



# Rural Futures



**NYS** Legislative Commission on Rural Resources **SUMMER 2011 ISSUE**

## GROWING RURAL AGRIBUSINESS TO FEED OUR SCHOOLS

*As the rate of childhood obesity continues to rise in America, federal monies have been granted to continue the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in schools in an attempt to reduce our population’s ever-rising rate of chronic disease.*

Childhood obesity and its consequences have, in recent years, gained the attention of state and federal policymakers. Since 31 million children (ages two-19) receive school lunches, and one in 10 of them is obese, lawmakers continue to work on initiatives regarding health and wellness in schools. Leaders in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are aggressively developing better childhood nutrition through the Federal School Breakfast and Lunch Programs.

On March 22, 2010, federal Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the USDA would be expanding the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) through The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The FFVP originated as a pilot study in five states (Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa and New Mexico) to determine how schools could increase student consumption of fruits and vegetables. The program was eventually implemented in all 50 states and was adopted into the National School Lunch Act.

There has been debate in recent years over the “healthfulness” of school meals and how a potential lack of nutritious foods served at schools relates to the present childhood disease epidemic. In light of this controversy and the rise in childhood obesity, the Act proposes changes that are meant to, according to the USDA,



“update the nutrition standards for meals served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs” and “solve the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation.” This overhaul of school meals and their nutritional value will be the largest of its kind in 15 years.

The new legislation reauthorized the programs for five years and secured \$4.5 billion in funding for another 10 years. While the

- continued on next page -

**Summer 2011**  
**Rural Futures**  
**News of Interest About Rural**  
**New York State**

A Publication of the NYS Legislative  
 Commission on Rural Resources

The NYS Legislative Commission on Rural  
 Resources is a joint bi-partisan office of  
 the State Legislature.



**Senator Catharine M. Young, Chair**



**Assemblywoman Aileen M. Gunther,  
 Vice Chair**

**Senate Members:**

Senator Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator Patricia A. Ritchie

Senator Neil D. Breslin

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator David J. Valesky, Ex Officio  
 Member/Special Advisor

**Tel: 518-455-2629**

**Fax: 518-426-6919**

**E-mail: ruralres@nysenate.gov**

**Assembly Members:**

Assemblywoman Barbara S. Lifton

Assemblyman Daniel J. Burling

Assemblyman Philip A. Palmesano

**Tel: 518-455-3999**

**Fax: 518-455-4175**

**Website: assembly.state.ny.us**

monies come from the federal budget, they are appropriated in different amounts to each of the 50 states, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. New York State ranks third in total amount of funding, with \$6,376,788 to be received. California will receive the most funding (\$10,801,714), followed by Texas (\$7,804,444).

Farmers, schools and rural economies all have the potential to benefit from this funding and other farm to school programs. School food service systems have the opportunity to procure local farmers' produce through which sustainable relationships between the district and local agribusiness can be established. The idea is that schools are able to serve their students nutritious and local fresh foods, while local farmers have the benefit of signing a long-term food service contract with a reliable client.

Farm to school programs that have capitalized on federal school food program funding have proven successful. According to The National Farm to School Network, there are more than 2,500 farm to school programs in all 50 states. Data gathered



by the Maryland Department of Agriculture revealed that farmers in North Carolina sold \$500,000 worth of fresh fruits and vegetables to state schools during 2004-05. More recently, the state of North Carolina declared October Farm to School Month, in support of farm to school programs. Moreover, Farm Aid has reported that in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Worcester Public Schools saw a 15% increase in school lunch purchases when they started buying locally through the Massachusetts Farm to School Program. The 60 farms participating in the Worcester based program generate over \$700,000 in additional revenue each year, with those dollars being recirculated into rural communities.

New York State communities in Broome and Orange Counties and the Hudson Falls Central School District (see sidebar) have already created programs to bring local farm fresh produce to their schools. These communities piloted their own farm to school programs and, after much success, are in the process of expanding into other communities within their counties. Both Broome and Orange counties created Implementation Guides that explain how they: developed contracts with

- continued on next page -

local farmers; arranged for transportation of produce from the farm to the school; handled storage and preparation; and much more. The Implementation Guides are a great resource for any farmer, school or organization that is interested in developing a similar program in their community. *(For more information about the Broome and Orange County programs, contact Cynthia Jaconski at 518-408-5142 or caj09@health.state.ny.us.)*

There is also economic potential on the horizon for rural New York farmers looking to expand their agribusiness beyond their local market. Many urban and New York City schools fit the criteria for the USDA's FFVP funding, but nearly no local vendors supply farm-fresh fruits and vegetables to their food services. One barrier to providing New York City markets with farm-fresh produce has been the high cost of transporting goods from upstate farms to the City. Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Commission on Rural Resources, recently proposed legislation that would provide toll exemptions for farmers transporting their

goods to the city of New York (S.742A). This bill would create opportunities and ease the financial burden of long distance travel for New York farmers transporting their goods to urban areas.

It is clear that parents, teachers and policymakers all want to see our children grow into healthy adults. Our rural representatives and lawmakers have made it a priority to create more opportunities for our rural communities and farmers to capitalize on local resources in order to promote wellness for our residents and strong markets for our local businesses. The number of opportunities for agri-business in rural New York communities continues to expand as programs with the potential to spur economic growth and help raise awareness about living healthy lifestyles flourish.

Please see below for contacts in the event that you or your organization is interested in learning more about any of the programs or information provided in this article.

## Resources and Contacts

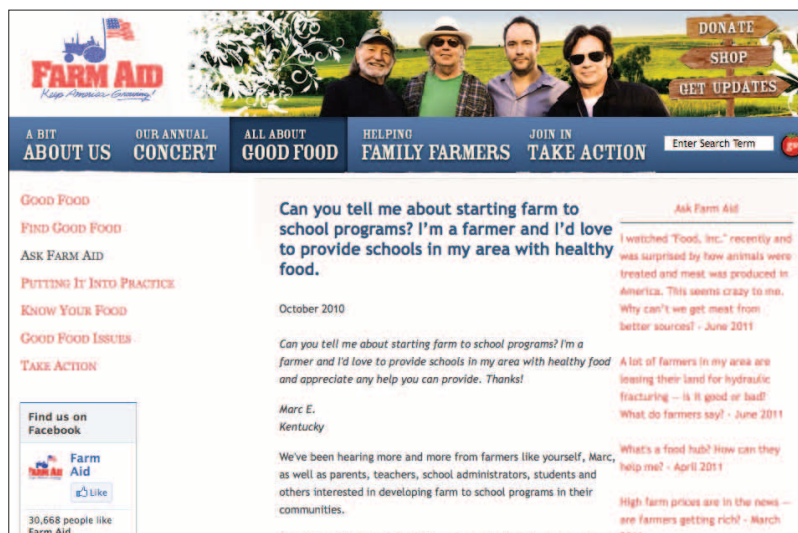
**Related Grants**

**Operation Free Seeds**  
[www.america-the-beautiful.org/free\\_seeds/index.php](http://www.america-the-beautiful.org/free_seeds/index.php)

**Lowes Community and Education grants**  
[www.cybergrants.com/lowes/start\\_app.html](http://www.cybergrants.com/lowes/start_app.html)

**Captain Planet Environmental Changes grants**  
[www.captainplanetfoundation.org](http://www.captainplanetfoundation.org)

**FarmAid** - <http://www.farmaid.org>



## *National Farm to School Network*

**Anne McMahon**

Upstate New York Farm to School Representative

518-485-7728

ann.mcmahon@agmkt.state.ny.us



### *The United States Department of Agriculture - Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program [PDF]*

A document that details the history and background, initiatives, research, and resources behind the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FFVP/handbook.pdf>



### *Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act The National School Lunch Act document [PDF]*

[http://www.schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles\\_old/ASFSA/childnutrition/govtaffairs/nsla.pdf](http://www.schoolnutrition.org/uploadedFiles_old/ASFSA/childnutrition/govtaffairs/nsla.pdf)

## **Rural Agribusiness In Action**

The Hudson Falls Central School District, in upstate Washington County, is a cornerstone in rural NYS – working to make systemic environmental changes in order to promote student welfare and academic performance. In 2003, Superintendent Mark Doody and the school administration vowed to make the wellness of their students a necessary component of classroom learning. After thoroughly reviewing research related to children’s health and their ability to excel academically, they began to construct a wellness plan as a “common sense approach to school reform.” With help from the school nurse, teacher Michelle Burke, and Jane Peppin from the school’s Nutrition Services, along with support from parents and the community, a thoughtful stages-of-change plan and approach was created. The main initiative was not only to change the school’s physical environment, but to create a new culture and approach to education.

Since its inception, the community’s support of the program has been overwhelming and integral to its success. In

fact, voters signed on to expand the program district-wide. Partnerships with local organizations like Kingsbury Recreation, Community Softball and the Little League, along with renovating the town pool for both school student and community member use, serving local foods in the cafeteria and joining resources to provide exciting physical activities, speak to the program’s comprehensive nature and methodically planned infrastructure. Such partnerships also highlight the effectiveness and cost savings that occur when local resources are joined.

The success of the Hudson Falls Central School’s directive to focus on healthful eating and opportunities for physical activity is obvious in both measurable and immeasurable ways. Ensuring that students are academically successful is at the program’s core. The fact that kids are asking for, and choosing, healthy options like carrots from the vending machine, have been the most satisfying outcomes of their efforts. The continued support from local organizations and the community has given the Hudson Falls area an opportunity to join together in promoting and ensuring healthy children and families.

## The Emerald Ash Borer: Killing the American Dream – and Potentially – an American Icon

*Across New York State, work continues to try to stop the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and its destruction of our Ash trees, economy and environment.*

The Ash tree is a native New York species and is particularly dense in the western part of the state. Integral to the state's lumber and wood product market, sales of Ash account for \$150 million in revenue to the state each year. The Ash tree appeals to a larger national market as well, having given life to a ubiquitous piece of Americana: the Louisville Slugger. These products and the Ash tree population are in serious danger, though, due to an infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer. It is estimated that Ash tree destruction from the EAB could cost the state and its landowners upward of \$10 to \$20 billion in damages and losses.

The Emerald Ash Borer gets its name from its metallic-green color, the tree species it destroys, and the way in which it does so. During flight season, May through August, the EABs lay their eggs inside an Ash's bark crevices at the top of the tree. Once the larvae hatch they bore deeper into the core of the tree and feed on the inner bark. In search of more food, they make their way down the tree, killing the top branches and canopy first, a classic sign of EAB infestation. Detroit, Michigan, has already experienced a total loss of its Ash tree population from EAB destruction.

Thought to have made its way to North America from China in shipping materials, the EAB was first tracked to Detroit in 2002, although experts now believe it could have been present in the United States as early as 1990. Since tracking began, millions of Ash trees have been killed as the bug has migrated north and east. Its presence was first recognized in New York State in 2009, as Ash trees in Randolph, New York (Cattaraugus County) showed signs of EAB infestation. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets confirmed its presence there on June 17, 2009.

Since then, EAB presence has been confirmed in the Cattaraugus, Erie, Genesee, Greene, Livingston, Monroe, Steuben and Ulster counties of New York State. A total of 18 counties, including Chautauqua, have been placed under a quarantine for the EAB – meaning that the intrastate movement of Ash trees, lumber and any other product containing Ash is limited, as is the transport of firewood, bark mulch, wood chips and other products of any species.

In recent years, New York State has received more than \$4 million in federal funding to pursue research and efforts related to EAB. In June 2011, however, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to cut the budget of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service by \$73 million, a program designed to find solutions to combating invasive pests like the EAB. While not yet acted upon by the U.S. Senate, such cuts could eliminate federal support for state-level



initiatives to eradicate EAB infestation. From the economic effect on property values, landowner expenses, tourism, municipal clean-up monies, logging and saw mills – to the environmental threat posed on New York's ecosystem by the potential loss of our native Ash species - the impact of the EAB is far reaching and potentially devastating.

*Information provided by the State Department of Environmental Conservation:*

While experts work to stop its spread, there are some simple measures communities and residents can take to help dampen the effects and slow the spread of the beetle. Professionals urge residents living in vulnerable areas to: comply with local protocols (like chipping or insecticides) for dealing with an EAB infestation in any trees; notify authorities of any Ash trees that show signs of EAB infestation (like a dead canopy or frequent visits from woodpeckers); and buy firewood in the same place it will be burned. As the transportation of Ash firewood is the common method of long-distance spread, check with the DEC and local authorities before purchasing or transporting any Ash wood products.

**Individuals can also contact the DEC about becoming an Ash Tree Tagger volunteer.**

**If you detect Emerald Ash Borers or damage caused by their presence, call your county Cooperative Extension, Regional NYSDEC office, or NYSDEC at 866-640-0652/518-402-9425.**

# Home Care Safety Net

## New York's CAHs

**New York State's 13 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) serve as primary, emergency, "safety net" hospitals for the state's most isolated rural populations and are considered the central health care presence, unique to the rural communities they serve.**

**CAHs provide limited stay special care, acute care and swing bed services, as well as 24 hour emergency service capabilities. The maintenance of these facilities is critical for preserving access to basic health care services for our state's rural populations.**

**Medicare reimburses CAHs on the basis of reasonable costs, thereby helping to stabilize these small viable rural hospitals and ensure that isolated communities continue to have access to health care services. The long range financial viability of these primary care hospitals is threatened, however, as the New York State Medicaid reimbursement rates for CAHs have been capped at lower than operational costs.**

**To address this reimbursement inequity, the Commission sponsored and was successful in passing S.5431-A (Young)/A.5366-B (Russell). This legislation addresses the Medicaid formula by reimbursing CAHs in the same manner that Medicare reimburses them – on the basis of reasonable costs – and thereby helping to sustain their viability.**

## Ensuring a Secure Home Care Safety Net in Rural New York

Home care plays a critical role in many rural communities across the state. But for every reason why home care is so vital to these communities, there are parallel reasons why rural home care providers face extraordinarily unique challenges.



As a first step toward addressing these challenges, the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources has worked closely with the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) in recent months to advance three legislative initiatives aimed at supporting home care services in rural New York.

One of these bills, S.5447 Young/A.7893 Gunther, unanimously passed both the Senate and the Assembly in June 2011. It will allow for home care access to the Health Occupation and Workplace Development Program, under which home care providers can apply for state waivers or regulatory flexibility that allow them to innovate or streamline operational procedures, state mandates, and personnel requirements in order to promote efficiency or quality. Provider experiences under this program are then to be considered by the state as a basis for broader policy changes.

Other home care legislation sponsored by the Commission would provide for additional flexibility and regulatory relief for home care services, and open up access to funding for home health collaboration, affiliation and sustainability of services. These bills, while not acted upon during the 2011 legislative session, are vital to providing support to home care providers who are struggling with issues related to workforce recruitment, staff retention, and dwindling financial resources.

Specifically, S.5446 Young/A.7892 Gunther, would include home care agencies among existing health care entities that are eligible for discretionary grant funding under the HEAL-NY program, to facilitate collaboration, affiliations and sustainability of service in the community.

- continued on next page -

Along these same lines, S.5448 Young/A.7895 Gunther, would create a Rural Home Health Flexibility Program to establish a provider application and state authorization framework for regulatory relief. The goal is to promote feasibility, efficiency and quality of home health service development and operation through new and/or existing home care services for the community, including proposals to enhance the administration, services and quality of care.

**More about rural home care**

Home care is provided to patients who are: elderly; chronically ill; in need of hospital after-care or therapy; or suffering from an unstable or disabling condition. Home care is also often the most cost-effective point of access to routine chronic-disease management or preventive health and assistive services for patients.

In many rural locations across the state, a single home care agency delivers services directly to patients in households spread out across multiple sparsely populated counties. These regions often contain difficult topography – such as mountains, farm landscape and even island terrain – which, when coupled with severe weather conditions, significantly complicates the task of traveling to a patient’s home and delivering services.

Without rural home care providers, many patients across New York would risk losing access to services in regions where travel to a physician’s office, clinic or other centralized health care provider is not feasible, or in areas of the state where a severe health or social service shortage otherwise exists. A lack of home care also jeopardizes the overall rural health system which relies on home care to function.

While a vital part of our communities, the rural home care system nevertheless remains extraordinarily fragile. By exploring creative initiatives, the Commission on Rural Resources will continue its collaboration with HCA to address home care needs, challenges and opportunities in rural areas with the goal of creating an action plan to further address these issues.

**Thank you to the Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) for contributing to this article - [www.hcanys.org](http://www.hcanys.org)**

## **New Property Tax Exemption Program Dedicated to Rebuilding Small Community Downtowns**

Renewing and rebuilding our rural downtowns is an idea that appeals to just about everyone living in a small New York State community. Population shifts, the passage of time and downturns in the economy have taken a toll on rural businesses and their main streets. Bringing in business and giving local entrepreneurs a fresh start is the impetus for a new law, sponsored by Senator Catharine Young, designed to help rebuild those rural downtown business centers and allow them to flourish once again. Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011 establishes a new program to provide a city, town or village, by vote of their legislative body, the ability to adopt a new real property tax exemption program. This program is specifically designed for new and substantially rehabilitated buildings which have an affordable housing component, and which are located within a municipally designated area.



### *Parameters of the New Law*

Specifics of the new law are as follows:

- The affordable housing component requires that at least 20% of the units are affordable to low and moderate income families (90% of Adjusted Median Income), and that such residents pay no more than 30% of their Adjusted Gross Income in rent;
- The housing must be constructed or rehabilitated with the assistance of grants, loans or subsidies for the construction or substantial rehabilitation of affordable housing from any federal, state or local agency;
- Where the exemption is applied to a mixed use property which encompasses commercial as well as other uses, at least 50% of the building must be used for housing and 20% of that housing must be affordable; and
- Municipalities which implement the program must develop an income monitoring program to ensure compliance.

### *Implementation and Exemption*

As far as implementation goes, any city, town or village outside New York City may establish a local law which identifies a target area for this exemption program. Any other municipal corporation, including a school district, may opt into the program.

The exemption from tax assessments and *ad valorem* levies is dedicated to new construction or substantially rehabilitated buildings on land which is vacant, predominantly vacant or underutilized – or with a non-conforming use, land containing one or more substandard or structurally unsound dwellings or an unsanitary dwelling within the designated area.

#### **Exemption Schedule**

- During construction or rehabilitation (up to 3 years).....100%
- Year 1-12.....100%
- 13-14.....80%
- 15-16.....60%
- 17-18.....40%
- 19-20.....20%

The passage of this new law is another incentive for communities to encourage the creation of more affordable housing and business opportunities within their borders.

While each municipality must opt in to this program, more information will soon be available.



## Farm Bureau Celebrates 100 Years

One hundred years ago, John Barron was commissioned by the Binghamton Chamber of Commerce to go out into the fields around Broome County on a horse-and-buggy, reaching out to farmers who knew about soil fertility, plant diseases and farm management. The Chamber wanted to extend the same resources to local farmers that businesses enjoyed in the City. The program took off, and expanded to what is known today as the Farm Bureau. Mr. Barron's outreach started a nationwide movement, leading to the formation of multiple county and state farm bureaus, as well as a national one. On March 18, farmers and agricultural dignitaries in Binghamton hosted "John Barron Day," to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Farm Bureau. The event was held on Front Street, Binghamton, where Barron held his first field meeting. His efforts launched a century of advocacy which helped the industry grow into a worldwide leader in agricultural innovation and rural development. The Farm Bureau serves as the voice of New York agriculture and has a membership of approximately 30,000 farm families.

## Binghamton University Seeks Researchers for Rural Concerns

On October 5-7, Binghamton University's Decker School of Nursing is hosting "The Canopy of Health Care for Rural and Underserved Populations." Researchers are encouraged to participate in a conference including research, projects and practice, or provide conceptual/theoretical papers focusing on rural nursing and healthcare for rural and underserved populations. For more information, contact Pamela Stewart Fahs at [psfahs@binghamton.edu](mailto:psfahs@binghamton.edu) or call (607) 777-6805.

## Rural Entrepreneur Expanding Market

Mary Gweneth Holland of Colton, NY makes custom-fit clothing for sale on etsy.com, an Internet marketplace for handmade goods. After a suggestion from Rudy J. Spowls, senior business development officer for Northern Adirondack Trading Cooperative, she decided to miniaturize her gowns to attract doll collectors. Spowls helps rural entrepreneurs market their products globally.

## Long Time Green Energy Experiment

There is a new neighborhood called the Urban Living Laboratory, a 1.2 million-square-foot sustainable community on a 72-acre lot owned by the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center, a network of research stations that comprise an agency of Texas A&M. It will be equipped with 800 apartments, retail space, hotels, office buildings, farmers markets and community gardens. The community has green technology - ranging from refrigerators to lighting systems and landscapes. These systems will be monitored over a 50- to 75-year period. The data collected on energy conservation in the urban setting will be available to local, state and federal government agencies, and the Laboratory will act as a blueprint for successfully building sustainable structures.



## High Speed Rail Funds

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced Wednesday, April 6, that more than 90 applications from 24 states, Washington, D.C., and Amtrak are pursuing \$2.4 billion available in funding from the Department's High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program. The application requests totaled just under \$10 billion. Winners will be selected using a merit-driven process to award the funds to high-speed rail projects that can quickly deliver public and economic benefits. Projects will be judged on their ability to reduce energy consumption, improve efficiency of a region's transportation network and a number of other criteria.





### Incentive for Farmers to Install Solar Thermal Systems

Agricultural producers and businesses who use electricity to produce hot water can apply for the state's first incentive program for solar thermal systems. Offered by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, this program will provide \$25 million during the next five years to promote the production of hot water from solar power. The five-year, \$25 million program, provides incentives of up to \$4,000 per site for eligible residential customers and up to \$25,000 per site for eligible commercial and non-profit customers who currently use electricity to produce hot water. Dairy farmers, for example, use a significant amount of hot water – roughly 2 to 2.5 gallons per day in order to properly clean milking equipment. All program questions should be directed to Marci Brunner at (518) 862-1090, ext. 3415 or [mlb@nyserda.org](mailto:mlb@nyserda.org).

### NY Farm Bureau Official State Vegetable Poll

While an official state vegetable has not been named, according to the Farm Bureau, sweet corn received 725 votes in a poll. Onions came in second with 311 votes, and other vegetables, including cabbage, received 240 votes. Following suit, the State Senate passed a bill on June 21, 2011 that would designate sweet corn as the official state vegetable (S.4431/Nozzolio). While it did not pass the Assembly, Aileen Gunther also sponsored A.6968, which would designate the onion as such.



### Conservation Partnership Announces Funding for Grazing Management

Livestock farmers in Albany, Columbia, Greene, Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Montgomery counties have an opportunity to apply for financial assistance to establish or improve grazing systems on their farms. The project, offered through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), and in its second year, was authorized in the Farm Bill of 2008. Farmers can apply for grants funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that will assist them in protecting soil and improving water quality on grazing lands. The Hudson Mohawk RC&D Council and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the six county area, have combined resources to deliver this new initiative. Landowners within this area can apply for the EQIP CCPI at their local USDA-NRCS office. Contact Eric Swanson at 518-271-1740.

### Chobani Boosts the State's Dairy Industry

The Chobani yogurt plant in Chenango County requires about 3 million pounds of milk per day, and almost all of it comes from New York State. Yogurt manufacturing and the demand for milk has had a significant role in promoting the state's dairy industry this year.



## Bill Could Allow Foreign Dairy Workers to Stay Longer

Senators Patrick Leahy, Mike Enzi, Herb Kohl, Kirsten Gillibrand, Bernie Sanders, and Charles Schumer have introduced the H-2A Improvement Act, which will authorize foreign dairy farmers, sheep herders, and goat herders to remain in the U.S for an initial period of three years, and gives the U.S Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services the authority to approve a worker for an additional three years. Under current law, farms that hire seasonal workers to harvest fruits and vegetables can utilize the H-2A visa program. Dairy farms are not included because milk production is not considered seasonal work.

## Northern New York Small Grains Support Agricultural Economy, Local and Heritage Foods Production

North Country farmers, bakers, and business owners interested in local, heritage and organic foods are reaping the benefits of research conducted at the 352-acre Cornell University Research Farm. The report in the Fields Crop section of the [www.nnyagdev.org](http://www.nnyagdev.org) website includes 21 spring wheat varieties, 15 winter wheat varieties, 11 heritage and nine modern wheat varieties, seven emmer wheat varieties and 22 commercially available food-grade soybean varieties. Baker Farm's Michael H. Davis says, "Field testing here helps us develop advantages, such as cost-effective seeding rate guidelines, that can help farmers begin their own plantings with a greater opportunity for success. Their success can in turn help supply and grow our local food processing industry."

## Study Finds Americans Rely on Library Computers for Internet Access

The findings of the report, *Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at US Libraries*, shows that one-third of all libraries have inadequate technology and say they lack even minimally adequate Internet connections to meet the demand. About half the nation's 14- to 16 year olds reported using the Internet in the last year, mostly for homework. Another finding was that low income adults are more likely to rely on public library access to computers than any other group.

## Bank of America Supports Rural Business

Bank of America announced a \$10 million commitment in support of microloans for small, and rural businesses. The Bank will purchase \$10 billion in products and services from small, medium sized and diverse businesses over the next 5 years to help spur lending to small and rural businesses. They will award grants to Community Development Financial Institutions and nonprofit lenders looking for funds from the US Small Business Administration and the US Department of Agriculture.

## Women in Agriculture

A new group, Lake Erie Women in Agriculture, seeks to help women farmers make connections with, and learn from, other women in agriculture, and provide information about practices that improve farm production and financial viability. Their first meeting, an informal networking and social gathering, was held on April 26, 2011 in Sheridan, NY. For more information, please contact Ginny Carlberg, (716) 664-9502 x 202/vec22@cornell.edu or Jodi Creasap-Gee, (716) 792-2800 x 204/jec53@cornell.edu.

## A Tough Winter for Bees

Beekeeper Ed Myer, of upstate Washington County, expects to lose 50 percent of his bees this year, and many other beekeepers in the area expect greater losses. The cold weather made it difficult for the honeybees to feed or conserve heat. Another problem was the lack of any warmer days; honeybees need a few 40-50 degree days during the winter to get out of their hives to remove waste from the hives. Jeremy Davis, manager of North Country Weather states, "Usually in the winter, you have a few days where you get up into the 40s or upper 30s. Basically, from Jan. 5 or so, all the way until Feb. 6 or 7, we were pretty much below freezing." Orchards pay commercial beekeepers to bring their bees to blooming trees each spring. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Research Service, bee pollination is responsible for \$15 billion in added crop value each year. The easiest way to support local beekeepers is by purchasing local honey.



## Local Farmers Contribute to Organic Valley

Organic Valley is launching *New York Fresh*, a new label highlighting its local nature. Among the 21 state farmers contributing organic milk to the company are Paul and Maureen Knapp (Cobblestone Valley Farm), Peter Mapstone, Hank Stoker, Rich Bruno (Twin Farms Inc.), and Bill and Joanne Casey. To be able to sell Organic Valley, these farmers may not use pesticides or non-organic fertilizers. The milk contains no antibiotics, hormones or genetically modified products. Organic Valley produces milk, yogurt, soy, cheese, butter, spreads, creams, produce, eggs and juice. A line of organic meat is produced under the *Organic Prairie* label.



## Federal Spray Records

The 1990 Farm Bill required certified private pesticide applicators to keep records of all applications of federally restricted use pesticides. For a list of federally restricted use pesticides in New York State, go to <http://ipmguidelines.org/grapes/>. A certified applicator who violates any provision of the regulations will for the first offense be subject to a fine or no more than \$650, but for additional offenses be subject to a fine of no less than \$1,100 for each violation. The records must contain the brand or product name being applied, the product's EPA registration number, the total amount of product applied, the size of the area treated, the crop to which the pesticide was applied, the location of the application, the month/day/year of the application and the certified applicator's name and certification number.

## Air Quality Tool

A new tool is available for farmers looking to lower air emissions and focus on environmental actions. More than 20 university professionals along with 15 partner agencies joined together to create the National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool (NAQSAT). The tool can be used to determine where air quality improvement opportunities are on farms. Swine, beef, dairy, broiler chicken, laying hen and turkey farmers can use the new tool, which addresses eight management categories relating to air emissions. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant program partially funded this development. Information on NAQSAT is available online at <http://naqsat.tamu.edu>.

The screenshot shows the NAQSAT website interface. At the top, there are navigation links: Overview, Disclaimer, Sponsors, Resources, Emissions, and User Manual. The main heading is "National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool". Below this, there is a section titled "Select a species to begin:" with a grid of buttons for Swine, Dairy, Beef, Broiler Chickens, Laying Hens, and Turkeys. To the right of the grid is a video player showing a video about the tool, with a play button and a progress bar. Below the video player is a link: "See a video about the tool or read the brochure". At the bottom left, there is a logo for NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service). Below the logo is a paragraph of text explaining the purpose of the tool. At the bottom right, there is another paragraph of text explaining how scores are generated and how the tool is used.

**Purpose:** The National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool (NAQSAT) has been developed for the voluntary use of livestock producers and their advisors or consultants. It is intended to provide assistance to livestock and poultry producers in determining the areas in their operations where there are opportunities to make changes that result in reduced air emissions. Air emissions research from livestock production systems is increasing every year. NAQSAT is based on the most accurate, credible data currently available regarding mitigation strategies for air emissions of ammonia, methane, volatile organic compounds, hydrogen sulfide, particulates, and odor.

NAQSAT was designed to provide information and education, only. It is not intended to provide emissions data and/or regulatory guidance. All users

Scores for each emission are generated upon online completion of NAQSAT. Scores reflect the degree to which an operation has incorporated all of the possible practices needed that would effectively minimize air emissions from the facility. Trade-offs may exist within a housing type that all categories of emissions cannot effectively be minimized. The tool considers the impact of diet, housing management, manure handling, management, transport, land application of manure, neighbor relations, and internal and nearby road management practices. Once areas where changes could be made are identified, resources to help implement changes are identified for the user. A user can run NAQSAT a second time with a proposed change included to determine the impact a change would have on emissions. Comparing results

## Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program

The RBEG program provides grants for rural projects that finance and facilitate development of small and emerging rural businesses, help fund business incubators and help support employment-related adult education programs. Grants generally range from \$10,000 to \$500,000. Examples of eligible fund use include: acquisition or development of land, easements, construction, conservation, renovations of buildings, plants, machinery, parking areas, pollution control, capitalization of loan funds including funds that will make loans for start-ups and working capital, rural transportation improvements and project planning. To apply, contact your local Rural Development State Office: Jill Harvey, State Director, The Galleries of Syracuse, 441 South Salina Street, Suite 357, Syracuse, NY 13202, 315-477-6400 [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ny/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ny/)

## Support for Electric Improvements in Rural Areas

According to federal Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, 50 rural utilities and cooperatives in 31 states have been selected to receive guaranteed loans that will benefit more than 183,000 rural electric cooperative consumers by financing the construction and repair of over 150,000 miles of distribution and transmission lines, including over \$310 million invested in renewable energy. The \$2.9 billion available is funded by USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service and will assist upgrades, expansion, maintenance, and replacement of rural America's electric transmission and distribution lines and generating equipment. The Electric Program also helps fund energy conservation and renewable energy products. The USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers more than 40 housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of 61,000 employees. Programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers.



### Agricultural Biotechnology Playing Significant Role in Food Output

Jack Boyne, spokesman of Bayer's CropScience Unit states, "In 1960, on average, one farmer fed 26 people per year. Now, a farmer feeds about 155 people per year." This is the reasoning behind the government's support of agricultural biotechnology in order to benefit farmers in their crop yields, while allowing them to keep costs low. A recent development is incorporating drought tolerance into plans, which would benefit many regions facing a water shortage. Another development worked on by Arcadia Biosciences has been the technology to help plants use nitrogen more efficiently, enabling farmers to use less nitrogen fertilizer, ultimately cutting costs and reducing negative environmental impact.

### Food Safety Modernization Act

In January 2011, President Obama signed the "Food Safety Modernization Act" into law. Under the new law, the FDA is required to make "a product tracing system to receive information that improves the capacity to effectively and rapidly track and trace the food that is in the United States or offered for import into the United States." In 2008, there was confusion when the FDA declared US-grown tomatoes as a source of salmonella outbreak. The actual source turned out to be peppers from Mexico, but still cost the tomato industry an estimated \$100 million. This law will prevent future confusion.



### Smart Water Grid Saving States from Water Shortage

The United Nations warns that 2/3 of the world's population could run short of water by 2025. The U.S. Government Accountability Office also warns that 36 states expect to face water shortages by 2013. Experts in the field of water IT use digital technology to cut water waste, save energy and reduce costs. This technology can help water utilities automate water systems, detect problem areas earlier, give customers tools to monitor water use, provide more accurate rates and reduce demand. West Virginia American Water is installing a system that uses advanced metering infrastructure and continuous acoustic monitoring which detects leaks. Water meter links are linked together via wireless mesh technology to create an automatic metering infrastructure that enables two-way communication and provides information about water usage.

According to American Water officials, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will finance 82 percent of the \$4.7 million project. The project has the potential to reduce water loss, vehicle emissions, energy consumption and pollution. Over the next two years, Santa Clarita, California will roll out a massive irrigation system of 700 acres that is expected to save more than 180 million gallons of water a year. The city has recently announced a partnership with HydroPoint, the manufacturer of the WeatherTRAK Internet-enabled, centralized irrigation controllers.

### Rural Economy Holding Strong

The overall Rural Mainstreet Index (RMI) dipped to 55.7, down from June's 56.0, although it still remains strong above growth neutral (50.0) for the ninth straight month. The farmland index declined again for the third straight month. It, too, remains above growth neutral at 59.4, down from 62.0 recorded in June. Farm equipment sales track similarly, down from 63.1 in June to 53.7 for the month of July. The rural job market took a slight dip to 49.3 after June's 51.5 high - and seven straight months of job growth.



## New York Biomass Energy Alliance Projects

In an effort to assist rural entrepreneurs in New York State seeking to develop renewable biomass projects, the New York Biomass Energy Alliance has teamed up with the New York Farm Viability Institute and SUNY Cobleskill to provide "Technical Assistance for Customer-Sited Rural Biomass Energy Projects in New York State." This technical assistance program has been established to bridge the gap between innovative projects that have been developed beyond the "concept" phase and viable commercial enterprises, capable of attracting outside financing through the provision of engineering and economic feasibility analysis. The program is funded by a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant, which has been extended to fund the program through calendar year 2012. The Alliance is managing the program, from soliciting applications to organizing review panels, to matching technical assistance recipients with economic and engineering consultants from different sectors of the biomass industry.

In addition to providing expert assistance to rural entrepreneurs, the program provides internship opportunities for students studying renewable energy development at SUNY Cobleskill. The overall goal of the technical assistance program is to enable start-up companies to move their projects towards commercialization and, in the process, create new renewable energy jobs in rural communities in New York State. Projects now underway include assistance to Community Biomass Energy in exploring logistics of low-densification grass-based energy systems, and support for Abbott Lund-Hansen, LLC, a consulting group in Lansing, NY, that is exploring a build-and-operate distributed heat network for customers in that rural community. Technical assistance applications will continue to be accepted on an ongoing basis until funding is exhausted.

**For more information, contact Alice Brumbach  
at 607-316-3437 or [abrumbach@newyorkbiomass.org](mailto:abrumbach@newyorkbiomass.org).**

## SCORE Some Free Business Assistance

SCORE, a volunteer organization which recruits experienced business professionals, offers free, confidential counseling and low cost educational programs to assist new and existing small business owners.

SCORE serves all rural and urban communities across New York State. Partnering with the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE volunteers help with strategic planning, marketing, finance, operations and database management. Services are free of charge.

Whether a business is well established or in its planning stages, owners can contact SCORE for many personalized services and programs – including the New York State Rural Small Business & Agribusiness Program. People who are interested in sharing their time and expertise with SCORE – with the mission of helping other start-up or established businesses – are always sought as well.

To find the nearest chapter, or for online mentoring, visit [www.score.org](http://www.score.org) and enter zip code below the words "FIND SCORE NOW!" Business owners can also contact SCORE's toll free number, 1-800-634-0245, to be directed to local chapters.

In the Southern Tier/Central New York, the Greater Binghamton SCORE office serves the counties of Broome, Tioga, Chenango, Otsego and Delaware. This branch works with the local agricultural and technical colleges, community banks and key organizations like chambers of commerce, to help rural communities and entrepreneurs develop and implement working business plans, networking opportunities and funding for new projects.

**Greater Binghamton SCORE can be reached at 1-800-920-6972 or [www.greaterbinghamtonscore.org](http://www.greaterbinghamtonscore.org)**

GREATER BINGHAMTON #217

**SCORE**  
FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR BUSINESS

**Ask SCORE**  
FOR BUSINESS ADVICE

[Workshop Plans](#)

**Greetings from SCORE Chapter 217 of Greater Binghamton, New York**  
Dan Sniezek, Chapter Chair

Greater Binghamton, New York Chapter of SCORE is part of the national nonprofit association dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of the nation's small businesses. SCORE volunteers serve as "Counselors to America's Small Business."

Greater Binghamton SCORE provides free and confidential business counseling tailored to meet the needs of your small business and your personal objectives. Greater Binghamton SCORE also offers workshops, for a modest fee, for both startup entrepreneurs and in-business small business owners.

SCORE volunteers are real-world professionals with time-tested knowledge who donate thousands of hours to help small businesses succeed. Counselors are experts in such areas as accounting, engineering, finance, marketing, management and business plan preparation.

The Greater Binghamton Chapter is composed of more than 48 volunteers that provide guidance and counseling to entrepreneurs in Broome, Tioga, Otsego, Delaware and Chenango counties of New York along with Susquehanna County of Pennsylvania. We maintain branches of SCORE in Owego, Oneonta and Norwich, New York and Montross, Pennsylvania.

A major goal for the coming year is to develop the SCORE Otsego County/Oneonta Branch. This Branch will provide SCORE services to Otsego and Delaware Counties.

[Meet our Volunteers](#)

**SBA**  
SCORE is a Resource Partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration. With sponsorship support from the Energy Mission Equipment Foundation.



### **New York Sea Grant Extension**

New York Sea Grant Extension at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, has issued a series of impact statements for projects completed by the coastal science extension organization in 2010. Project beneficiaries include New York's public and private coastal property managers and municipal leaders as well as commercial fisherman, students, teachers, seafood safety inspectors and European fisheries managers. They show the practical, economic, environmental and educational benefits of New York Sea Grant outreach efforts to New York's freshwater communities. Until the 2010 NY Sea Grant Program, there had been no formal Safety-at-Sea training conducted in the past 10 years.

#### **Project Work in New York's Marine Coastal District Includes:**

- Advancing Effective Storm Water Management
- Helping Local Leaders Understand Hudson River Shoreline Environments
- I FISH NY: Sharing Fishing Facts in New York City and Long Island
- New York Commercial Fishing Fleet Safety-At-Sea Training
- Helping Coastal Managers Respond to Nor'easters
- Revising the Long Island Sound Study Website
- Strengthening Partnerships with Marine Educators

#### **Project Work in New York's Great Lakes District Includes:**

- Developing Educational Materials for NY's Eastern Lake Ontario Region
- The 2010 Discover Clean and Safe Boating Campaign
- Assisting the Czech Republic's Development of a Reservoir Trawling Program
- Training Extension & Agency Educators in Climate Literacy
- Preventing and Containing VHS in Aquaculture Operations
- Teaching the Next Generation of Concerned Citizens

Follow NYSG activities and initiatives online at [www.nyseagrant.org](http://www.nyseagrant.org)

## SAVE THE DATES!

**Rural Health Conference,  
High Peaks Lake Resort,  
Lake Placid, NY  
September 19-20, 2011**  
[www.nysarh.org](http://www.nysarh.org)

**NYS Association of Counties  
2011 Fall Seminar,  
Crowne Plaza Hotel,  
Lake Placid, NY  
September 21-23, 2011**  
<http://www.nysac.org/Conferences/index.php>

**Rural Wealth Creation & Livelihoods  
October 3-5, 2011**  
Rural Wealth Creation and Livelihoods: A National Conference  
and Conversation - Washington, DC  
[http://www.richmondfed.org/conferences\\_and\\_events/  
community\\_development/2011/ruralwealthcall\\_20111003.cfm](http://www.richmondfed.org/conferences_and_events/community_development/2011/ruralwealthcall_20111003.cfm)

**Smart Management for Small  
Communities: A Local Leaders Conference  
October 6-7, 2011**

Holiday Valley Inn & Conference Center, Ellicottville, NY  
[efc.syracusecoe.org/315.443.8488](http://efc.syracusecoe.org/315.443.8488).

**Advanced Energy 2011  
October 12-13, 2011  
Buffalo, New York**  
<http://www.aertc.org/conference2011/>

