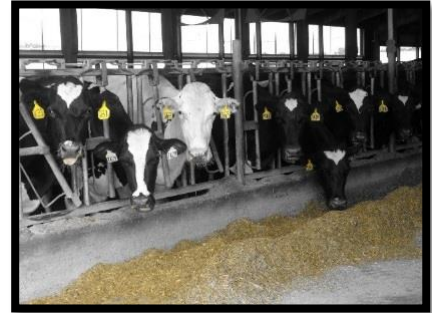


## CORNELL NWNYS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS APRIL – JUNE 2016

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### **Dairy Farm Business Summary Cooperators, a Significant Source of Economic Activity in 2015**

Applying financial management skills, owners of 42 dairy farm businesses from the region cooperated with regional specialists, PRO-DAIRY staff, and agribusiness consultants to complete DFBSs for 2015. 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 who do not. Greater profitability 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 in 2015 the 42 cooperating businesses invested a total of \$39.4 million in land, buildings and improvements, and a total of \$13.8 million in machinery and equipment. Estimates suggest that the 42 farms employed a total of 767 worker equivalents, excluding operators, where an equivalent represents 230 hours worked per month for 12 months. These same farms generated a total of \$227.3 million in cash farm receipts from milk, cattle, crops, and other receipt items.



### **A Proactive Approach to Hoof Care Saves Money**

Over the course of four days in April, the NWNYS Team brought a new hoof trimming course to 25 dairy farmers and employees from across the region. Renowned hoof trimmers Chip Hendrickson and Vic Daniels taught the class while Libby Eiholzer translated for the 17 Spanish-speaking participants. Jerry Bertoldo taught them how to mitigate on-farm environmental issues that can contribute to lameness, how to gait score cows, and how to identify lame cows.

The class focused on teaching participants how to identify cows before they become clinically lame and how to treat them quickly and effectively. The cost of one case of clinical lameness is estimated to range from \$300-\$500, due to factors such as decreased milk production, poor reproductive performance and increased risk of culling. Each of the 25 participants is now equipped to save their farm thousands of dollars a year, simply by identifying and treating lame cows before they can become severely lame.



One farm manager has since reported his employee who attended the course has shown a marked increase in his ability to identify cows that are just becoming lame. The previous week the employee noticed a cow that was not lame, but wasn't walking quite normally. When he looked at her hoof, he found the beginnings of a case of foot rot, which he was able to quickly treat and cure, thus saving the farm money and the cow pain.

An older study estimated that if a herd was able to improve their incidence of lameness from average to excellent through this level of observance and remediation, they could save almost \$5,000 annually per 100 cows in milk production losses alone using today's low milk prices (\$15/cwt). On a 1,000 cow dairy, that's nearly \$50,000 per year in savings.

## Women Land Owners Learn Benefits of Conservation and Farming Practices in the Genesee Valley

In Western New York, one-third of farmland is rented from non-operator landowners. Best estimates indicate that about one-third of the rented farmland is owned by women. The NWNY Team has engaged with American Farmland Trust, Utah State University researcher Peggy Petrzelka, and the Women, Food and Agriculture Network to learn about the needs of women as landlords and their tenants.



To learn about the needs from multiple perspectives, separate focus groups of women farmland owners and farm operators were held to better understand the working relationships between the owners and operators. A pilot Caring for the Land Learning Circle was held for women landowners to introduce them to soil health and conservation practices from local service providers, experts from the Women, Food and Agriculture Network, and farmers. These efforts were funded through a planning grant from the Great Lakes Protection Fund and supported locally by staff from the NWNY Team, USDA Farm Service Agency, Western New York Crop Management Association, Genesee Valley Conservancy and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Through these activities, the project team has learned:

- Conservation is a priority for women landowners and they want to understand the practices farm operators are implementing on their land.
- The relationship between landowner and farm operator requires a great deal of trust.
- For farm operators, gender is less important to the relationship than the level of understanding of farming practices of the landlord. Operators are more concerned about the stability of the relationship with their landlords when ownership moves to a new generation.
- It can take a few years to see improvements as a result of implementing conservation practices. Therefore, longer term leases, five years or more, provide more incentive for operators to implement practices to improve soil health.

These findings are being used to develop a multi-year proposal for the Great Lakes Protection Fund which will develop and implement a model for working with women non-operating farmland owners and their tenants in the Great Lakes Basin to increase conservation practices on their land. The end goal is to improve the long-term health and productivity of leased farmland. The NWNY Team will be engaged in the project helping to develop and test teaching tools and recruit landowners and their tenants in the Genesee Valley Watershed to participate.

## Improving Malting Barley Production Practices to Meet Industry Needs

The resurgence of malting barley production spurred on by the growing craft beer industry has kept Cornell field crop specialists busy across the state. While not a new crop to NY (it was grown here in the 1950's), a lot of work is being done to establish best management practices to maximize barley yields under current NY growing conditions. Malting barley acres have slowly increased over the past three seasons and there were approximately 1,800 acres harvested in NY in 2016. Over half of these acres were grown by producers in the NWNY region.



Establishing which barley varieties grow best under NY growing conditions has been at the top of the to-do list. Cornell plant breeder Mark Sorrells and his staff have been planting variety trials across NY. These varieties are secured from malting barley breeding programs across the U.S. and evaluated for their malting qualities and yield. There were three variety trial locations established in NWNY this year. A malting barley twilight tour was held with producers and maltsters on June 23rd at Harris Farm in LeRoy. Twelve producers and four malt houses went on a guided tour of all the winter malting barley varieties being evaluated. They also were updated on current fertility, harvest, and drying recommendations from Mike Stanyard and disease management from Cornell plant pathologist Gary Bergstrom.

Working one-on-one with every barley producer in the region has been beneficial in helping us determine what is working and what is not. We have been collecting all current producer management practices along with soil and grain samples to come up with recommendations for successful barley production in NY. We will need to triple the current malting barley production by 2018 to meet the standards set by the NY Farm Brewery Law that beer brewed under the farm brewery license must utilize 60% NY grown ingredients.

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