

REPORT

Second Quarter 2025

Central NY Continues to Grow!



Meet our new Farm Business Management Specialist

Raevyn Saunders grew up in Michigan on a fruit and vegetable farm, where she developed a strong passion for agriculture. After moving to Central New York, she continued gaining hands-on experience working on local dairy and equine farms throughout the region. These experiences inspired her to pursue a career in agricultural business to better support the agricultural industry.

Raevyn holds a Master of Science in Food and Agricultural Business from SUNY Morrisville and a BBA in Agricultural Business, where she completed interdisciplinary coursework in agricultural economics, agribusiness marketing, human resources, and financial management. Her graduate work included developing onboarding and labor audit tools for farm employers, evaluating supply chains, and analyzing market pathways for value-added food products. These experiences have prepared her to support producers through financial planning, compliance support, and business planning to achieve operational goals.

Raevyn previously worked for Cornell Cooperative Extension as a Farm to School Coordinator and Agricultural Educator, leading grant-funded initiatives to connect local farms with institutional markets and designing hands-on agricultural resources for local producers. Most recently, she worked in the heavy equipment industry at Milton CAT, where she managed service logistics and technician support for construction and agricultural customers across New York. With both practical experience and a strong educational foundation, Raevyn is excited to partner with producers to strengthen farm businesses and support the future of agriculture.



My name is Heer Patel

I'm the new Program Aide for the
CNYDLFC Regional Team.



I was born & raised in India, and grew up in Pennsylvania. I studied Agricultural Sciences at Penn State University where I attained a Bachelor of Science with minors in Soils and International Ag. My passion for sustainable farming and soil health grew from a young curiosity about where my food comes from. This led me to diverse experiences, including studying the Himalayan environment in Bhutan in 2022, where I gained valuable insights into sustainable agricultural practices and soil management in a global context. While with the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, I contributed to the Soil Health Benchmark study where I coordinated sampling efforts and gained deeper knowledge in scientific research. As an undergraduate, I also collaborated with professors and grad students on the development of a Nitrogen decision-making tool, gaining hands-on experience in research field management. In my free time, I enjoy helping out at Patchwork, a small organic produce & vegetable farm in Central PA.

I'm excited to contribute to the team's ongoing efforts, particularly the neonic project, which I'm eager to dive into. Having participated in conferences like the 2022 Tri-Society Conference and the Women for the Land Learning Circle, I gained valuable networking experience and further strengthened my commitment to addressing agricultural and sustainability challenges. I am passionate about using science & collaboration to address key agricultural challenges, and excited to continue learning and growing with the team at CNYDLFC.

Developing a Plan to Reach your Farm's Dairy Cow Replacement Needs

Farms plan one year in advance for forage, and a critical part of the planning process is developing a plan for the herd. Regardless of the size of the dairy, this is a process that has to be carefully thought out. The herd inventory depends on how many acres the farm has access to and how well the forage is used and managed.

There are many factors that could affect this plan, leaving the dairy short on forage inventory or not reaching the dairy's milk production goal, consequently affecting the dairy's financial status.



The CNYDLFC team organized an event for Amish communities to develop a plan for herd inventory and forage inventory. The event had 13 Amish farmers who were able to work on their dairy plan for herd and forage inventory.

The **Fencing 101 with The NY Farm Ops** program, held at the end of May, was a great success, drawing 20 enthusiastic participants. The hands-on training provided attendees with valuable foundational skills in fencing techniques and farm infrastructure planning. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many producers expressing strong interest in additional, more advanced training opportunities. The high level of engagement and demand for further education highlights the program's effectiveness and its importance to the agricultural community

A program and funding partnership between Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Chenango, Fulton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery, Otsego, Saratoga and Schoharie Counties.

Corn and Soybean Seed Treatment Research:

Will conventional growers lose yield without the protection of neonicotinoid insecticides?

With the ban of neonicotinoid insecticide seed treatments set to take effect on corn, soy, and grain crops in 2029, Erik has been heavily involved in Cornell's efforts to assess the threat that various insect pests pose to our field crops, and to identify viable alternative pest management strategies. Seed treatment trials are currently growing in 12 fields around our region this year (one intended trial could not be planted due to the wet spring weather), including a demonstration plot at SUNY Cobleskill, which will investigate and show how different cropping strategies affect seedcorn maggot pressure and damage.

Tapped by the state to conduct this research, Cornell researchers across upstate NY are busy tending to trial plots all summer long.

This project will help us understand the potential risks of not having insecticide seed treatments once the ban goes into effect. There are alternative chemistries to neonicotinoids, and our work will show whether those alternatives are viable if needed.

Erik will host a Field Day focused on this project on July 22nd at SUNY Cobleskill. This research will continue through 2027.



From left to right: Planting trial plots at SUNY Cobleskill; Heer Patel (CNYDLFC Program Aide) and Zach O'Donnell (intern from Colgate University) collect samples from the plots; germinated corn seed with a seedcorn maggot.

Other Educational Activities: April - June 2025

- The team measured alfalfa crops at more than 50 field sites as a part of their annual First Cutting Forage Quality program.
- Daniela held forage and herb inventory meetings.
- Daniela organized a Bovine Respiratory Complex Disease workshop.
- Daniela completed reproduction evaluation and assessments for different dairies.
- Daniela attended Dairy Cattle Welfare Council Symposium.
- Daniela provided training on milk quality and milking routines in different dairy farms.
- Daniela participated in a monthly podcast with regional specialists statewide.
- Erik began his annual corn pest pheromone trap program at 5 farms around the region.
- Erik is collaborating with Cornell IPM on a corn leafhopper trapping program. This insect transmits a bacterial plant pathogen that causes corn stunt disease, first detected in NY in 2024.
- Erik began the weekly Field crop Update e-newsletter.
- Ashley and Erik wrapped up their work on their grant-funded project investigating forage quality and finishing metrics in beef.

Future Grant and Project Activities:

- Daniela will hold an Artificial Insemination workshop
- Daniela will complete her Agricultural Workforce Development Certificate training online
- Daniela and Erik will host a Corn Silage Dry Down Day
- Erik will host a Field Day at SUNY Cobleskill focused on the neonicotinoid seed treatment research he and other regional teams and Cornell IPM are conducting around the state.
- Erik will hold a Field Crop and Vegetable farm walk with ENYCHP's Crystal Stewart-Courtens on a Plain Community farm in Montgomery County.
- Erik will judge Field Crop and Vegetable entries at the NY State Fair
- Ashley will organize and carry out a Hands-on Integrated Parasite Management training for small ruminants
- Ashley will organize and carry out a Hands-on training for beef cattle producers with a newly purchased injection simulator. The injection simulator was purchased by the NYS Beef council to help demonstrate the proper techniques of giving injections. We are eager to be able to utilize this technology in our region.
- Ashley will host swine 101 workshops across the region
- Ashley will organize the NYS livestock judging contest at the NY State Fair

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