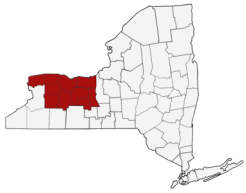


A partnership between Cornell University and CCE Associations in these ten counties:  
Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming & Yates.



## QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS April - June 2019

### Human Resource Management on Dairy Farms

Securing a reliable workforce is a major concern on the minds of dairy farmers across the United States, and our corner of New York is no exception. As farmers are striving to attract and retain workers, the need for improved human resource management (HRM) practices on the farm is apparent. Lack of clarity in HRM policies can lead to protocol drift, misunderstandings about pay and benefits, poor upkeep of worker housing, and ultimately, disengaged employees and high employee turnover.

A project funded by the New York Farm Viability Institute allowed us to work closely with six dairy farmers to improve their HRM practices. The areas that resulted in immediate benefits were the topics that had to do with improving the training of and communication with employees, such as improving the management of housing, creating standard operating procedures, and sharing performance metrics with employees.

Four newsletter articles and two in-person meetings attended by 30 farmers have multiplied the results of the project and encouraged more farmers to update their HRM practices. In a survey of employees on the project farms, 80% of respondents said they were committed to the farm due to liking the people that they work with or personal contentment. Improved HRM practices directly affect employee commitment. This encourages longer-term employees and decreases employee turnover, which is a major cost on many farms today.



### Discussion Groups and Tours Focused on Dairy-Beef Crosses and Beef Operations

The NWNY Team has hosted many discussion groups which meet on a regular basis. These small groups are a great way for farmers to learn from each other, extension specialists and other experts. One new group is focused on beginning livestock farmers and meets quarterly in Niagara County with 20 participants from 5 different counties across the region. They have discussed feeding and health topics, and pasture management.



*The Niagara discussion group learning about pasture management.*  
Photo by: Nancy Glazier

In April 2019, 13 young dairy farmers and industry professionals came together from several counties to tour those farms in the business of beef and dairy-beef in Orleans County, NY. At Beach Farm in Albion, NY, participants learned about the logistics of handling, facilities needed, and contracting with dairies to raise groups of 20-30 Holstein X Angus cross calves to 550-600 pounds. The group also toured Meadowbrook Farm in Medina, NY, where they learned the ins and outs of a 300-head beef feedlot operation that finishes steers purchased at auction. Properly growing and marketing Dairy X Beef crosses earns the dairy producer a \$150 premium over a purebred Holstein steer at most auctions in the region, and provides a business opportunity for farmers who may have the time and facilities available to contract with dairies to purchase and/or raise these animals, creating a value-added co-product of the dairy industry.

### Dairy Farm Business Summary (DFBS) Cooperators, a Significant Source of Economic Activity in 2018

Applying financial management skills, owners of about 40 dairy farm businesses from the region cooperated with regional specialists, PRO-DAIRY staff, and agribusiness consultants to complete DFBS's for 2018. Cooperators learned about the strengths and weaknesses of their businesses using their summary and analysis results, DFBS data for the Western New York region as a whole, and by using DFBS data for a group of most profitable businesses by size using the two page Comparison Report. Research studies conclude that producers using DFBS with analysis achieve greater levels of profit compared to producers that do not. Greater profitability

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## Genesee River Watershed Outreach

Implementation of sustainable agricultural practices lags on rented farmland acres when compared to farmer owned acres. In the Genesee River Watershed, nearly one-third of cropland is rented. The NWNYS Team in collaboration with American Farmland Trust and funded by the Great Lakes Protection Fund, has been engaging women non-operating landowners who rent land to farmers in learning circles to share sustainability information. These farmland owners are committed to protecting the soil resources on their land. At the learning circles they are developing the skills to build stronger working relationships with the farmers who rent their land. Other topics included sustainable agricultural leases and understanding best management practices for sustainability.

Exit evaluations completed by 39 landowners at 6 learning circles show they collectively own 6,550 acres. By committing to longer-term leases and offering incentives for use of sustainable practices like cover cropping, landowners and farmers together are implementing practices that make economic sense. Recent presentations at a Genesee Watershed Forum hosted by American Farmland Trust and the Genesee River Summit hosted by Genesee Riverwatch, over 150 local officials, agency personnel, planners, researchers and educators were informed of how this innovative pilot project is engaging both landowners and farmers to protect and improve water quality with implementation of sustainable agricultural practices on rented lands.



Genesee Watershed Learning Circle landowners at Holistic Management Session in Livingston County

## Dairy Farm Business Summary (DFBS) Cooperators, a Significant Source of Economic Activity in 2018

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contributes to enhanced economic viability, increasing the likelihood that businesses have the capacity to invest in replacement and, or expansion assets, and maintain and, or increase employment levels. Estimates using DFBS results suggest that the cooperating businesses invested a total of \$18.3 million in land, buildings and improvements in 2018, and a total of \$9.5 million in machinery and equipment. Estimates suggest that the roughly 40 farms employed a total of 820 worker equivalents, excluding operators, where an equivalent represents 230 hours worked per month for 12 months, and generated a total of about \$214.2 million in farm receipts from milk, cattle, crops and other receipt items.

## Potential Career Opportunities for Youth in Precision Agriculture

Genesee Community College's BEST Center hosted its Fourth Annual Precision Agriculture (PA) Day at the Batavia Campus on May 21, 2019. The NWNYS Team combined efforts with GCC's PA committee, comprised of local PA consultants, Cornell Cooperative Extension specialists, agricultural leaders, as well as high school representatives; designed this event to expose the area's youth to the high-tech careers and opportunities in agriculture, specifically, PA. The program was attended by 142 students in grades 9-12 from more than 22 high schools and BOCES districts across the GLOW region.

The NWNYS Team members presented on the concepts of how **PA decision-making tools can impact nutrient management decisions and profitability on farms**. In addition to this, other stations featured topics in: **electronic troubleshooting, drones and apple production**.

Agriculture producers have quickly adopted PA technologies over recent years. These advances in technology have resulted in agriculture systems collecting data and using it in multiple operations all controlled through a computer, tablet, or smartphone. New emerging technologies on farms are continually creating new employment opportunities in agriculture. In addition to new employment opportunities, these technological advancements have created education and training opportunities to address the need for skilled workers and provide awareness of this burgeoning field. Precision Agriculture Day is one way in which extension contributes to stimulating intellectual and social growth, economic advancement, and engaged citizenship of our youth.



Drone Station at GCC Precision AG Day