



**Cornell University**  
Cooperative Extension  
South Central New York Dairy & Field Crops Team

# South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Program

## 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

The South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Program provides educational opportunities and technical assistance to help the industry with emerging issues, production bottlenecks, and new technologies. We focus on areas that will help improve farm profitability within the region since farm financial success is key to sustaining the dairy and field crops industry. Our program's education helps our industry respond to both internal and external forces that help it keep pace in a rapidly changing world.



Hay  
Workshop



Winter Crop  
Meeting

### Regional Educators:

Janice Degni - Field Crops

Fay Benson - Small Dairy Support

Betsy Hicks - Dairy Production

Betsey Howland - Farm Business Management

### 2016 By the Numbers

- 77 Active participants in farmer-to-farmer learning groups
- 47 Meetings and workshops with 1306 participants
- 55 Active members in farmer-to-farmer groups
- 110 Consultations providing in-depth, personalized troubleshooting, evaluation, information and advice
- 500 Responses to phone & email inquiries
- 20 Events with the Soil Health Trailer with 3106 Participants
- 15 Events to Increase Public Awareness of Agriculture - 2000 Contacts



Fay Benson, Janice Degni, Betsy Hicks

## Governor Cuomo announced the Southern Tier Ag Industry Enhancement Program (STAIEP) on January 19, 2016

The program allocated \$25 million to 11 Southern Tier Counties including Broome, Chemung, Tioga and Tompkins that our team serves.

The intent of the support directly targeted to ag producers was to increase agricultural production on farms and improve profitability, as well as support farmers in better managing and enhancing environmental resources. Farmers could receive up to \$100,000 at a 75% cost share to help with construction, renovation, irrigation, drainage, environmental enhancements, fencing, trellis systems and greenhouses. The project was to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets in coordination with the County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Applicants had to meet a set of 5 criteria to be eligible to apply. Applications had to include 4 elements: 1) Projects must be critical to increasing production, enhancing profitability and or increasing environmental compatibility of the farm operation; 2) Projects must implement a farm business or environmental plan or components of a plan; 3) The applicable section (s) of the farm business or environmental plan should be prepared by a third party and submitted with the application for funding; and 4) The project must be located on land owned and operated by an Eligible Farm Operation. Projects located on rented land are not eligible .

### Marrying DAP to STAIEP

This program was a once in a lifetime opportunity for farmers in these counties. The farms that had been through the Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP\*) program had a leg up. Participating DAP farms had already thought through their long term goals and had an up-to-date business plan in hand that would meet criteria required by STAIEP. Others who were new DAP applicants could apply for a mini-project and receive up to \$1000 to have a consultant prepare farm financial records and benchmark farm financial status. This report would also meet the requirement of farm financials prepared by an independent third party.



Team members worked with dairies that had their DAP developed business plan and encouraged those that didn't to use DAP to pay for the professionals to prepare the required financial overview. In August the farms selected for funding from the first round were announced. All of the farms that had completed the DAP business plan received awards. Other farmers taking advantage of DAP have also applied for the 2nd round of funding.

## Peer to Peer Learning Through Discussion Groups

Farms especially in the southern counties of our region always want to see other facilities and tour farms on a variety of different topics. In addition to this desire, these farms also had a special grant through the Southern Tier Agricultural Industry Enhancement Program that they could submit to for helping pay for costs in improving their operations, including building costs. Specifically, farms wanted to see more calf and heifer facilities as well as farms that have made investments in cow comfort.

Because of these two factors, with the help of funding through Pro-Dairy Discussion Group funding, I set up tours at two farms in the Southern Tier. The first tour featured a calf facility that was built after touring several farms the previous year with the discussion group. Positive pressure ventilation, automatic curtains controlled by a weather station, heated alleys, sloped floors and spacious room for the calves are just a few of the details that were shown and discussed. The farm's veterinarian, Dr. Ben Laudermilch, followed up the tour with his talk on key items when raising calves. He also focused on products that he sees as beneficial and important factors to track while raising calves.

The second tour featured a farm that highlighted the efforts they had made over the past ten years to make cows more comfortable. These included a new parlor, bedded pack hospital area, mattresses in the stall barn and more facility plans for fresh and dry cows. The owner

also spoke on how his profit team helped him make the decisions that have gotten their business to where it is today. Several farms that attended the tours were awarded STAIEP funds and have used them to update facilities, ranging from building new calf and heifer facilities to increasing cow comfort in current facilities. Many participants stated they will use the information they learned by touring these farms to help them make decisions in facility design. A farm in Tioga County used the hospital pack design to do something similar on their own farm. Another farm that finished up a STAIEP grant this fall not only made changes to their barn that cost \$150,000 but also started a profit team to help them make decisions down the road.

