Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Northern New York Regional Ag Team

CORNELL NNY REGIONAL AG PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS JANUARY-MARCH 2016

Serving: Jefferson, Lewis, Clinton, Essex, St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties.

Meat Processing & Marketing

Harvest NY is working closely with Northern NY and Central NY regarding meat processing and marketing. The meat industry is experiencing growth and added interest in the production and availability of locally sourced meats and meat products. The prospect of new processing capacity in many parts of New York as well as the development of enhanced educational programs in meat processing at SUNY Cobleskill presents an opportunity for enhanced capacity to support this growth. MacKenzie, Harvest NY's Livestock Processing and Marketing Specialist has been working with processors and producers to understand the strengths and weaknesses in the processing process; from slaughter to fabrication. This past quarter, MacKenzie has been involved in producer meetings. These meetings ranged from beef genetic talks and sheep wool pooling; to Beef Quality Assurance training and farm business summary training. SUNY Cobleskill and Harvest NY is working on a Beef Cutting class, set for a tentative date of May 25. This all-day class is designed for producers who are selling to markets, would like to learn to cut their own meats, or are interested in learning the cuts of beef. The morning classroom session will comprise of the cuts of beef, quality of meat, and marketing your cuts. Participants will spend the afternoon learning the correct way to cut a beef carcass to get the most value for your beef. This is the initial step in a positive partnership to add additional classes for producers raising and marketing other meats and meat products (lamb, pork, shelf stable, and charcuterie). New York is home to many diverse meat markets; from farmer's markets and freezer trade to large city markets. New York has an opportunity to fulfil many markets while allowing for our livestock producers to expand their operations or become more specialized and Harvest NY is there to help see our livestock meat industry grow.

North New York Cuisine Trails

Northern NY (Clinton Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties) is a one of a kind location with the Adirondack's, Lake Champlain, Thousand Islands, and proximity to Canada. We have much developing across the region with regards to agriculture from agro tourism, push to buy local, learning where our food comes from, and an increasing craft beverage industry (wineries, breweries, and distilleries).

Currently in development in Essex, Clinton, and Lewis County are Cuisine Trails with possibly also one in Franklin County. A Cuisine Trail is designated by New York State Department of Agriculture and Market to promote agricultural producers in the area. These trails for each county are approximately 50 miles in length with a variety of stops on the way including producers (farms and craft beverages), retail store, agricultural product processors, and restaurants that have local products. The hope is to create the Adirondack Cuisine Trail Organization for Clinton, Essex, and Franklin County to make it a destination location for people all over to come visit.

Pashow is currently helping with the development of Essex, Clinton, and Lewis counties Cuisine Trails. She hopes that with the development of these Cuisine Trails that it will lead to more economic development for agricultural businesses across Northern New York. With the additional goal of making the region known as a new agro tourism destination around the world.

NNY Alfalfa Growers Take Advantage of Cornell Alfalfa Snout Beetle Programs

Alfalfa is an important crop to most of the 1000+ dairy farms in Northern New York, but it is uniquely at risk of devastating damage by the Alfalfa Snout Beetle (ASB). The 6 NNY counties (Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence Franklin, Clinton and Essex) grew a little more than 127,000 acres of alfalfa in 2012, according to the USDA Ag Census. ASB infestations are unique to NNY and have been found in 9 northern counties, including the 6 listed above, but are not found in the rest of NY State nor in the remainder of the United States. A large, collaborative ASB-scouting effort took place across all 6 NNY counties in the fall of 2015. CCE regional and county staff worked together to scout alfalfa and alfalfa-grass fields in at-risk areas. New infestations were noted in Franklin County while other infested areas had not expanded significantly.

After 25+ years of research, Cornell University entomologist Dr. Elson Shields and his research support specialist, Tony Testa, developed the use of 2 native New York nematodes as an effective biological control method for ASB, and have implemented the program on many NNY fields. The approach takes advantage of the natural, insect-attacking habits of the nematodes to reduce ASB populations to manageable levels. The Shields Lab have also worked out nematode rearing and application methods for both small, farm-built, and larger, commercial sprayer equipment.

In 2015, a cost-sharing program made possible by a grant by the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program helped farmers to apply the nematodes on their own, or with assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension personnel, or by hiring a commercial applicator. During the spring, Mike Hunter and Kitty O'Neil, agronomists with Cornell Extension's NNY Regional Ag Team, spread the word across the 6 counties and linked farms with the Shields Lab at Cornell University to organize nematode rearing, transportation and application strategies. Nematodes were ordered, reared and delivered to NNY on a tight schedule to allow applications to take place within 24 hours of delivery for best nematode survival. Final applications took place in early September. Through the 2015 cost-sharing program, 22 new farms representing 1058 acres participated and 14 of those farms, representing 986 acres, had the nematodes applied commercially. Growers who had participated in the program in previous years treated an additional 3,242 acres. In total, 4,300 acres of alfalfa were treated with biocontrol nematodes in 2015 with this program. The distribution of the 2015 applications were: Jefferson County – 11 farms & 1,137 acres, Lewis County – 24 farms & 1,641 acres, St Lawrence County – 4 farms & 1,004 acres, Franklin County – 9 farms & 318 acres, Clinton County – 2 farms & 200 acres. In total, 60 billion nematodes were reared by the Shields' lab at Cornell and transported to NNY producers for application on alfalfa fields during 2015. Since 2007, 77 farms have applied biological control nematodes on more than 250 fields covering 12,000-14,000 acres in 6 NNY counties.

Despite the fact that our grant was not renewed for 2016, the Shields Lab at Cornell University will continue to offer bio-control nematodes for ASB and to teach interested farmers to rear these important nematodes on their own. Mike Hunter advises, "ASB is really a 'neighborhood' problem, so all alfalfa-producing farms in an infested area need to apply some nematodes each year until all fields have been treated, or the problem will continue to threaten alfalfa production in that area."

Dairy Acceleration Program continues to have an impact in Northern New York

A redesigned milk house, larger bulk tank, an increase in milk production per cow and an increase in herdsize were some of the outcomes for Decker's Family Farm LLC adventure with the Dairy Acceleration Program. Applying and being awarded funds was the easy part, finding the right business consultant was the hard part, but once Decker's started working with Dehms Associates a great relationship developed and ideas became reality. The first meetings focused on finances and a vision for the future. Questions such as "what does the future look like?" and "what projects do you in vision" were discussed and a game plan was developed.

"Looking at how we compared to benchmarks, creating a new budget and business plan allowed us to present material to our bank for future project financing" Decker's Family Farm LLC member, Mark Decker.

As management practices were changing, milk production per cow was increasing and the need for a larger tank was apparent. Construction began in June, 2015 for a redesigned milk house that could fit a larger bulk tank. During construction, the herdsize increased due to internal herd growth and the purchase of cows. Upon completion of the building, and installation of the tank, Decker's milk production had increased over 20% per cow even with an 18% increase in herdsize.

Decker's Family LLC continue to look towards the future with plans to expand the lactating cow facilities, build a calf and heifer facility and continue to update the current milking facilities. Continuing to focus on herd management will allow Mark & Wade to increase efficiency and (hopefully) remain profitable.

The Dairy Acceleration Program is an initiative of Governor Cuomo in partnership with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation designed to enhance profitability of New York dairy farms while maintaining a commitment to environmentally responsible dairy farming. Since its inception in 2013, over 25 farms across Northern New York (NNY) have been awarded funds for business planning, CNMPs, BMPs, or facility planning.

Our Mission

"The Northern New York Regional Ag Team aims to improve the productivity and viability of agricultural industries, people and communities in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton and Essex Counties by promoting productive, safe, economically and environmentally sustainable management practices and by providing assistance to industry, government, and other agencies in evaluating the impact of public policies affecting the industry."

Contact us directly through our website: http://nnyrap.cce.cornell.edu/