

CORNELL NWNY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS JANUARY – MARCH 2017

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Meat & Greet Event Connects Farmers and Consumers

When it comes to shopping for meat, more consumers are looking for products raised locally. Many of those consumers, however, have trouble connecting with nearby farms to satisfy their buying preferences. Looking to break down that barrier in the Finger Lakes was the inaugural Meat & Greet Farmer and Chef Fair.

Producers do a great job of taking care of their animals and the day-to-day things, but marketing often does not always come naturally to those folks. It is so important that farmers get out and let consumers get to know them. There is no one better positioned to tell an animal's and farm's story than the farmers themselves.

Held at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York, the event was a collaboration between Cornell Cooperative Extension and Hobart and William Smith Colleges' Finger Lakes Institute. Also sponsored by the Meat Suite Project and Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty, the event brought together more than 20 farms and well over 100 consumers, including home cooks, professional chefs, restaurateurs and food distributors.

During the event, four local chefs prepared meat that was donated from some of the attending farms. The demonstrations were entertaining, educational as well as delicious!

It was not only a networking event for consumers to connect with farmers, but farmers to connect with other farmers. New and beginning farmers attended to pick up some marketing and promotional ideas as well.



Academy for Dairy Executives

The Academy for Dairy Executives returned to Western New York during the winter of 2016/2017 to provide young farmers with the opportunity to improve their management skills. The NWNY Team paired up with PRO-DAIRY and educators in Erie and Chautauqua counties to offer the program. Twenty-six farmers from across the region met for three two-day sessions. The program targets the next generation of dairy farmers, especially those who are transitioning into a management role.

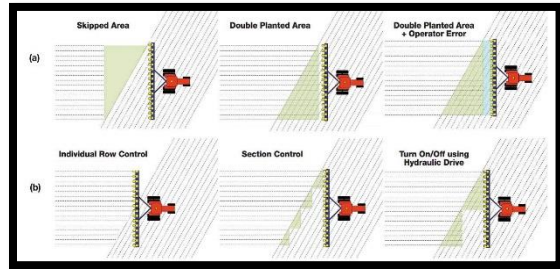
Participants heard from excellent speakers and participated in group exercises to learn about communication and conflict resolution, managing vs. doing, budgeting and making financial decisions, and other topics. Participant evaluations were extremely positive, including responses such as *"Great! Very action based and people based. I want to go and try the stuff I learned right now,"* and *"The whole farm budgeting was very eye opening and helped me to realize I need to become more involved in the budgeting process. Also family business conflict resolution and communication was an amazing conversation. Helped to open mind on how to deal with it efficiently".*



The participants represent 20 farms and 2 agribusinesses that milk 21,125 cows, positively impacting the local community through collectively selling \$86.5 million dollars of milk annually. Together these farms employ 400 people and utilize the services of many local agribusinesses. They protect the environment and maintain green spaces in their communities through managing 49,000 crop acres. Skills that the participants learned will enable them to lead their businesses to continued success for future generations.

Auto Section Control on Corn Planters: Benefits and Costs for Decision Making

With respect to crop production, the PrecisionAg Institute defines precision agriculture, or precision farming as “managing crop production inputs on a site specific basis to increase profits, reduce waste and maintain environmental quality.” Greater accuracy with respect to rate, timing and/or location of input use, including machinery operations, can lead to improved economic and environmental results. Advisory Committees for the NWNY Program have identified a range of precision agriculture topics as high priority to help direct applied research and extension work of the program. The benefits and costs associated with auto steer was one of the first topics addressed by the team. Recently, the team examined a second entry point technology -- auto section control (ASC) on corn planters.



An ASC system on a corn planter uses information from a global positioning system to plant seeds. By switching sections of the planter on and off, an ASC system helps the operator achieve greater accuracy in input usage as mentioned above, while reducing double planted areas due to planter overlap. Producers see these benefits when turning in headlands, moving around obstacles, and in field corners. ASC technology helps reduce operator stress and increase work quality. To realize benefits a farmer would invest about \$15,000 additional on average for ASC on a corn planter when compared to base technology.

To provide farmers, their advisors, and research and extension staff with information for decision making on ASC technology, the team worked with Erick Haas, the Cazenovia Equipment Company, to develop economic analysis.

At a session on precision farming during PRO-DAIRY’s 2017 Operations Managers Conference, approximately forty attendees learned the following.

- Expected changes in profit attributed to ASC on a corn planter are positive for some, but not all corn acres scenarios
- Capital investment analysis yields similar results
- Some benefits to the operator are difficult to quantify, but valuable -- reduced stress, reduced fatigue
- Producers are encouraged to take advantage of analysis provided by equipment professionals, advisors and others when making decisions

Producers and their advisors can develop and apply analyses that will likely find ASC attractive under many scenarios. Two benefits attributed to ASC mentioned by producers and their advisors are reduced stress and reduced fatigue. Combine these benefits with expected favorable economic and financial impacts, and ASC has the potential to be a beneficial change in practice for many farmers, one that farmers will likely want to evaluate for its ability to achieve improved results.

Positive Reviews for Inaugural Forage Congress

After months of team planning, the inaugural Forage Congress was held in Livingston County on February 28th. The agenda was developed with input from the NWNY Team’s dairy and field crops advisory committees; both felt this type of congress was lacking from the team’s arsenal since forages are the base for all livestock nutrition.



Approximately 75 participants and 20 exhibitors attended the day-long event. One agri-business provided the lunch sponsorship. Topics included whole farm planning from the ground up, economics of high forage diets, reduced lignin alfalfa with quality grasses, double cropping presentation and panel, and storing quality silage options. Planning for year two is underway.

Manure Forum – Proper Handling, Value and Dangers

Good management of manure handling is a must for road safety, conservation of nutrient value, environmental safeguards and employee well-being. Manure transport on public highways can lead to vehicular incidents and spills. Handling a serious spill on or off the road may involve law enforcement, DEC, fire companies and local contractors. Manure pits and containment vessels present air quality and toxicity risks that can easily result in death. Hydrogen sulfide gas as an ever present fact of stored manure represents a particular problem when people and animals are near the location of agitation and pumping. Manure is both a liability and an asset. The value of spreading and incorporating manure in a timely manner can vary significantly with the variables of land base slope, soil type and proximity to waterways adding to the planning. The team partnered with PRO-DAIRY in planning a webinar connected forum that was held at five separate locations for five hours. Our region hosted two of the sites, three of the five speakers and over three-quarters of the attendees with 34 individuals. The collaboration featured presenters from law enforcement, NYCAMH, SWCD and PRO-DAIRY. A variety of farms, small and large, as well as a few industry people positively commented on the meeting.



Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

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