractive destination for New York City residents as it has three accessible Thruway exits.

In 1996, Ulster County Tourism developed a *Harvest Time Guide* brochure (See Appendix A, page 2). This publication lists county wineries, herb farms, farm markets and pick-your-own operations. A map is included to guide customers to each operation. Farm operation descriptions include food products sold as well as farm attractions such as petting zoos, tractor rides, pony rides, etc.

Agricultural farm stands, pick-your-own operations, wineries and herb farms all market their products directly to the customer, thereby realizing more profits than when using intermediary agents. Strategies for better utilizing NYC as a primary market may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Explore using a variety of media for advertising Ulster County agricultural products to NYC consumers. *Harvest Time* brochures could be placed at bus and train stations between Ulster and New York City as well as Thruway exits. Strategies for using both local and New York City region radio and television should be explored.
- Continue to advertise Ulster County direct marketing operations (road side stands, u-pick and u-cut operations) on Ulster County's web site, www.co.ulster.ny.us.

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In the metro region, Ulster County is surpassed only by Suffolk in the number of retail farm outlets according to 1995 figures from New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. These outlets include roadside stands, pick-your-own operations, wineries, apiaries, etc. Efforts to promote these direct marketing operations may include, but should not be limited to, the following strategies:

- Encourage local newspaper and magazine editors to publish articles featuring our many direct marketing outlets. Articles could spotlight quality products and seasonal attractions visitors may encounter at the different operations.
- Encourage our six local radio stations to broadcast "what's in season now" at the farm markets. Press releases could be sent to stations on a regular basis. Explore using public service announcement time to promote Ulster County agriculture.
- Communicate interesting agricultural economic facts and statistics to Ulster County Development Corporation (UCDC) for inclusion in their promotional materials.
- Encourage agricultural direct marketers to advertise in Ulster County Tourism's *Harvest Time* brochure. Awareness of this brochure can be promoted at agricultural educational programs, agricultural organization meetings and newsletters.

Niche Farming

Many Ulster County residents and visitors seek high quality specialty products or services. Some want to know where to buy organic vegetables and herbs while others want to cut their own Christmas trees.

A growing number of farms are offering customers an opportunity to experience agriculture through events, attractions or demonstrations. Some farms have petting zoos, some host festivals and give tours and tractor rides, while others demonstrate production practices and offer educational programs.

Organic farming is a growing industry in Ulster County. In organic farming, farm products are produced without the use of synthetic chemicals. Natural fertilizers and pest controls are employed. Many of Ulster County's organic farms are Community Supported Agriculture.

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a popular new concept that was pioneered in Massachusetts. A farmer calculates the farm's expenses and sells shares to the number of families the farm can support. The farmer benefits by having a guaranteed income that remains constant as the risk of crop failure is spread among the shareholders. The shareholders benefit by receiving fresh vegetables at wholesale prices. Ulster County is home to five CSA operations.

Farm operations selling specialty products or offering unique experiences could be promoted through the following activities:

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- Continue to promote Ulster County Tourism's *Harvest Time* brochure and encourage direct marketing operators to list their specialty products or activities.
- Encourage local newspaper and magazine editors to publish seasonal articles spotlighting specialty products available in Ulster County.
- Encourage farms offering special events, activities or experiences to write press releases and send them to a variety of media outlets.

This plan supports all types of farming equally. Farming today is different than it was ten years ago and will be different ten years from now. Farmers will need flexibility to change with the times. As Roderick O. Dressel, Jr. stated in his letter to the Board, "We should let the markets decide which types of farms belong in Ulster County. The farms may need to be apple or dairy, large or small, IPM or organic. Ideally they will be some mix of all of these plus others."

Ulster County consumers and farmers alike express dismay over the lack of local produce in area grocery stores. Some farmers feel the price of shelf space to be prohibitive to marketing their product locally; others have experienced reluctance from supermarket representatives to purchase local products. As most retailers are consumer driven, the committee recommended targeting consumers regarding this issue. If the customer requests local products, the supermarkets may respond by purchasing, labeling and prominently displaying locally grown fruits and vegetables.

- Develop a quick educational slogan or message that encourages consumers to buy local products and utilize the media (brochures, radio, television) to distribute the message.
- Research and write a consumer educational message comparing health and economic benefits of local produce over imported. In the message, encourage consumers to ask supermarket managers to carry and prominently display local products. Distribute information to local radio stations and newspapers.

Some Ulster County farmers own operations far from major roads or byways. It becomes more difficult and costly to attract customers to retail outlets that are hard to find. It is plausible that New York City green markets and Ulster County farmers' markets may provide direct marketing opportunities for these growers. Strategies for providing these marketing opportunities to growers may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Facilitate meetings between existing farmers' market directors, farmers and Cornell Cooperative Extension to discuss marketing opportunities in Kingston.
- Continue discussions between farmers, New York State Agriculture and Markets, Cornell Cooperative Extension and other pertinent organizations concerning the formation of new farmers' markets in Ulster County.
- Advertise farmers' markets locations using a variety of media sources.

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Ulster County produces a variety of high quality agricultural products. Increased market shares in regional and national markets enhance agricultural viability. Several strategies to consider for increasing regional and national markets may include:

- Consult regional tourism organizations such as Team Hudson Valley and Hudson Valley Tourism for information on regional marketing opportunities.
- Consult with other Hudson Valley counties concerning participation in the Javits Fancy Food trade show in New York.
- Contact promotional representatives of NYC television shows in hopes of promoting Ulster County agricultural products.
- Encourage Ulster County name recognition by applying logo stickers to products. Ulster County Hudson Valley Harvest stickers may be obtained through Cornell Cooperative Extension. Other available logo stickers may be available from the Apple Association and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Existing Management Resources

Deer damage to agriculture can be devastating. Orchard damage is worse during severe winters as deer browse trees. Bear can be troublesome to corn growers during summer as they come down from the mountains and take up residence in a corn field. Geese can reduce yields of newly planted alfalfa, winter wheat and rye.

Environmental Conservation Law directs the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to promote and maintain conditions under which people and nature can thrive in harmony and to maintain wildlife in ecological balance. DEC manages deer numbers with deer management permits by controlling the number of female deer taken by hunters. A citizen task force, made up of community members affected by deer management, assist the DEC to arrive at an ideal population number for deer in their area. This determines the amount of deer management permits issued in a given year.

Deer damage permits are available to farmers or other individuals sustaining damage during nonhunting season. These permits are granted after damage is confirmed by the DEC. Proposed legislation which may benefit farmers calls for New York to offer deer management assistance permits. This allows individuals to obtain additional deer management permits (doe permits) during hunting season. Pennsylvania, Michigan, Virginia and other states currently offer this option.

Hunting of deer, chasing bear and obtaining a permit to destroy geese eggs are the current best management techniques available at this time. Exclusion of deer with special fencing is the most effective management technique, but too costly for many to use.

The following strategies may be considered to promote wildlife control in Ulster County:

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- Consult with the DEC for current wildlife management techniques.
- Offer educational programs to both farmers and the general public. Farmers can benefit by learning new management techniques; the general public can benefit by learning why wildlife control may be necessary.
- Support wildlife management research.

The New York State Agricultural Experiment Station - Hudson Valley Lab is a valuable resource for sustaining viable agriculture in Ulster County. The lab is noted for its applied research program focusing on fruit and vegetable problems unique to eastern New York. The lab works closely with farmers and the agricultural program of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County on pest management recommendations, ecologically sound cultural practices and new technologies. Strategies for promoting Hudson Valley Lab may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Inform local and state representatives of Hudson Valley Lab's activities and accomplishments.
- Encourage public investment in New York State agricultural research.

Taxation/Regulation

Public policy should recognize agricultural economics and land use changes as they occur. Agriculture is a dynamic industry that constantly evolves. In Ulster County, the agriculture industry responds continually to economic, environmental and demographic changes. Strategies for influencing public policy may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Create forums for discussions between farmers, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, and local government. Farmers in Ulster County have unequivocally stated that property, school and estate tax relief is needed to ensure viability. Local government officials could assist farmers in their lobbying efforts.
- Support Farm Bureau efforts to effect legislation that enhances agricultural viability.
- Identify county and local government rules, regulations and policies that hinder the economic development potential of agriculture. Public policy should protect the public health, safety and welfare of the community without restricting normal farming practices, hindering farm economic viability or discouraging agricultural operations.
- Review planning and zoning ordinances to ensure they allow for farm-related structures, employee housing, support businesses, etc. When a building becomes nonconforming, a provision will need to be made for successor uses.

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- Encourage local right-to-farm legislation. New York State has a right-to-farm law which protects normal farming activity, as outlined by the State Department of Agriculture, from regulations and private nuisance suits. Local governments may pass an ordinance to supplement the state right-to-farm law. This may give farmers better protection from nuisance law suits by including specific provisions or providing new property owners with a disclosure notice. An example of a town right-to-farm law is included in Appendix C.



Apple picking

photo courtesy of Ulster County Tourism

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ISSUE: LAND USE/PROTECTION

Agriculture is an important industry in Ulster County as it provides fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, grains, horticultural products, livestock and livestock products. Agriculture contributes significantly to the economy of Ulster County as it employs workers, requires less community services than it pays for in property taxes, and spends dollars locally. Agriculture preserves and protects important environmental resources, wildlife habitat, and aesthetics that contribute to our quality of life.

In 1950 there were 227,497 acres in farms, 32% of the county's total 721,280 acres. Forty-five years later, in 1995, acreage declined to 71,900 acres in farms, 10% of the county's total acreage. This decline in farmland acreage indicates a need for active farmland preservation efforts.

In addition to offering farmland preservation techniques, this study acknowledges a farmer's right to realize income from the sale of his/her property. Land purchases and sales will be motivated by a multitude of reasons and situations. With careful planning and knowledge of available options; communities, working with farmers, may significantly contribute to farmland preservation efforts.

Model Soil Rating System

In order to identify the agricultural lands most desirable for protection, a rating system may be helpful. The rating system detailed below is designed to assist individuals and towns to identify land most worthy of preservation. This model may be modified as needed. If a farm receives a score of three or above, it may receive a high priority designation for preservation.

Positive Points: Each worth one point

Soil suitability:

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board recognizes that unique types of agriculture such as orchards or vineyards require different types of soils than those included in the statewide soil rating system. For that reason the rating system for Ulster County lists additional suitable soils as well as USDA prime and important soils.

Suitable soils include:

BgD-Bath gravelly silt loam, 15-25% slopes

BnC-Bath-Nassau complex, 8-25% slopes

BOD-Bath-Nassau-Rock outcrop complex, hilly

HgC-Hoosic gravelly loam, rolling

PIC-Plainfield loamy sand, 8-15% slopes

SmC-Stockbridge-Farmington gravelly silt loams, 8-15% slopes

Property is in an agricultural district

Farmers may become part of an agricultural district either at its creation or during the review process which occurs every eight years. Agricultural districts provide a variety of benefits for

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farmers. Location in an agricultural district is a strong indication of agricultural viability and intent to remain in agriculture.

Property is an active commercial farm or rented by a commercial farm

Our primary concern is long term economic commitment to remain in agriculture. Our highest priority should be preservation of serious farm activities and to assist farm families who derive their livelihood from agriculture.

Aesthetic characteristic (scenic appeal)

Farms which are part of a scenic vista are important components of a community's character and increase the attractiveness of the area to residents and tourists alike.

Contiguous to other active farmland

Contiguous farmland is much easier to cultivate and is more economically viable than separated parcels. This is also important where normal agricultural practices may conflict with residential land uses.

Proximity to residential and commercial development

Where farmland is especially valuable but vulnerable due to existing development pressure, it may be desirable to give a higher consideration for protection than land remote from development. Identification for agriculture in a local comprehensive plan would be an important consideration in these cases.

Negative Points: Deduct a point

Inclusion to sewer and water district

If land is part of a municipal water and sewer district, it will have higher development value and probably be converted to other more intensive uses. Reference to the community comprehensive plan is again an important consideration.

Land Use Compatibility

As development continues to abut and in some cases surround farmland, land use compatibility between farmers and neighbors becomes an issue. Many land use compatibility problems can be avoided or resolved through educational efforts and are mentioned in that portion of this document. Strategies that promote land use compatibility while maintaining agricultural viability may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- On new development adjacent to farmland, buffers on the developed property may be beneficial. Vegetative buffers may provide a noise barrier as well as impede spray drift. The buffer can be established under subdivision or site plan review as part of the development process. Where new residential development abuts agricultural land, the residential development may be viewed as an intrusion. In these situations, encourage the developers to plant and maintain natural vegetative screening.
- Continue the use of Best Management Practices (BMP) to minimize land use conflicts. BMP are management programs that are designed to maximize production while minimizing costs

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and environmental impacts. Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Integrated Crop Management (ICM) and Integrated Fruit Production (IFP) are Best Management Practices. Some strategies used by these BMP include:

- * Contour plowing to reduce runoff.
- * Planting of buffer strips along waterways to minimize erosion.
- * Use of cover crop systems to preserve soil quality.
- * Soil analysis to determine specific fertilizer needs.
- * Use of biological and mechanical controls for pest management, such as the release of predatory insects and the use of light traps.
- * Recognition and conservation of the many beneficial natural enemies of pests.
- * Selection of proper pesticides when chemical control is necessary. With the help of IPM scouts (Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialists), farmers can use the least toxic pesticide necessary in the least amounts at the best possible times to minimize use.

Recent New York State BMP programs have managed flies in dairy barns with biological controls, taught apple growers to scout their orchards, and controlled greenhouse pests with sanitation and natural enemies. Most of the farmers in Ulster County use some sort of BMP, because it helps agriculture to remain sustainable. Farmers that use pesticides must be licensed by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). It has been determined that the DEC along with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are the experts in pesticide usage and as such, monitor pesticides and their usage in the county.

- Continue to promote and encourage Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell's Farming Alternatives Center and other appropriate departments to explore farm production techniques which will result in healthy attractive produce while minimizing the use of chemicals. Promote Cornell University's Center for the Environment program on breast cancer and environmental risk factors in New York State (BCERF).

Clustering

New divisions on farmland can be laid out so that the residential buildings are clustered on one part of the property while the other portion is placed in agricultural reserve. This allows continued farming of the property with the residential development. This land use strategy requires careful planning to ensure the agricultural reserve is viable farmland and not just preserved open space. The same type of land use planning can also be achieved through average density subdivision. These techniques can minimize land use conflicts when properly implemented.

Agricultural Districts

Article 25AA -- Agriculture Districts of the Agriculture and Markets Law was designed to encourage locally initiated mechanisms, such as agricultural districts, agricultural assessments, agriculture and farmland protection boards, and agricultural and farmland protection plans to preserve farmland in New York State. A summary of this law can be found in Appendix C.

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Agricultural districts are blocks of agricultural land, not always contiguous, that were formed with county legislative and state approval. Participation requires an eight-year commitment. During the eight-year review, participants may leave or petition to enter the agricultural district.

The benefits of belonging to an agricultural district include:

- * Limitation on unreasonably restrictive local regulations
- * State policies that encourage the retention of viable agricultural land
- * Limitation on eminent domain, public acquisition and advancement of public funds
- * Limitation to impose benefits assessments in certain improvement districts or benefit areas.
- * Protection from private nuisance law suits.
- * Orchard or vineyard replanting/expansion tax break.
- * Policy commitment to agriculture by local planning and land use decision-making policies through agricultural data statements and disclosure.

The following strategies may be used to promote farm participation in agricultural districts:

- Create an informative brochure listing benefits of participating in an agricultural district, include information detailing agricultural assessments as well. Distribute to farmers at organizational meetings and educational events.
- Create a new agricultural district in the northern portion of the county.
- Sponsor educational programs for farmers concerning agricultural districts.
- Investigate ways of making it easier for farmers to join agricultural districts.

Farm Information Database

Ulster County Real Property Tax Service Agency (RPTSA) has entered into an agreement with New York City Department of Environmental Protection whereby the city has funded the digitization of Ulster County parcels in the New York City watershed in exchange for ten years of annual digital tax map updates. RPTSA sees this as an excellent opportunity to convert from traditional paper maps to more functional digital maps. The digital tax maps form the "base layer" for a county-wide geographic information system (GIS) which would be accessed and used by RPTSA, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Ulster County Planning, Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Environmental Management Council.

For the past two years, the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has collected farm information using a global positioning system (GPS). This data has been developed into a "data layer" for the geographic information system (GIS). The SWCD is currently adding farm

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information (i.e. type, size, etc.) to the data layer to keep pace with modern technology. SWCD staff will maintain and update the farm database on a continuing basis. Soils information still needs to be digitized and developed into a "soils layer."

Strategies for continuing the GIS digitizing of county tax parcels and soils may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Seek financial support for Soil and Water Conservation District to digitize Ulster County soils. SWCD will update and maintain the database.
- Seek financial support for Real Property Tax Service Agency to digitize remainder of county tax parcels. RPTSA will provide tax parcel updates.
- The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and Cornell Cooperative Extension will contribute agricultural survey information to the farm database layer being developed, maintained and updated by Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Continue discussions between the contributing agencies and research computer networking options.

Farm Preservation Efforts

Purchase of development rights and conservation easement land preservation techniques help communities protect prime and important farmland from conversion to nonagricultural use. When landowners sell conservation easements or development rights, the agreement is recorded in the land records and limits the future use of the land to agriculture. This ensures that productive farmland will be available for future generations. The income the farmer receives may provide for farm improvements or for their retirement.

The first PDR program was pioneered in Suffolk County in 1974. Since that time; states, counties, towns, and private nonprofit organizations have started programs nationwide. PDR programs are commonly found in areas where there is significant pressure to develop farmland for residential or commercial use. PDR programs are voluntary. Participants retain full ownership and access to their land. Orange County has just received a state grant to implement a PDR program as part of their farmland protection program.

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a government agency or conservation organization to restrict the use of land. Farmers may restrict all or part of their property from subdivision, residential structures, etc.

Conservation easements do not generally permit public access unless the owner agrees to such access. The recipient of the easement is empowered to enforce the restrictions on the land, yet the property is retained in private ownership. As the ownership of the protected property changes, it remains subject to the restrictions of the easement.

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Easements benefit both the landowner and the community at large. Since easements keep land in private ownership, it remains on the tax rolls. At the same time, the diminished value of the property due to the imposed restrictions may provide the landowner a property tax reduction.

Strategies that promote the use of PDR and conservation easements may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Seek government and private funding sources of PDR and easements.
- Consult with land trust organizations. Ulster County land trust organizations include: Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy, the Shawangunk Conservancy, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, and Woodstock Land Conservancy. Other land trust organizations actively involved in these programs include, but are not limited to, American Farmland Trust, Scenic Hudson and Catskill Center for Conservation and Development.

Estate Planning

Estate planning may help perpetuate family farming and encourage generational transfer of farm ownership and management. It can provide for the needs of all family members, even those who leave the farm. Often, it helps reduce high estate taxes on land made more valuable by inflation. Estate planning can offset settlement problems that arise because land is not a liquid asset. With professional assistance, the following strategies may be considered when investigating farm estate planning:

- * Split ownership of land between spouses to reduce taxes.
- * Reduce taxes by opting for "special use" valuation.
- * Pay estate taxes on the installment plan.
- * Family partnerships or corporations.
- * Living gifts.
- * Increase liquidity with life insurance.
- * Trusts.

Additional information concerning estate management strategies may be obtained by:

- Consulting local estate planners and attorneys.
- Contacting American Farmland Trust or other land trust organizations.

New York FarmLink is an informal program of Cornell Cooperative Extension which helps connect farmers planning to retire with farmers hoping to work into farm ownership. FarmLink emphasizes building a farm transfer plan that provides the entering farmer an opportunity to work into farming during a period of joint operation before the exiting farmer retires. NY FarmLink is not a real-estate service.

- Publicize FarmLink through Cornell Cooperative Extension agricultural newsletters and at agricultural meetings and educational programs.

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Other Farm Preservation Options:

The following options should be carefully researched with the aid of a professional estate/land use counselor, planner or attorney.

Bargain Sales. A bargain sale is the sale of land, conservation easements or development rights to a unit of government or private nonprofit conservation organization at less than fair market value. The difference between the fair market value and the bargain sale price is a potential charitable gift to the seller. In a bargain sale, the seller may be able to shelter a portion of the capital gain or other income from taxation.

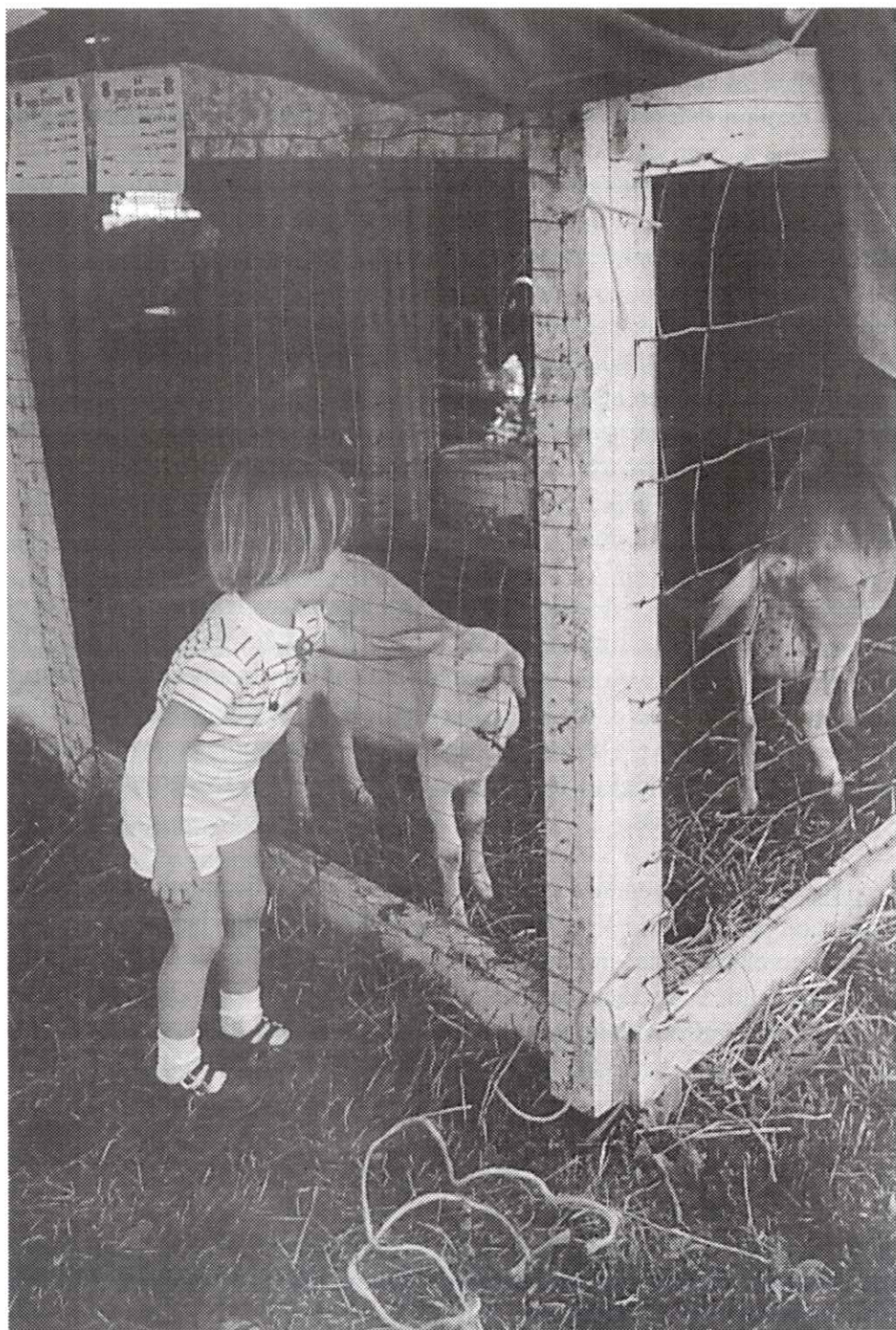
Installment Purchase. Also known as Securitizable Tax-Exempt Installment Purchase Open Space Financing, this method of purchasing development rights accelerates the rate of preservation without overburdening the taxpayers or straining municipal budgets. In addition to tax benefits, farm owners can securitize the agreement and sell all or parts of it to others. Charitable deductions may be claimed against their operating income by gifting portions of the agreement into trust accounts. This enables estate heirs to cash out their portion of the agreement instead of dividing up the land itself.

Transfer of Development Rights. Section 261-a of the Town Law and section 7-703 of the Village Law empower municipalities to provide for transfer of development rights (TDR). TDR transfers development rights from one lot, parcel or area of land in any sending district to another lot, parcel, or area of land in one of the receiving districts. To implement a TDR program, receiving and sending districts are designated and mapped in accordance with a comprehensive plan. In the future, as land values in Ulster County increase or as TDR programs are further developed, they may be of value.

Voter Referendum. Voter referendum is one way to raise a significant amount of capital to fund farmland protection programs. In New Jersey, three \$50 million bonds have been approved by the voters for the purchase of development rights since 1981. In Rhode Island, \$2 million has been placed on the ballot every two years since 1982, except in 1994. These referenda have always passed. Several Suffolk County towns have proposed and had approved a number of bond issues that acquire development rights to farms. Use of voter referendum may be encouraged where appropriate.

The following actions may be useful to consider when considering the above farm preservation options:

- Landowners may wish to contact estate planners, attorneys or land trust organizations such as American Farmland Trust for more information.
- Consult with local government concerning voter referendum and procedures.



Girl with goats
photo by Joe Munster

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ISSUE: **AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION**

People in the community value the rural character created by farms in Ulster County. The cultural and historical significance of Ulster County farms help provide a sense of identity and stability for the community as well as attract tourists.

As people relocate to Ulster County or move from the urban cities and villages to the rural, they bring with them preconceived notions of what rural life is like. As farmland decreases and residential development increases, pressure on remaining farms from newcomers grows. Many people have never been exposed to farm operations at close range.

Normal farm operations may include the sounds of equipment at sunrise, the smell of manure on a hot summer's day or the sight of spray rigs applying fertilizers or pesticides. This plan recognizes the difficulties that result when people with diverse backgrounds live close to each other, but firmly believes that the educational process can result in greater understanding of how food, fiber and horticultural products are produced. Once these processes are understood, an appreciation of agriculture may be realized. Specific strategies for encouraging land use compatibility are listed in the land use planning section.

Seven specific audiences were selected for agricultural education efforts. These include youth, nonfarm neighbors, consumers, farmers, government officials, the media, and the real estate industry. For each audience, objectives and implementation strategies have been suggested:

Youth

Children who understand and appreciate the processes involved in farming will most likely become educated consumers. *Ag in the Classroom* is a curriculum for children that teaches basic agricultural concepts and emphasizes hands-on activities. The curriculum was jointly developed by Cornell University and Farm Bureau. The following strategies may be considered when promoting *Ag in the Classroom*:

- Provide direct agent teaching of material to children. Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H agents could lead this program. Schools may purchase the curriculum from Cornell University.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension could train volunteers to present *Ag in the Classroom* workshops to school children.

Many Ulster County farms offer tours for children. These tours create memorable experiences that stimulate curiosity and often result in a multitude of questions about the origin of food, soil conservation, animal behavior, etc. Strategies to promote educational farm tours for children should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Develop a brochure of Ulster County farm tour sites and distribute to all county schools.

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- Obtain funds for creating a video featuring Ulster County farm tours and give a copy to the library system.

Ulster County has a rich farm heritage that offers prime subject material for integrating into curricula. From art, science, history, geography, English and more; lessons from agriculture may be learned. By designating an Ulster County agriculture month; local farmers, Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and Soil and Water Conservation representatives can contribute ideas and experiences for classroom use. Strategies for increasing agricultural activities in the school during a county agriculture month or other designated time may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Publicly award an educator or school for their commitment to agriculture during this month.
- Consider promoting appropriate educational programs during March, as it contains national agriculture week; June as it is dairy month and October as it is apple month.

Parents can benefit from exposure to farming operations as much as children. Activities such as farm tours, demonstrations and tractor rides are but a few ways of attracting families to the farm and promoting agriculture. Strategies for promoting educational programs for families may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Offer Saturday educational farm tours.
- Create a brochure of county farm tours and distribute to community.
- Support the creation of an Ulster County apple museum.

4-H is an informal educational program for children between 5 and 19 years old. The “four H’s” stand for head, heart, hands and health. Many 4-H programs use agriculture as a means for teaching practical skills and leadership. 4-H participation can lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of agriculture.

The Ulster County Cloverbud program is for children five-, six- and seven-years old. Cloverbuds participate in activities that are noncompetitive, educational and promote friendly social interactions. Cloverbuds often work on animal science projects which provide educational experiences that inspire both an appreciation of and respect for animal life.

Most school children have little or no understanding of what life is like on a modern farm. The goal of the *Adopt a Classroom* program is to increase agricultural awareness of youth in New York by creating a relationship between a farm family/agriculturist and a school class.

Farmers “adopt” a classroom and establish a relationship through letters, pictures, samples of products, presentations, farm visits or even video tapes. This is a brand new program with great potential for building bridges between farms and nonfarm children. Sample applications forms and a certificate of recognition are included in Appendix D.

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- Approach schools to discuss recruitment opportunities for Cloverbud and 4-H clubs.
- Promote New York Farm Bureau's *Adopt a Classroom* program to farmers at agricultural meetings, educational events and through agricultural newsletters.
- Promote *Adopt a Classroom* to schools through educational direct mailings and through the media.

Nonfarm Neighbors

People relocating to farm areas may encounter viable farming operations for the first time. While farms add beauty to the landscape, farming is also a labor intensive occupation that occurs at odd hours, involves machinery and sometimes pesticides.

Many people are generations removed from the farm and have had little exposure to agricultural operations. Across the country, farmers are pressed to defend their practices as residential development increases and suburban life meets rural. Farmers now receive complaints for waking neighbors early by operating equipment on weekend mornings, for slowing traffic by driving tractors on the roads during the day, and for creating unpleasant outdoor aromas by spreading manure, to name a few.

While most neighbors are respectful, some neighbors treat farms as public property and walk the fields at their leisure, sometimes interrupting normal work processes. Others pick corn and apples without asking permission or offering to pay for the products.

Through education, perhaps the nonfarm neighbor can understand the processes involved in agriculture and gain an appreciation for farm operations. Some farmers who are skilled at communicating with their neighbors have had success stories and built good neighborly relations. Strategies for increasing nonfarm understanding of farm operations and processes may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Hold public meetings for local residents and farmers to share information.
- Offer educational programs for the general public that both illustrate and explain farm practices.
- Research making an educational video tape that illustrates a variety of farming operations in Ulster County. Explore showing segments on television stations, fairs, the mall, etc.

Communication between farmers and neighbors is critical to resolving conflicts and achieving harmonious relations. To enhance communication the following strategies may include, but should not be limited to:

- Encourage farmers who have successfully resolved conflicts with their own neighbors to share ideas, strategies and techniques with other farmers in an educational setting.

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- Create a fact sheet or brochure that describes normal farming practices of various commodity groups for farmers to distribute to interested neighbors.
- Promote farm tours for nonfarm neighbors. Some Ulster County farmers encourage communication with neighbors by inviting the neighbors to the farm and giving an educational tour. This activity can help create positive channels of communication in many circumstances.
- Create forums for public/private interests to explore agricultural and community topics such as land use protection techniques, pest management strategies and current research.
- Explore using mediation techniques for conflict resolution.

Consumers

When consumers buy foods that are produced in other parts of the world, they may weaken the local market for local farmers. Ulster County residents can promote viable local agriculture by purchasing locally grown products.

Strategies encouraging consumers to purchase local products may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Create public service announcements that give an agricultural statistic and couple it with an educational phrase such as “buy local, eat seasonal.”
- Utilize media to encourage people to request local products at the supermarket.
- Farmers and Ulster County agencies such as Tourism, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation and Ulster County Development Corporation could partner to create a traveling Ulster County agriculture educational display exhibit. Attendance at fairs, festivals and other public events could promote agriculture to consumers and encourage “buying local.”

Consumers and Ulster County farmers want to see local products for sale in area supermarkets. Strategies for achieving this may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Utilize a variety of media sources to encourage consumers to request local produce at stores.
- Encourage public recognition of stores that do sell local produce. As part of an Ulster County agriculture educational traveling display, incorporate a “Where you can go to get local produce” component.

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Farmers

Agriculture is a dynamic changing industry. As often as state tax and agriculture and markets laws are amended, changed or created; production technologies improved; and issues of land use and neighbor relations focused on, educational programs for farmers will be needed.

Cornell Cooperative Extension educators in Ulster County have provided traditional educational opportunities for farmers since 1913. Research-based information has been delivered through field visits, formal classroom programs, demonstrations, etc. The Hudson Valley Fruit School has been offered annually since the 1950's. Each year this program draws over 200 farm owners and employees from the Hudson Valley and neighboring states. A fruit program radio show has aired continually since the 50s as well. Department of Environmental Conservation New York State pesticide applicators licensing training has been developed and offered by extension educators since the early 1970s. In addition to existing programming, farmers have suggested the following objectives and implementation strategies for providing education and educational materials to farmers:

- Create a fact sheet for farmers to give neighbors that describes normal farming practices.
- Provide farmers with a reference "quick list" of names, addresses, phone numbers and Internet addresses of individuals or organizations who can provide data to respond to controversial issues.
- Continue to provide technical support for farmers in the field through the use of Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and specialists.
- Offer computer classes that focus on accounting programs. Computer adept farmers, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Ulster Community College's business resource center could develop or sponsor this type of program.
- Offer continuing education twilight (IPM and other) classes at various grower locations throughout the season.
- Assess current programs being offered to farmers. Research possibilities of creating broad-based noncredit marketing and business management classes at Ulster County Community College. Explore development of an expanded curriculum. Encourage practical noncredit courses such as foreign language, computer skills, conflict resolution, etc.
- Develop a comprehensive agricultural mailing list and keep farmers informed of educational programs through direct mailings. Advertise programs through local agricultural association newsletters.

Benefits of belonging to an agricultural organization are varied and plentiful. Some offer informative newsletters, some sponsor educational conferences and others support research or legislative changes. Strategies for encouraging farmers to participate in agricultural organizations may include the following:

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- Make association membership information available at Cornell Cooperative Extension office.
- Promote association membership at educational programs for farmers.

Government Officials

Economic information concerning agriculture is widely circulated among the farming community and government branches with agricultural responsibilities, but seldom seems to make its way into local government. With additional effort, facts and figures representing Ulster County agriculture should become widely available to our representatives.

Many of our elected officials have had little, if any, first-hand experience with agriculture. In order to understand the challenges that Ulster County farmers face and appreciate their economic, social and aesthetic contributions to the community, the following implementation strategies may be considered:

- Offer farm tours for local government officials. Farm tours can give representatives a first-hand look at farming operations which may result in a greater appreciation of agriculture.
- Encourage farmers to personally contact and communicate with their elected officials during constituency day as well as other times.
- Invite government officials to a lunch featuring local products. Our representatives may (or may not) be aware of the high quality farm products produced in Ulster County, but surely a taste will create a positive, long-lasting impression.
- Create an Ulster County Agriculture Day and present legislators with samples of local food products and an agriculture economic fact sheet.
- Invite government officials to agricultural gatherings both as introductory speakers and as attendees.
- Publicly recognize government officials who have supported agriculture.

Media

Agriculture seems to be a low-priority subject for the news media and the items that do get coverage tend to be negative. Strategies for increasing positive media coverage of agriculture may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Encourage local newspapers to increase feature articles about agriculture.
- Purchase newspaper inserts featuring agriculture.
- Encourage radios to use ag facts for public service time.

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- Publicize agricultural events on public access television.
- Send an agricultural resource list of information contacts in Ulster County agriculture to local media and NY City media.

Realtors

People who relocate to an area within an agricultural district may not have any idea what an agricultural district is, or what normal farming operations are. Some farmers attempt to educate their neighbors through signs, notices or telephone calls. A sample of one farmer's notice is included in Appendix D. Strategies to improve communications and educate potential buyers may include, but should not be limited to, the following:

- Review existing buyers/sellers disclosure statement.
- Explore improving visibility of disclosure statement through local right-to-farm law.
- Consult with the Board of Realty about offering educational programs to realtors.
- Create a brochure for realtors to give their customers that explains the benefits and realities of living in an agricultural district.
- Create a map of agricultural districts for realtors.
- Explore installing "you are entering an agricultural district" signs in agricultural districts.