



Sullivan County Agriculture and Sustainability Policy Committee

May 1, 2014 AGENDA

1:00 PM

Committee Members:

Cindy Kurpil Gieger, Chair, Cora Edwards, Vice-Chair, Gene Benson, Alan Sorensen, Kitty Vetter

Call to Order

Attendance

Comments: Committee Chair

Reports:

1. Office of Sustainable Energy (OSE) Monthly Report- Carol Roig & Stephen Stuart
2. Agricultural Report- Melinda Meddaugh
3. DPW Update- Kristen Porter

Presentation:

1. CAP Summary Goals

Discussion:

1. Update Farmland Protection Survey
2. Priorities from Ag Advisory Board
3. Youth to Ag Initiative

Resolutions: None

Public Comment

Adjourn

Ag Planner Projects:

Dairy Processing RBEG: Applications due May 2nd. (Give update whether or not applications were received)

Agri-Business Loans: Currently working to promote this County program and reach out to potential applicants. CCE is doing a funding workshop in the fall that will promote this program along with other County, State and Federal programs.

Sullivan County Farmland Protection Planning Grant: We applied for a 6 month extension with NYS Ag & Markets because the FLPP working group is concerned that the review process is going to overlap with their busy season. The original contract is set to expire on August 31st. We anticipate the public hearing to be pushed back to October/November. The Committee is currently working on reviewing the initial survey results, focus group results and the first phase of the goals and strategies for the plan.

Ag District 30 Day Window: Staff from the County and CCE, along with AFLPB Chair visited properties on May 1st. The Farmland Protection Board is meeting on May 5th to review any applications. The AFLP Board will introduce the recommendations, along with a resolution to hold a June 19th Public Hearing at the May 8th Planning Committee meeting. All recommendations from the County need to be sent to NYS Ag & Markets before August 28th.

Ag Advisory Board: The Board met with the Farmland Protection Plan consultant to prioritize immediate actions that they can take. A primary short term project that came out of the meeting was to begin to work on a Farm to School Project. Melinda and Nancy McGraw are going to take the lead on this and look into: what the needs and regulations are for the school and the farmers and an inventory on local farm products for a Farm to School Project. A long term goal is to work on marketing and distribution of red meat for the County.

Upcoming Events/Meetings:

Ag Advisory Board: May 14th at 1PM

Farmland Protection Plan Meeting: May 19th at 730pm

Ag and Farmland Protection Board: May 5th at 8PM at SC Govt Center

CCE REPORT:

Greenhouse/High Tunnel Project- In partnership with Sullivan BOCES and Sullivan Renaissance, CCE is working to construct an educational teaching greenhouse and high tunnel. The greenhouse has been constructed and is holding the Sullivan Renaissance Winter Expo plants until April 23rd. The high Tunnel has arrived. We will plan a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the project once the High Tunnel is up. We are in the processing of developing the educational programs for the Greenhouse/High Tunnel. Programs for this year include: High Tunnel/Greenhouse 101, Soil Rotation, Business Planning & Marketing, Winter Greens. For next year we are working on a number of production classes. SC BOCES are also going to use the Greenhouse/High Tunnel for educational classes. There will also be programs with the CCE Jr. Master Gardeners.

EaT Kitchen (Commercial Kitchen)- partnership between CCE and Liberty CDC. A commercial kitchen and educational facility. The kitchen will be open to value added producers and for educational programming. We anticipate kitchen construction to be completed by the end of May. We are completing our Recipes for Success series-attendees will leave with a Business Plan at the last session.

Dairy Processing- We arranged for Cornell and County officials to visit the Cornell University Yogurt Facility on April 28th to learn about regulations and what it takes to develop a local yogurt facility. CCE will continue to provide support for this and extend our Cornell University resources to the County. We are also currently working to create programs for dairy farmers based off what their needs are.

Fruit Production: Currently organizing a 2 day commercial fruit production workshop, using Cornell University specialists.

Beginner Farmer: The Ag educator has been working with a group of beginner farmers to develop classes for them, such as small business planning/marketing and a roundtable discussion.

Insurance for Farmers: Currently working with CCE Specialists from the Albany area to develop a program for our local farmers on health insurance and the Affordable Care Act.

Upcoming May Classes

1. Hay Harvesting and Pasture Walk- May 3rd from 10-2pm, (Pesticide Credits may be available) Part of a series of classes with CCE Orange and Ulster.
2. Basic Gardening-in partnership with Sullivan Renaissance (May 7th, June 4th)
3. Backyard Poultry- May 13th 530 – 730pm
4. Ongoing Master Gardener Training series

Sullivan County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan
Hospitality and Tourism Focus Group
Thursday, March 27, 2014

Meeting Notes

Participants:

Freda Eisenberg and Jill Weyer, Sullivan County Planning
Melinda Meddaugh, Cornell Cooperative Extension/Sullivan County Planning
Roberta Byron-Lockwood and Herb Clark, Sullivan County Visitors Association (SCVA)
Sonja Hedlund, Apple Pond Farm
Cheyenne Zigmund, Root N Roost Farm
Ken Walter, retired farmer and former USDA inspector
Dawn Ryder, Town of Bethel
Rhonda Owens, Jeff Bank
Gina Molinet, RM Farm
Evadne Giannin, Hospitality Green
Stacy Cohen, Catskill Distilling Co./Dancing Cat Saloon

1. Welcome/Introductions

Icebreaker: Provide a word or phrase you would use to describe Sullivan County agriculture

- Diverse
- Agritourism
- Evolving
- Reserved... few farm identification signs
- Opportunity
- Huge asset
- Open vistas are critical
- Diversity
- It's what makes the county magnificent
- Vital
- Growing
- What people want and will travel to experience

2. Project Overview

3. Roundtable Discussion

How are farms, local food products, and agritourism opportunities in Sullivan County currently marketed? To whom are these efforts targeted, what agencies and organizations are involved, and what media are used? Are these marketing efforts effective?

- Facebook... starting to use Twitter > connections to NYC, blogging
- Ads – multiple listings
- Social media very beneficial – and free
 - E-newsletters, e-mail blasts
- Restaurants contact our farm
- Broadband is a challenge, especially in Bethel
- Website (for our farm) – in English and Japanese
- Ads in local journals
- Memberships in Sullivan County Farm Network, SCVA, and Pure Catskills... Pure Catskills is key
- Word of mouth – referrals between farms, neighbors, B&Bs... cross-promotion
- Reward return visitors with discounts to our farm vacations
- FarmStock promotions
- Annual literature exchange through SCVA
- SCVA promotions
 - Guides list farmers markets, events
 - Local foods – Farm Fresh
 - Concerted effort by SCVA (to promote agriculture) – ag is a strength
 - Weekly e-blasts
 - SCVA goes to trade shows
 - Sends visitors/bloggers/travel writers all over the county
- Hasidic Jews – very large visitor market
 - Advertise in Guide put out by Hasidic community [?]
- Not enough lodging here > Airbnb listings [*note: Airbnb.com is an online marketplace where people can list, find, and book accommodations around the world*]
- Opportunity to market county products in NYC – could have flyers at Greenmarkets
- Pure Catskills membership
- Working group comprised of Sullivan, Delaware, Orange, and Ulster counties in NY and Wayne, Pike, and Monroe counties in PA > Green Tourism Conference, April 7th & 8th – to share information on what we're offering, what we have
- Farmers Markets – social media marketing, distribute flyers (about markets) at big events
 - Manpower is a challenge – a cooperative effort would be effective
 - Example: Lucky Dog took 10 people to NYC to connect with potential buyers there

What challenges or barriers prevent businesses such as restaurants and grocery stores from buying local agricultural products? How should these challenges be addressed?

- Limited quantity of product > higher-priced
- Need a constant supply of product

- It's easier to provide restaurants a list of what's available at the farm
- Idea: could have a weekly e-mail to restaurants
- Distribution is a challenge – we're too busy farming!
- Larger farms may have a larger quantity
- Need collective distribution (food hub)
- Issue for producers of grass-fed beef – must travel 2.5 hours to a slaughterhouse
- Opportunity for more beef production
- Dairy farmers could diversify, grow more crops – the market exists (Lucky Dog model)
- We currently underestimate how much demand is really there
- Need to attract new producers to the County to meet this demand
- Veggie farmers in short supply
- If the market is guaranteed for any product – we'll grow it
- Farmers markets
 - Challenge: need to educate the public about how food is grown, seasonality, and buying locally
 - Break the cycle of convenient food (i.e., Walmart, processed foods)
 - Community gardens are a good way to teach people how food is grown
 - Latino population in Sullivan County – need more Spanish-language marketing

What challenges or barriers prevent institutional buyers such as schools, hospitals, and prisons from buying more local agricultural products? (For example, is convenient access to suppliers an issue? Are there certain products that are not available locally?) How should these challenges be addressed?

- Volume, consistency, price, and paperwork
- Length of growing season
- Opportunity to sell to SUNY Sullivan culinary school – need to reach out to them to encourage use of local produce
- Farm to School program – start with hamburger meat – supply is available, and can be frozen
- Sysco is open to buying locally – should focus on one item you know you can deliver consistently
- Issue of selling to schools, prisons, colleges – requires USDA & NYSDAM inspections, a paper trail, jumping through hoops

[Comments unrelated to the question above:]

- Farmstays – farmers could fix up old farm buildings for extra money
- Dairy farms – succession issue
 - Could lease land to young or beginning farmers
 - Dairies own a lot of property
 - Huge (unfulfilled) cheese demand
 - What about organic dairy? Bethel Creamery is doing this

How do agritourism businesses promote themselves using new technologies (i.e., social media), either individually or as part of a larger effort, like Pure Catskills? What challenges or barriers prevent them from using social media?

[Note: Most of this was already covered under the first question]

- Need a way to aggregate the e-newsletters of individual farms
- How to cross-post/distribute e-blasts at various times of day *[so they are more likely to be seen and read]*
 - Education is needed in social media practices for business trying to do their own social media

Do lodging facilities, restaurants, farms, wineries, breweries, and other attractions in Sullivan County participate in larger cooperative efforts to maximize their marketing dollars? If so, what are those organizations and are they effective?

- Yes, through:
 - SCVA
 - Pure Catskills
 - WJFF radio
 - Local events – donations
 - Farmstay listings
 - Airbnb
 - ‘Woofers’ – farm interns
 - ATTRA – farm internship opportunities
- Recent Syracuse University study – cooperative efforts?
- Need to make tools easy for farmers to use

What opportunities exist in Sullivan County to expand agritourism and the purchase of local food products by the hospitality industry?

- Farmstock program – get more farmers to participate
- Renewable energy tourism: visit sites; more farms are getting into this or at least considering renewable energy
- Delaware River should be leveraged as an asset
- SUNY Sullivan – a leading “green college”
 - Offers local meal for new students
 - Sustainability plan – looking to do more composting, install solar panels
 - Spotty PR, though – it’s hit or miss
 - No central source of information *[about these efforts]*
 - New president > college in transition, but under county funding cap

- (Comment about tax issues in Sullivan County – there’s a lot of tax-exempt property, especially in Fallsburg and Liberty)
- Need more heads in beds!
- SCVA – expanding the farm map; need off-season/fall event
- Need more farmers
 - Plenty of land available – could be marketed
 - Provide foreclosed property to new farmers?? Has been considered in the past
 - For new farmers: Start farming at a community garden, then “graduate” to leased land – need baby steps
 - What about veteran farmers?
- Should tap into growing Pike County, PA market [*note: Pike is one of the fastest growing counties in PA and lies directly across the river*]
- NYC residents don’t mind driving long distances between places
- Need more local meat producers of all types... also, organics, cheese/butter, veggies
- Regulatory issues (can be a barrier): dealing with paper work – EPA, DEC, DEP
- Woodstock/Bethel Woods – need to leverage this tourism attraction more > “FoodStock” event?

**Sullivan County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan
Agricultural Economic Development Focus Group
Thursday, March 27, 2014**

Meeting Notes

Participants:

Freda Eisenberg and Jill Weyer, Sullivan County Planning
Melinda Meddaugh, Cornell Cooperative Extension/Sullivan County Planning
Herb Clark, Sullivan County Visitors Association (SCVA)
Mary Ann Johnson, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation
Beth McKellips, Watershed Agricultural Council/Pure Catskills
Karin Hilgersom, SUNY Sullivan
Heinrich Strauch, Liberty CDC
Denise Frangipane, Sullivan Renaissance
Susan Jaffe, SB Jaffe Consulting/Catskill Mountainkeeper
Dick Riseling, Apple Pond Farm
Jen Flad, Sullivan County IDA

1. Welcome/Introductions

Icebreaker: Provide a word or phrase you would use to describe Sullivan County agriculture

- Opportunity
- Disjointed
- Diverse
- Underserved
- Burgeoning
- Undersupported
- Essential
- On the cusp
- Encouraging
- Underdeveloped opportunities

2. Project Overview

3. Roundtable Discussion

What economic development programs currently support the development and expansion of agriculture and food-related businesses in Sullivan County? How are they marketed to potential applicants, and have these programs been effective? Are additional programs or services needed?

- Agri-Business Revolving Loan Funds
 - 2 in Planning Department, 1 at IDA
 - Sullivan County unique in having ag loan funds
- Catskill Mountainkeeper – Access Capital
 - Ag loan fund for value-added production
 - Has made one loan of \$60,000; \$60,000 remaining
 - Available region-wide (not just Sullivan County)
 - Opportunity to leverage funding by partnering with the County
 - Need to market the availability of loans
 - Business planning process – help farmers access existing resources
- USDA likes partnered funding
- HVADC
 - Provides resources for education & facilities for farmers
 - Business expertise, strategic plans
 - Cost share basis for plan development is 75/25
 - Staff will go to the farm – farmer does not need to go to Hudson office for assistance
 - Most farmers are referred to us by other organizations – it’s rare for us to get a cold call from a farmer
 - Need to keep the seasonal nature of farm cycle in mind in developing a plan – farmers don’t have time during the growing season
 - Some farmers do not follow through – if they can’t take the time to develop a business plan, or even provide us with basic information...
- SBDC is a free resource for business planning, but it’s based in Ulster County and seems to be more vested there (although it covers both Ulster and Sullivan); expertise is not agriculture-specific
- USDA Rural Development – Value-Added Producer Grants & REAP program
- Training – Recipes for Success Program
 - Initiative of Cornell Cooperative Extension and Liberty CDC
 - Business plan writing for food-related businesses
 - Developing a commercial kitchen facility with an educational component (May 2014 completion)... will close the gap between home canning and co-packers
- BOCES/Sullivan Renaissance – year-round tunnel/greenhouse
- SUNY Sullivan – proposed Healthy World Studies and Technology Transfer Institute
 - Applied for SUNY 2020 grant – may know by summer 2014?
 - For healthy food and beverage manufacturing
 - Recipe to Market Kitchen – entrepreneurship
 - Labs for fermentation and manufacturing processing to commercialize
- SUNY Sullivan – START-UP NY application
 - Will be 30-day review within the county before it’s submitted to the state

- Focus will be on food & beverage manufacturing, green building manufacturing, and new nourishment arts program (agriculture/food and beverage/entrepreneurship/culinary arts) – could also tie in with software development and business
- Has identified 18 acres on campus as shovel-ready site for businesses
- With Amy’s Kitchen coming to Orange County, should be reaching out to Revolution Foods of California to locate here
- Center for Discovery – well-financed, training resources for agriculture and renewable energy
- Apple Pond Farm – offering 2-3 acre plots of land with water and soil amendments for trial vegetable farming, and a straw bale house, at no cost
- Watershed Agricultural Council economic development programs
 - Pure Catskills “Buy Local” campaign membership
 - Farm to Market Conference – brought farmers to NYC trade shows
 - Supports Lucky Dog food hub – 40-acre organic farm that sells in NYC; could stop in Sullivan County to pick up other farmers’ goods and transport them to NYC
- Sullivan County IDA Food Hub
 - Still trying to get additional funding
 - Option on Glenwild property
 - IDA to construct the building and lease it to Ginsberg Foods
 - Will truck food from farms to restaurants by freight – “the FedEx of food”
 - Still need to determine scope of operation – feasibility and market analysis needed
 - Could operate as an aggregation point – direct delivery
 - Configure custom packages for restaurants?
- Narrowsburg Elementary School – group working on redeveloping into a food project [?]

Is it a goal to attract new farmers to Sullivan County? If so, are there any specific programs or initiatives aimed at promoting the County to attract new farmers?

- Loss of dairy farmers – a few new farmers
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
 - Resource for new farmers
 - New farmer (orientation) program starting again – new Ag Educator
 - Webinars
 - Informal mentoring
- SUNY Sullivan – experimental hops program; explosion of distilleries and breweries in the area
- “Is it a goal...?”
 - Realtors missing from the discussion (though invited to participate)
 - Need to make sure they understand the value of agriculture and keeping farms in farming
 - They don’t know how to market Sullivan County as a place to farm
 - Land prices here are lower than in Ulster and Orange, but still not affordable [*note: no consensus on this issue*]
 - No community chest of money to protect farmland that’s leased for agriculture
 - County must decide

- Need outreach to large landowners about the benefits of making their land available for farming
- No formal outreach or specific programs to attract farmers
- Catskill Farmlink – land-finding resource – undersubscribed
- Mentoring programs critical
- Leasing of rollovers [?]
- Hoop house program – affordable; way to extend growing season
- Catskill CRAFT program
- Connect people with land to “donate” 5-10 acres for farming
- We don’t have the soils for cropland – more livestock production is happening

What challenges or barriers prevent businesses such as restaurants and grocery stores, and institutions such as schools and hospitals, from buying local agricultural products? How should these challenges be addressed?

- All very different buyers – need to look at these separately
- Restaurants
 - Farmers can sell to locally-oriented restaurants
 - Need to match price to market
 - Someone needs to help make the connection (between the farm and the business)
 - Need to help restaurant owners understand seasonality & see the value
 - USDA certifications needed – definitely for grocery stores, preferred but not necessary for restaurants
- Institutions
 - Fighting government contracts
 - School food service budgets more flexible
 - Slow growing Farm to School activity – Sullivan West is very active
 - Volume and seasonality is the challenge – can do root vegetables
 - Also consistency of product
- Food Metrics Bill – requires state agencies to purchase NYS food products
- FINYS – American Farmland Trust initiative – received grant to work with 4 SUNY schools to increase purchasing of local foods
- 8 school districts & BOCES in Sullivan County – interest and willingness shown, but food service directors don’t have time to shop around; need coordination
- SUNY Sullivan – built local buying into its contract with Chartwells
- Creating Edible Gardens at schools to educate, start the conversation, even grow food for the school cafeteria... spearheaded by public health nurses
- Farm Catskills (not working in Sullivan) [?]
 - Opportunity for closer links to be made, needs facilitation
- Red Barn produce-distribution – working in other areas
- Need to make capital available to farmers to scale up

- Procurement model: Poughkeepsie school district included geographic preference in the bidding process – 10% premium given for local products

To what extent have Sullivan County farmers been able to capitalize on niche market opportunities (e.g., kosher products) or develop value-added products? What strategies are needed to help farmers take advantage of these opportunities?

- One kosher milk business that's growing – may do yogurt
- One business in the process of developing value-added production for meat/poultry
- Rick Bishop – high-end vegetables market
- Tonjes cheese – successful, but not interested in getting bigger
- Not all farmers want to grow, but business models could be replicated
- Untapped opportunities
 - Lack of distribution – requires diversity and flexibility
 - Growing interest in hops and distillery businesses – need capital and equipment
 - Malt/barley easier to grow here, and needed more than hops; malt houses outside the county [*Ulster and Columbia County - see <http://hudsonwhiskey.com>*]
 - Do feasibility study first – need to better understand market opportunities, don't just jump on the bandwagon
 - Value added products need sources – e.g., Amy's Kitchen
 - Farmers Market Association requiring value-added vendors to source locally

What strategies are needed to connect food processing companies, production facilities, and wholesalers with local farmers and food products in Sullivan County?

- SUNY Sullivan – opportunities for food processing on campus; with Amy's Kitchen coming to Orange County, may encourage other organic food companies to come
- Should regionalize efforts (HVADC)
- Entrepreneurial scale in Sullivan County: community kitchen, small caterers, culinary program > opportunity to create entrepreneurial environment for small-scale processing
- Farm to Table Co-Packers – does buy local for their value-added product (tomato sauce)
- (Selling to) wholesale market is a challenge – lower price paid
- NYC market pays a high premium – some producers won't sell locally. Serving *both* markets may be best.
- Hudson Valley Bounty – connecting suppliers with buyers
- Opportunities may vary by the scale and typology of the farm
- Red Meat Facility
 - Liberty – in architectural design process (shell & core)
 - Will issue bid documents for construction, then RFP for operator
 - Facility will be owned by the IDA and leased to an operator
 - Capacity of 1,250 animals per year (based on 1,000-lb. animal) – average 5 per day
 - Operator will determine whether cut and wrap or other services will be offered

What other strategies should be used to promote Sullivan County farms and increase their profitability? Are you aware of any “best practices” in agricultural economic development that should be considered in Sullivan County?

- “Greening Sullivan” column in *Sullivan County Democrat* – community benefit side of economic development projects > we need a robust community benefit strategy for agriculture
 - Example of requiring a company that receives incentives to offer jobs to long-term unemployed
- Create and adopt Agricultural Statement to keep County Legislature on task
- Should tie agricultural initiatives to the health of our county – use agriculture to improve our health status
- Sullivan West received a PEP grant to tie together physical activity and health food
 - How can we get the Monticello district to use the Sullivan West model? Different demographic
- Need a central organization to meet in more formalized way (to bring groups together)

Other strategies identified from Committee Notes and Interviews:

Identify needs coincident to the Red Meat facility such as hanging facility, smoking, branding, etc

Food Hub – work with IDA to outreach with potential farmers

A ‘come farm with us’ marketing program to attract new farmers to county

Farm link program to link farmers with farmland owners

New farmer recruitment and training

Provide technical assistance for value added products

Policies to protect water quality

Business planning for farmers

Marketing training for farmers

Ombudsman for farmers

Provide list of efforts, resources, funding opportunities that are available

Simplify loan fund programs and terms and re-tool descriptions to be more farmer friendly and enhance use of this funding source; concentrate on recruiting fruit and vegetable farms as this is where the market is

Promote hoop houses and more vegetable farming – needs aggressive marketing to recruit more farmers. Link to future need to supply food hub.

Promote renewable energy (Solarize Sullivan) to help farmers decrease costs.

Establish a mentoring program.

Develop community gardens to build support for agriculture.

Initiate farm to school project

Outreach to farmland owners to turn fallow lands back into production

County to be more of an advocate for agriculture; more emphasis of ag with IDA and partnership

Change attitudes as the negativity is holding the county back

Promote lodging and agri-tourism as a primary area of opportunity

Small dairy processing facility

Kosher processing

Identify and implement new tax abatement or incentive programs

Re-write county open space plan strategies to be action oriented and implement

Sullivan County Farmers' Focus Group

The Sullivan County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan committee held a farmers' focus group session on March 20, 2014. Approximately 40 county farmers participated in the event, held at the Cornell Cooperative Extension office on Ferndale-Loomis Road, Liberty.

Vision/Goals

During the session, participants were asked to develop a list of words or phrases that could be used to describe a future state of agriculture in Sullivan County. These phrases will be used to further develop a vision statement for the plan, describing what agriculture in Sullivan County will look like 10 to 20 years from now.

- Financially healthy
- Agriculture is a priority
- Diverse
- Available for the future
- Open communication
- Transparency
- Stability
- Educated community
- Valued by the community
- Opportunities for young farmers
- Even playing field with big agri-business
- Emphasis on local products staying local
- Positive image of agriculture

Issues

Participants were first asked about the issues facing farmers and agriculture in Sullivan County. The list was developed in an open forum, with everyone present given an opportunity to speak. At the end of the session, participants were given four stickers, and asked to vote for the issue most important to them, or viewed as most important to the county. The issues are listed here, with the number of 'votes' received preceding each issue identified. Bolded issues are those that received at least one vote.

15 - Property taxes

10 - Need more support from the county

10 - Not enough help for new/young farmers

7 - Lack of leadership – no cheerleader

7 - Lack of confidence in government officials

6 – Lack of affordable farmland

5 - Finances/capital for young farmers

4 - Food Safety Act requirements – very restrictive

3 - Little clout with government officials

2 - Agricultural assessments

2 - Productive land is going fallow, needs to be reuse of these lands

2 - Nuisance wildlife – deer, eagles, coyotes

2 - Lack of funding mechanisms for the projects we want

1 - Crop insurance requirements

1 – Lack of marketing

1 - Transition from dairy to another ag use

Reliance on leased land

Lack of respect/knowledge of farmers needs, lack of political clout, lack of hope and confidence

The big advertisers focus on products, not the process – contributes to lack of knowledge about farms

Farmers are too busy to act on the situation

Need more networking

Need more accessibility to website to sell and market products

Regulations too restrictive

Transition to value-added is difficult

Eagle's nest restrictions

Animal activists

Non-farmer conflicts

Little use of value-added operations

Lack of clear definition of farmland

Strategies

After the issues were identified, participants were asked to discuss possible solutions to these issues. Using the same open forum, strategies to address the issues were identified, listed, and voted on. The strategies are listed here, with the number of 'votes' received preceding each strategy identified. Bolded strategies are those that received at least one vote.

22 - Marketing consultant/advisor - help with marketing, Identifying niche markets; branding

13 - Startup money for young farmers

9 - Additional property tax relief

7 - Financial advisor for farmers

7 - Need a leader/driving force at the county – education and leadership

5 - Advertisements that promote farm operations, not just products

4 - County agricultural website

4 - Rotating part-time labor force program

3 - Take advantage of the urban market for hay

3 - Education in agriculture/training at SUNY Sullivan Community College – work with new products and entrepreneurs; more communication between college and farmers

3 - Innovative funding mechanisms – other than grant applications

2 - Link farmers to unused land

1 - Assistance for value-added equipment

1 - Facilitate networking opportunities

1 - Bring in experts and businesses in value-added

1 - Collective New York City Green Markets program

Artisanal cheese processing

Additional processing facilities

Form a communications channel with the local college

Identify niche markets that are available and how farmers can meet that niche

Red Meat facility – need to include or at least evaluate need for butchering, marketing, packaging