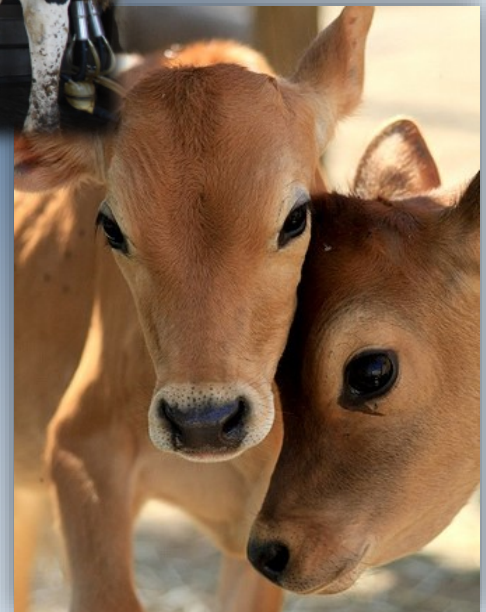


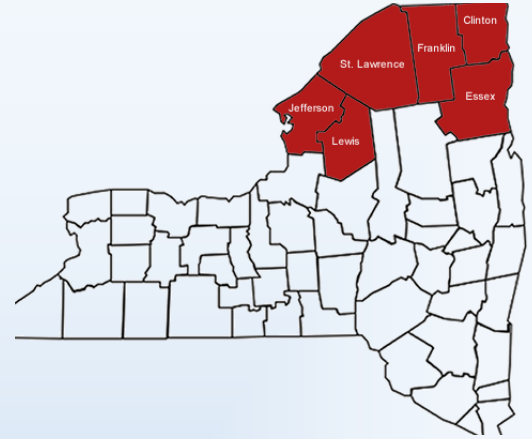
Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
North Country Regional Ag Team

2017 Annual Report



Our Mission

“The North Country 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.”



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Welcome to our 2017 Year in Review Report!



2017 has been a challenging year for our North Country Regional Ag Team and NNY farms and agribusinesses. We have one simple mission - to improve the productivity and viability of agricultural industries, people and communities in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties. We operate with funds from our 6 counties, New York State and the federal government. We work each day to provide technical support for productive, safe, economically and environmentally sustainable ag management practices, and we also assist industry, government, and other agencies to do the same. A difficult business climate, together with an extremely wet and problematic growing season, provided many more opportunities to offer technical assistance and advise on-farm and community decisions this year. Our team of Ag Specialists works closely with county-based extension educators and ag businesses, with Cornell faculty and with extension educators statewide to deliver education, research and consultation on the important issues that impact NNY farms and ag businesses. We focus our efforts on dairy, livestock, field crops and

farm business management needs in the North Country. This year, we worked to help large and small farms of all types to make good business decisions, advised dairy farms on strategies to enhance animal health, monitored field crop pest populations and even connected County water treatment planners with campus weather and climate experts. Our NNY team also works together with 3 Harvest NY Team specialists with 'post-harvest' expertise in dairy processing, livestock and meats processing and agricultural marketing and business development to more fully support agricultural prosperity across the region.

In 2017, our North Country Regional Ag Team...

- ◆ ... brought 20 research projects to the NNY region with external grant funding. Additional research proposals are submitted for 2018.
- ◆ ... reached thousands of program participants through dozens of single- and multi-session educational events. A full slate of educational programs is planned beginning in winter 2018 with Crop Congress, Quality Milk programs, the Hay School/Pasture Workshop series, Calf Management Workshops and many others.
- ◆ ... transitioned to electronic distribution of our monthly North Country Ag Advisor newsletter. Some constituents choose to subscribe to the paper format of the newsletter.

It's important to emphasize that collaborations with County Extension Associations and each of their Ag Educators are a huge part of our accomplishments. Local educators help to direct inquiries, deliver programs, implement research projects and communicate results locally. We thank them profusely for their lynchpin role and for helping us to maximize our impact.

Please read the rest of this report for additional details about a few of the programs and projects we've worked on this year. Please contact me or any of the Specialists for more information on our program.

Thanks!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy".

CCE Ag Staff across the North Country Strategize to Best Serve the Region

The North Country Regional Ag Team was implemented across Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties in 2016. Executive Directors of these six County Extension Associations and Cornell Extension Administration had been working toward this transition for several years. Simultaneous with implementation of the Regional Team, 3 Harvest NY Specialists were assigned to post-harvest agricultural roles within the region. Local Ag Educators in each of the 6 counties continue to serve as key connections to local ag communities and contribute prominently to the effectiveness of our network. With the transition to these 2 new regional teams in NNY, many previously well-established communication routes and program delivery traditions within each county were disrupted and significant effort was needed to replace them with new models, coordinated across 6 separate offices with separate staffs, calendars, and systems. Eight separate workgroups must now function as one integrated unit serving 6 counties. Programmatic efforts must continue to address specific and sometimes unique needs of each county and area, but with a coordinated and efficient effort.



Only a few months into 2016, Regional and County personnel recognized a need for an occasional large group meeting to identify challenges within the region and to formulate solutions. We wanted to improve both our internal and external operations and simultaneously expose our many young educators and specialists to knowledge accumulated by our more experienced members. Our more veteran teammates recalled the 'Cranberry Lake' meetings of the past, where ag educators from several county offices would meet, usually in the summer, for informal meetings to share experiences and to loosely plan out the work ahead. In recent years, the summer meeting had been abandoned in favor of a more formal event to provide education and training. Our current roster of Regional and County staff found this informal meeting appealing, so it was resurrected to again foster collaboration and improvement across our diverse region.

The group first met in July 2016, and addressed a number of topics but made particular progress addressing challenges discovered impeding communication channels. We met again in August of 2017, and worked on an agenda with two large items – customer service and collaboration. The workshop-style meeting yielded a document outlining a consensus approach to providing our 6-county region with excellent customer service and improving our internal collaborations and communications. This document is essentially a 'how-to' guide that our regional and county staff can return to for guidance and direction over time. We've already begun implementing some of our ideas. Across the 6-county group, we share weekly work plans via email each Monday using a new group email address. Similarly, we use this same system for requesting help or for sourcing needed materials or labor for a regional project. We also meet monthly via conference call to provide updates and address needs. Additionally, we discovered a need for a better way to share details about everyone's respective skillsets to help direct inquiries and requests quickly and effectively. Work is underway to address each need that was revealed and to capitalize on our strengthened relationships within the region. We look forward to being able to better serve farmers and other customers and increase the positive impact we have on agriculture in Northern NY.

What's Next for Dairy Farmers?

Extension takes a role in assisting dairy farmers through business transitions.

With the continued depression of milk prices for the third calendar year in a row, dairy farmers feel the pressure to perform. Numerous dairy farms in the region are faced with tougher decisions each day, with a focal decision being: do I continue milking cows? According to the 2012 Ag Census, the average age of principal operators on farms was 58.3 years old. Dairy farmers approaching retirement age during this dairy downturn without a strong next generation on the farm are really thinking critically about their options. With the addition of a Farm Business Management Specialist to the North Country Regional Ag Team, a new role has emerged assisting farms in their decision to transition out of dairy farming.



Kelsey O'Shea, our Regional Farm Business Management Specialist, was approached by multiple dairy farmers in the last twelve months requesting assistance in evaluating and facilitating transition options. One farm in particular has completed their transition after requesting assistance, and is now six months into their new business structure. They were willing to share some of their experiences and insights in the hopes of assuring others that there is a positive way to get through it. When asked when they really decided to sell the cows, they indicated that they started looking into it five years ago for health reasons but didn't seriously act on selling until roughly twelve months ago. They approached Kelsey looking for help creating partial budgets comparing selling the cows that month at auction, versus waiting on a private buyer for 6 months, versus continuing to operate through the low milk prices for a year. They felt that this would help them decide the best choice for them financially to maximize their retirement income. They did not have a next generation ready to take on the farm operation. They reflected on how they were fortunate that they were not financially *forced* to make this decision, frequently saying, "We were lucky!" Because of their foresight and good planning, they were able to transition out of dairying on their own terms and feel good about the prices they received for their cattle.



It is most likely that requests for this type of assistance will continue given that milk price futures remain relatively flat and uncooperative weather has left some farmers with poorer quality/less crops this year to feed animals. While it can be sad to see dairies exit the industry, the individuals that have worked their lifetimes on the farm to provide a sound living also need to secure a good retirement for themselves and their families. They deserve the utmost care and assistance in preserving their equity and retirement with financial evaluations, budgeting, and family planning from numerous consultants and organizations. The task of evaluating how and when to transition a business is extremely daunting and usually takes a team of consultants and professionals over many months advising the farmer. This was the approach that

the farm mentioned here took; they utilized Extension's Regional Business Management Specialist along with other consultants and professionals to plan their exit and next business venture. Kelsey continues to focus on finding ways to support farmers looking to transition to retirement, or a new business model, through facilitating relationships and preparing financial budgets to evaluate options.

The Value of On the Farm Research



Every day farmers are faced with challenges, it may be a pest problem in the corn field, sick calves, milk quality, parasites or the weather. All of these challenges (and more) can impact the productivity and profitability of the operation.

One responsibility of the North Country Regional Ag Team is to conduct on-farm research that will impact that agriculture industries across Northern New York. The goal of these projects is to help farmers overcome challenges presented to them and increase productivity and profitability.

This year team members are working on over 20 research projects. Topic areas include: dairy cattle lameness, calf health, milk quality, development of protocols and employee training, western bean cutworm, field comparisons of crop varieties, use of nematodes for control of corn rootworm, viability of sheep AI, feed efficiency of beef cattle, and the economic impact of the VFD. Team members may be the primary investigator, or a collaborator for a larger project.

All projects have an outreach component, this may include: workshops, farm discussion groups, field days and newsletter articles. Project results will be presented at local workshops across the region, at statewide programs, and some national conferences. The results of the projects help drive future programs.

Funding sources for these projects include the Northern New York Ag. Development Program (NNYADP), New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) and the USDA. Additionally, some of these projects are being done “in-house” with minimal, if any outside funding. Many of these projects are done in collaboration with Cornell faculty, Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators, Miner Institute, faculty from other universities, industry representatives and most importantly, NY State dairy, livestock and crop farmers.



Northern New York Craft Beverage Industry

Harvest NY continues to work with the craft beverage industry across northern NY. Currently there has been an increased interest in starting more breweries, wineries, and distilleries. Each of these potential businesses bring in a new niche to the craft beverage industry in northern NY which will help to strengthen the industry. Harvest NY provides support on development, establishment, and expansion for this potential and current industry. This also includes helping with licensing (state and federal) and regulations. Over the past few months Harvest NY has been working with ten potential and current wineries, one potential brewery, and one potential distillery across northern New York.

Harvest NY is wrapping up the Winery Cost Establishment and Expansion Project and a New York State Hard Cider Supply Chain Analysis. In addition, two short educational videos are currently being create to provide educational information regarding the New York State American Viticultura Area's (AVA) and the Cold Climate Grape/Wine Styles. The Winery Cost Establishment and Expansion workshop will be on November 18th from 10am to 2pm at the CCE St. Lawrence County office. The workshop will also include information regarding vineyard establishment and cost.



Pro-Dairy Webinar: 2017 Forages - Finishing Strong and Managing at Feed-out August 2, 2017

Home-grown forages are the basis of a successful feed ration for dairy cows and each growing season presents unique challenges to achieving desired forage quality. For many farms the challenges presented this past growing season were greater than any in recent memory, starting early in the spring and continuing throughout the season. Understanding the early challenges, recognizing how these would affect the crop for the remainder of the season and the feeding of these forages over the coming year PRO-DAIRY Specialist Kathryn Barrett organized a Webinar to address this topic. The content for the webinar was developed with input from Joe Lawrence (PRO-DAIRY), Ron Kuck (CCE) and Larry Chase (Cornell University) and presented by Lawrence and Kuck.

Gathering resources to provide a timely response to the challenges being faced was facilitated by the depth of information generated through numerous past and on-going forage quality research and extension initiatives lead by Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension. In addition to those that participated in the live broadcast of the webinar, it was recorded and is available on the PRO-DAIRY website. The topic was also picked up by *6 different national and local farm publications. Country Folks East; Hay and Forage Grower; Hoard's Dairyman; Progressive Forage; Dairy Herd Management and AGWeb. Lawrence and Kuck were also interviewed for upcoming article in Progressive Forage on a topic covered in the webinar "What makes the ideal temporary forage storage site?"*

North Country Research Yields Statewide Awareness

With help from Cornell Cooperative Extension research, North Country farmers are adapting to a new and more troublesome pest – the Western Bean Cutworm (WBC). This corn pest has steadily increased in population since it was first discovered in NYS back in 2009. Since that time, the NYS IPM program has implemented a statewide trapping network each season to monitor insect numbers. Traps in St. Lawrence, Franklin, Jefferson and Lewis Counties consistently catch the most WBC moths in the state, so North Country farmers have begun to implement strategies to protect their corn crop. Current management strategies available to control WBC in corn include the use of foliar insecticides or selecting transgenic corn hybrids with specific Bt traits. Foliar insecticide treatments are difficult to apply to tall tasseling corn. Two transgenic Bt traits, Cry1F and Vip3A, are available in various corn hybrid seeds and are labeled to protect corn from WBC.

Because of recent reports of inadequate control of WBC with the Cry1F trait from the Midwest US, the North Country Regional Ag Team was awarded funding from the NNY Ag Development Program to conduct a set of on-farm trials to examine its effectiveness in NNY. The team implemented comparisons of these Bt traits on 4 farms in NNY. The trial was planted on the Murcrest Farm in Jefferson County, on the Conway Farm in Lewis County, and on JPL Farms and Logue Farms in Franklin County. For the first time, incomplete control of WBC with the Cry1F trait was confirmed in NY corn fields in this trial. Efficacy of the Cry1F trait ranged from no control to some suppression of WBC while the Vip3A trait provided full control at the same sites.

This important finding was communicated widely, via written articles and in-person presentations at 2016-17 winter meetings. Mike Hunter, lead investigator on this project, gave oral presentations at 9 field crop meetings to 896 attendees across the New York State. Written articles were published in the North Country Regional Ag Team's "Ag Advisor" newsletter and our press release was picked up by Country Folks and Lancaster Farming newspapers and websites. Dr. Elson Shields, Cornell entomologist and collaborator on the project, also gave reports on these findings to various audiences during this past winter. The project will be repeated, and expanded, in 2017. The North Country Regional Ag Team will place the trial on 4 more NNY farms and Mike Stanyard, NWN CCE Agronomist, will replicate the study in Western NY with funding from NY Corn Growers Association.



Regional Specialist Connect North Country Farms with Hemp

New York became the 19th state to legalize industrial hemp research trials back in 2015. This year, Governor Cuomo has kicked off a new phase of the initiative - connecting New York farmers to that growing market potential, and he's looking to Cornell Cooperative Extension for both research and technical expertise.

NYS Ag and Market's initial pilot program enabled Cornell University and SUNY Morrisville to obtain research permits in 2016. These permits initially restricted hemp cultivation to university research farms and a very small handful of partnered New York farms. This spring, an Industrial Hemp Summit was held at Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, where new plans were announced to foster growth and propel the hemp industry across the state. Mike Hunter, North Country Regional Field Crops Specialist, attended the Hemp Summit and heard researchers, farmers, manufacturers, government officials, and economic development leaders assess and discuss the benefits and address challenges hampering growth of the industry. New programs in 2017 opened the way a bit further to a few more farms to try a few acres of hemp.



The state also announced that a Hemp Technical Team would be established to support optimal growing and processing of industrial hemp. The technical team will consist of three Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and a State Department of Agriculture and Markets liaison.

Mike Hunter and Kitty O'Neil, both North Country Regional Field Crops Specialists, were named to the technical team along with Janice Degni, Field Crops Specialist in Central NY. Christopher Logue is the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation officer tasked with managing the permitting process for potential growers. Already the three field crops specialists have fielded inquiries from interested farmers in the North Country and assembled information to facilitate decision-making and planning for hemp production.

International Dairy Foods Association Food Safety Leadership Award



The 1st quarter of 2017 brought recognition to Cornell's Dairy Food Team, as we received the International Dairy Food Association (IDFA) Inaugural Food Safety Leadership award. IDFA chose our team for this award for our comprehensive approach to support and improve food safety across the dairy industry, and our ability to extend the research conducted directly to the industry.

A video describing our team and programs was created for the award presentation. We were honored to receive recognition and will continue to work with educational institutions, regulatory agencies and dairy processors to best serve the dairy industry. Watch the award video here:

<https://vimeo.com/201985633>.

2017 Cow Comfort Conference

Cow comfort is essential to maximize cow health, production, profitability, and ensure positive consumer perceptions of the dairy industry. Understanding just how big a role facilities play, improving existing facilities, and designing new facilities for the future were the focus of the 2017 Cow Comfort Conference in Syracuse, NY, this March. The conference was organized by the North Country Regional Ag Team, in partnership with the South Central New York Dairy & Field Crops team, PRO-DAIRY, and the Miner Institute. With about 80 people in attendance from across the state, including producers, students, extension employees, and industry professionals, the event was a success. The conference featured locally and internationally known consultants and specialists in cow comfort, along with a producer and industry panel discussion. The 18 sponsors were able to display booths in the exhibit hall, providing more information to producers on specific products, and additional opportunity for networking and discussion.



Dr. Albert De Vries, University of Florida, presented producers with the economics behind stocking density and the financial benefits of heat abatement throughout the entire lactation and dry period. “It is profitable to cool cows everywhere in the country – except maybe the state of Alaska”, De Vries stated. He also stressed the importance of knowing all the factors that can influence the optimal stocking density on each dairy, including that with low milk prices, overcrowding could actually be hurting a lot of dairies. Emily Yeiser Stepp, National Milk Producers Federation, gave an update on Version 3.0 of the National FARM Program, and addressed emerging issues that producers and allied industry should be aware of and should be discussing. Dan McFarland, Penn State Extension, gave recommendations for barn and stall design, and practical on-farm solutions to improve cow comfort in existing facilities. He suggested to producers that if the estimated cost of remodeling exceeds 2/3 to 3/4 of the cost of a new facility, they should seriously consider building new.

“We received a few ideas for renovations and simple adjustments that could make a big impact,” one producer indicated. Others noted they planned to take the information back to their farms and look at everything from increasing ventilation and bedding, to reducing overstocking, looking at stall design and new barn plans, and considering calving blinds. About half of the attendees completed conference evaluations and they were overwhelmingly positive, and provided good direction for next year. The North Country Regional Ag Team plans to make this an annual conference, focusing on different areas that affect cow comfort each year.



The Next Generation:

Specialists collaborate and lend expertise to high school senior Ag Tech Program

The North Country Regional Ag Team extended their impact in NNY by sharing their expertise with students in the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES Agricultural Studies Academy (ASA) during the 2016-17 school year. This was the inaugural year for the ASA, a pilot program launched through the BOCES system for senior high school students seeking a broad introduction to ag business management. The Academy operates in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County and uses their Extension Learning Farm livestock and facilities outside Canton, NY. The program provides students with a daily experience on the Farm exploring agricultural careers and completing core educational requirements through the lens of agriculture. Our Regional Specialists shared time and expertise with the eight students in the program to further develop and expand their knowledge of agriculture.



Kelsey O'Shea, our Ag Business Management Specialist, worked with the ASA students over the course of 2 lectures and 1 workshop to guide them through development and evaluation of their own agricultural business plan. The first lecture presented business plan basics and helped students think critically about what makes a successful business. The concept of diversification and the impacts of national and global economic trends were emphasized. Kelsey found the entire experience to be very rewarding and appreciated engaging with students to expand their perspectives beyond the farms they know personally, to include numerous career options in agriculture outside the traditional role of farmer/farm owner. The students quickly delved in and explored different business options. Three students even changed their primary business choice based on their research after the first lecture. Business plans in hand, the students moved on to budgeting monthly cash flow. At this point, students were able to put their ideas and dreams to the test. One student volunteered to use her business idea as an example for class discussion. As the group evaluated the plan and variable expenses, she realized her business was not profitable. The group also discussed the real cost of living, how to manage economic risk, and

doors out strategies. These exercises brought the financial realities of running an ag business to the forefront. Finally, students presented their plans to a panel of industry professionals for additional input and did very well. Kelsey looks forward to similar interactions in the future and says, "I really believe these exercises in financial planning, critical thinking, and strategic decision-making are very impactful for high school seniors and I look forward to watching this program expand so we can all continue to promote new agriculture endeavors for the next generation in the North Country."

ASA students also regularly participated in management of livestock and forages on the Farm. The Extension Learning Farm has a commercial flock of 75 Dorset ewes, a small flock of layers and a few pigs. Milking goats are also on site from time to time. With the occasional tutelage of Betsy Hodge, Regional and County Livestock Specialist, students were exposed to daily management of each species. Betsy has taught ASA students about forage testing round bales used on the farm, lambing and kidding and even led the group through a necropsy on a large lamb. Betsy occasionally presented lectures but also involved the students in ordinary farm operations. Lambing season included both lectures and hands-on participation. Students also learned meat cutting and sausage-making in the Farm's large commercial kitchen. Students raised broilers in a few batches, learning about feeding, watering, pen cleaning, and the slaughter and processing steps. With instruction from Charlie Hitchman, farm manager, and Kitty O'Neil, Regional Field Crops and Soils Specialist, students were exposed to grazing management, forage harvesting and operation of tractors and forage harvesting equipment on the Farm.

Regional Programing provides Dairy Producers with Latest Data on Reproduction



Dairy farmers produce one of the safest products, unfortunately they continue to be the center of activist attacks and consumer demands. With questions and concerns about the milk supply and animal care, the National Milk Producers Federation has developed (and continues to improve) a program that's goal is to increase consumer confidence as it is focused on animal care practices.

Currently, about 98% of nation's milk supply is coming from dairies that are part of the National FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Milk) Program. The FARM Program is administered by the National Milk Producers Federation and Dairy Management Inc., and is one way the dairy industry is working to promote and ensure healthy and comfortable cows, and safe and wholesome milk. As part of the program, dairies are evaluated in several areas of dairy production including record keeping, employee training, facilities and space, and animal-based measures from calves to adult cows including handling, lameness, and injuries. Although this program has been in place for multiple years, many dairies still aren't sure what the evaluation entails, and are therefore unprepared when an audit takes place.

Mapleview Dairy in Madrid, NY (2300 milking cows) was proactive and asked us to do an evaluation on their dairy. This was beneficial in many ways as it showed them what a real evaluation will look like and it identified areas of improvement with their protocol documentation and record keeping. Multiple visits were made to the farm to conduct an interview with the farm manager, score the animals, facilities, and records, and provide feedback and recommendations.

Jordan Fisher, manager and part-owner of Mapleview Dairy stated, "We asked Kim and Lindsay to work with us on an animal welfare audit to provide an unbiased evaluation of our policies, procedures, and animals. They provided us with a detailed report which we can use to measure progress going forward and make improvements towards our goal of becoming Validus certified. Their expertise in the FARM program and cow comfort was especially valuable in discussing areas where we are strong, like locomotion, as well as areas to improve on, like hock scores and missing protocols."



On January 1, 2017, version 3.0 of the FARM Program will be released which contains some important changes including no longer allowing tail docking and requiring farms to have a documented VCPR (veterinarian client patient relationship). We plan to continue offering and promoting this service to producers, and as more farms are exposed to the program, we anticipate fielding more calls for resources and assistance in the coming months.

Livestock Processing and Marketing

The first quarter of 2017 has been very progressive and informative. In Northern NY, we teamed up with St. Lawrence CCE to bring the lamb processing workshop to the North Country. Participants first watched half a lamb carcass being broke down, and then were able to get hands-on experience breaking the carcass down themselves. Lewis CCE was home to the Charcuterie board workshop for consumers. 25 consumers spent the evening at the BarkEater Craft Brewery, learning about local charcuterie, and local cheeses. Not only were they taste testing local product, consumers learned how to create a board that you eat with your eyes first. These charcuterie board classes are to raise awareness for local meats, cheeses, and craft beverages to the consumer. Right after the New Year, a few days were spent in New York City to travel to numerous Craft Butcheries. These butcheries are buying NY meats to sell downstate. Developing markets is very important, and these craft butcheries are a piece of the puzzle to help our upstate New York Livestock Farms. The collaboration between SUNY Cobleskill and Harvest NY brought two new meat processing workshops for the first quarter of 2017. February 3, our Lamb Processing workshop concluded with participants learning the art of butchering. This lamb class concluded the first section of the Meat 1.0 workshops through the collaboration. March 17, started the second component of the Meat Workshops. At the Beef Cutting and Cooking workshop participants were able to have hands-on experience cutting a beef carcass. Then they were able to go over to the culinary center and learned to cook heart, sweetbread, tongue, and bones. These are all products that are value added, but many producers have a hard time selling these products. This workshop helped the producers market and cook value added products. Harvest NY held their second Meat HACCP course at Cornell University with Penn State Extension on March 28 and 29. This collaboration between two land grant universities is an opportunity for participants in the meat industry to learn from industry leaders and experts, and the HACCP course and instructors are accredited.



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Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NYS College of Human Ecology, and NYS College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Cooperative Extension associates, county governing bodies, and U.S.D.A. cooperating.