



Cornell Cooperative Extension

South Central NY Dairy and Field Crops Program

SECOND QUARTERLY REPORT

APRIL – JUNE 2021



SCNY Dairy Team Outreach Helps Farmers Access \$18.6 Million in Forgivable PPP Loan Funds *Mary Kate MacKenzie, Farm Business Management Specialist*

In March 2020, congress created the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) as part of the CARES Act to address economic impacts of COVID-19. The Small Business Administration (SBA) allocated a first round of PPP funding between April 3 and April 16, 2020. Congress approved additional funding at the end of April 2020, which the SBA allocated by August 8. In December 2020, congress allocated more funds, revised the program, and extended the deadline once again. Congress made this third round of PPP funding far more generous to small farmers by designating owner compensation as an approved payroll expense and using gross farm income to determine the PPP loan amount. As a result, a small farm with no employees could qualify for up to \$20,833 in forgivable loan funds.

Our team began PPP outreach to farmers on April 9, 2020. Since then, we have utilized multiple communication channels to build program awareness and understanding among farmers and agricultural service providers across the region. We renewed our outreach efforts this spring when the third round of PPP funding expanded access to small farms that were not previously eligible. Our most popular blog post to date in 2021, *Updates to the PPP Loan Program make forgivable loans available to small farms with little or no hired labor expense*, received 736 views and was widely shared by educators across the CCE system. In addition to providing information via email, blog, and social media channels, team members reached out directly by phone call or text to about 40 small farms across the region, many of whom did not realize they were eligible. A number of local banks and lenders were also uninformed about the program changes for farm businesses, so our outreach efforts included coaching

farmers on how to educate their lenders and complete the application process.

As of May 31, 2021, the PPP program has approved almost 12 million loans and distributed nearly \$800 billion to businesses across the country. In the South Central New York region, 348 agricultural production businesses received 420 PPP loans valued at \$18.6 million. Our team’s outreach efforts over the past year increased awareness of this program and influenced farmer decisions to apply.

Figure 1. Number and value of PPP loans awarded to agricultural production businesses by county. Source: SBA data compiled by Elizabeth Higgins, CCE Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Team.

County	Total PPP Loan Value to Ag Production Businesses	Number of PPP loans to Ag Production Businesses		
		First Draw PPP Loans	Second Draw PPP Loans	Total Number of PPP Loans
Broome	\$1,580,788	32	13	45
Chemung	\$348,153	22	3	25
Cortland	\$2,635,703	57	7	64
Onondaga	\$8,894,073	109	28	137
Tioga	\$1,312,581	56	8	64
Tompkins	\$3,836,251	72	13	85
Regional Total	\$18,607,549	348	72	420

Ag Production Businesses are defined using NAICS Codes 111 Crop Production; 112 Animal Production; 1151 Support Activities for Crop Production; and 1152 Support Activities for Livestock Production.



Cornell Cooperative Extension links the research and extension efforts at **Cornell University**, and **Cornell AgriTech**, the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, **providing the knowledge** to maximize New York State’s agricultural and natural resources. The **South Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Program** is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations in 6 Counties.



Successful CCE Regional Collaboration on “Pasture Prep: Virtual Ruminations for your 2021 Grazing Program” *Betsy Hicks, Dairy Management Specialist*

“Pasture, when cared for and used appropriately, can be a valuable management tool that promotes the health of animals and profitability on farm. However, reaching optimal management and maximizing the benefits of pasture grazing can be difficult. In recognizing this area of opportunity, CCE Dairy Specialists Betsy Hicks (South Central NY) and Alycia Drwencke (Southwest NY) developed a series of webinars to help producers develop their management skills and explore ways of improving their efficiency. The series was titled “Pasture Prep: Virtual Ruminations for your 2021 Grazing Program” and was offered weekly for 6 consecutive weeks starting March 2nd, 2021. Each session was approximately an hour and a half, with an opportunities for discussion among participants and interactive presentations.

The series focused on the following topics: considerations for 2021 spring green up, nutrition and grazing through the season, incorporating annual forages into the grazing plan, examining lameness, and maximizing pasture investments. In total 21 paying registrants from across NY, the U.S. and the UK participated in the series. Each of the webinars has been recorded and posted to YouTube for additional reach.

Participants were enthusiastic and overall pleased with the program, which was highlighted by one survey response “This was a great presentation!! Thank you.” Attendees also expressed interest in continuing to meet on a more regular basis to discuss pasture management, highlighting the need for continues resources on this topic.

When asked if participants planned to make any changes to their business based on the webinar 12 participants reported plans they would like to implement. Changes included “Actually write down the partial budget instead of the ‘sort of’ method of doing it in your head or on a scrap piece of paper that is easily lost” and “I am going to plan on doing a better job of managing the weakest part of my grazing system so it all works a little more smoothly.”

Additionally, participants rated their knowledge level before and after attending the program. On average, participants rated their knowledge at a 3.0 prior to, but that value increased to 3.7 following program delivery. Participants were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction of the program on a scale of 1-5, and the average response was 4.3. These two statistics demonstrate that the program was successful in adding value to grazers across NYS.

This series is an excellent example of the collaboration that exists between Regional Ag Teams across the state. In joining our efforts, we were able to showcase individual skills and develop a very strong program tailored to the needs of grazers across NYS and beyond.



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2021 Pasture Regrowth Monitoring Project

5/28/2021

Town	Elevation	Rainfall in the last week	Cumulative GDD	GDD in the last week	Date grazed/clipped	Days since last grazed/clipped	Residual Height	Last Week's Height	This week's Height	Total height gain	Regrowth Rate (average gain/day)
Deansboro	963	0.2	995	149	4/26/2021	25	3	13	16	3	0.4
McGraw	1400	0.2	856	228	5/14/2021	7	10	12	20	8	1.1
Remsen	1235	0	840	232	5/12/2021	9	9	9	20	11	1.6
Brookfield	1520	0.1	797	227	-	-	-	10	14	4	0.6
Norwich	1400	0.25	835	221	5/7/2021	16	4	11	16	5	0.7
Canastota	1336	0.1	1049	296	5/10/2021	11	-	12	16	4	0.6
Hudson	310	0.27	1256	257	5/14/2021	7	8	13	20	7	1.0
Alpine	1287	0	939	239	5/11/2021	10	-	8	12	4	0.6
Canton	400	0.1	1087	249	5/10/2021	11	-	7	10	3	0.4
Schoharie	560	0	1065	243	5/4/2021	17	-	9	11.5	2.5	0.4
Groton	1315	0.2	949	242	5/21/2021	0	-	0	7.5	7.5	1.1
Groton	1331	0.2	949	242	5/16/2021	5	-	6	12	6	0.9
Truiston	1343	0.25	878	229	5/8/2021	13	6	10	15	5	0.7
Truiston	1173	0.25	878	229	5/17/2021	4	8	9	12.3	3.3	0.5
Schuyler Falls	470	0.1	1016	253	5/12/2021	9	-	6	12	6	0.9
Regies	1480	0.1	954	248	-	-	-	30	43	13	1.9
Regies	1470	0.1	954	248	5/1/2021	20	2	20	32	12	1.7
Keseville	400	0	974	289	5/24/2021	-3	-	14	24	10	1.4

0.9





Technology Driven—Efficient Communication

Janice Degni, CCE Field Crop Specialist

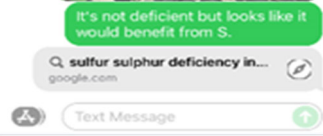


Photo: Screenshot of actual communication with a producer.

One of the things that the field crop specialist does during the growing season is track crop progress and troubleshoot problems with the growing crop. Issues can arise from weather patterns or environmental conditions, nutrient related, or from a myriad of pests. The technology in use “2day”, particularly the ability to text directly to producer’s cell phones, allows a quick response that can include

links to factsheets and pictures capturing conditions from the fields.

A recent example of this came up while I was assessing the health of a corn stand and nutrient status, particularly interested in sulfur status. The plants did show interveinal chlorosis associated with a lack of sulfur. I was able to send pictures of the crop in real-time, direct to the producer and attach a factsheet on sulfur deficiency which included information and additional pictures for his review.

In the past, if such information were to be shared, it would have to wait until returning to the office and printing the information to be shared, and sending via USPS or send via email as an attachment.



Pasture Regrowth Monitoring Project - Graziers Across the State Participate

Betsy Hicks, Area Dairy Management Specialist

After our Pasture Prep webinar series focusing on dairy grazing, participants stated that they would like more frequent check-ins with other graziers during the grazing season. One of the ideas mentioned was an open monthly grazing call where graziers could check in and compare notes on how the season has progressed. The other idea was a pasture monitoring project, where graziers could report their own pasture growth weekly, and be able to compare rainfall amount, temperature and growth against other locations in NY.

Teaming up with Troy Bishopp of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and Madison County SWCD, both ideas were put into motion. Starting May 7th, Betsy and Troy began compiling information from locations across NY who self-reported grass height, rainfall amount, graze/clip date and residual height. Early in the monitoring project, over 15 locations reported this information, which was compiled and sent out weekly to over 80 graziers throughout NY, whether they reported monitoring information or not. While each

spring is unique, this year’s conditions were very much so, and participants often shared their own grazing experiences to the wider group of people on the list. Troy’s weekly “Pasture Pontifications” gives readers a sense of what is “normal” in the grazing season as well as strategies for resiliency during the period. Since the initial height measurements, the report has morphed into also including density measurements, as pasture growth is never the same throughout the season. These weekly reports will continue throughout the grazing season until late fall.

Two monthly grazing calls have occurred to date, with more to be planned throughout the season. During this time, participants could share what pasture growth looked like on their farm as well as strategies they were employing. Some people used this time to bounce ideas off the group or ask questions of advanced graziers on the call. While the call only lasts 30-60 minutes, the opportunity to touch base and ask questions of the group has been valuable thus far.





Small Dairy Program Updates

Fay Benson, Small Dairy Support

Dairy Grazing Apprentice (DGA)

This work continues with a new financial agreement with the National DGA. Another small grant was received from the Northeast Dairy Innovation Center to promote farmers transitioning to becoming a grazing dairy. During this quarter I had a graduate from Tompkins County and the apprentice in Cortland County reached his 6-month anniversary.

Cortland "Part Time Farmer" Cohort

Working with Dana Havas, to set up a part time farmer cohort. Our goal is to utilize the discussion group format to share experience and provide resources to a group rather than individually. We had two on-farm meetings. One in April at the Triple Three Livestock farm in Marathon and another meeting in June at Whey Street Dairy in Truxton. Another meeting is being planned at Northland Sheep farm in Marathon.

This group is very slow to materialize but that hasn't slowed our effort to continue working towards our goal of forming the cohort.

SARE Compaction Study

Data collection continues on the pasture soil study which is in its third year. Two meetings are being planned to contribute towards the outreach requirement for the grant. Both meetings will take place in July in other parts of the state. Also in July working with an NRCS Soil Scientist in Washington County we will use a ground penetrating radar unit to better understand the nature of pasture soil compaction.

Soil Health Trailer

The trailer was used as part of "Cortland's Agstravaganza" presentations June 14th and 15th. Presentations about the importance of healthy soil for water quality and carbon sequestration were given to six 4th grade classes during the two days.

The trailer was also part of the June 19th "Part Time Farmer" meeting previously mentioned. Later this summer there are three other on farm meetings around the state where the trailer will be used to promote healthy soils. Fay and the trailer will also be at the Empire Farm Days all three days providing demonstrations for the public.



SCNY DFC Team—On-Farm Impact Voiced by our Farmers

Quotes from program participants responding to the question "how have dairy team programs and interactions impacted your farm?"

We have very much appreciated becoming part of several dairy farm discussion groups including DFBS and DPM. Both hearing other farmer's strategies, strengths, and challenges as well as needing to articulate our own to the group has enabled us to fine tune our mission and plan how we can continue to improve our business. Mary Kate also worked tirelessly to help us straighten out our books in preparation for the group discussions, everything from tech support and tips for recordkeeping to providing spreadsheet templates. We always look forward to meeting with our dairy team program for the support network it provides, getting feedback from others, and the comradery that can be so hard to find when we rarely get to interact with others who share our passion and profession.

- 90-cow organic dairy

The Dairy Advancement Program recordkeeping systems grant helped us purchase new farm accounting software and get it installed. I now know how to enter our financial information. The new program has already paid for itself. Our accountant made a mistake last year that we identified as we were setting up the new program, and we notified our accountant to correct it. It helps having our own set of records at the farm.

- 160-cow dairy

The dairy team programs have broadened my knowledge of herd, crop, and employee management through discussion meetings, webinars, and newsletters. My father and I attended the virtual grazing seminar this past winter, and we were very impressed with the speakers and information provided. The information was very practical and the dairy team was always willing to listen to any questions and help in any way they can.

- 300-cow grazing dairy

The CCE team has proved to be an invaluable resource for our farm. We have reached out to Betsy, Mary Kate, and Janice numerous times over the years with simple questions about recommended practices as well as complex issues our farm is facing. The programs offered have been informative and timely. We will continue to avail ourselves of their up-to-date knowledge and ease of access.

- 600-cow dairy

I am thankful for the CCE staff that I work with because they have persisted in the face of adversity and continued to develop and implement engaging programming for a diverse group of farmers during trying times. The SCNY dairy program asks farmers for topic suggestions and they deliver.

- 1400-cow dairy

