

To: Garry Douglas/Anthony Collins, NCREDC Co-Chairs
From North Country Regional Economic Development Council - Agriculture Committee

Our committee has met twice this year so far and emailed several times to provide a timely report for the Council. We have divided our report into four sections: the Committee's structural needs, a review of NCREDC projects, other grants for agriculture, and recommendations for the 2014 agricultural plan.

- 1) **NCREDC Agricultural Advisory Committee Structure** –We have had 3 resignations from the Agricultural Advisory Committee: Bob Laisdell – feed manufacturer; Ron Davis – McCadam Cheese retired, but Tom Herbick from McCadam remains on the committee; and Jon Greenwood, dairy farmer and link to the Council. We feel it is crucial to replace Jon Greenwood with another farmer representative that will make an effort to attend our meeting and bring our projects forward to the council.
 - a. Current Agriculture committee: Michele Ledoux – CCE Lewis, Bernadette Logozar – CCE Franklin, Anita Deming – CCE Essex, Kevin Jordan – CCE Jefferson, Dawn Howard SWCD St. Lawrence, Christine Watkins SWCD Jefferson, John Bartow – Tug Hill Commission, Mike Keichle – dairy farmer, Robert Andrews – dairy farmer, Cynthia Johnston – direct market farmer, Jay Matteson – Jefferson Co Ag. Development Agency, David Tomberlin – Well Dressed Foods owner/marketer, and Katie Ballard – Miner Institute research.
 - b. We have suggestions for the committee and/or council: St. Lawrence Co: Mark Akins, Sandy Stauffer, Louanne King or Dave Fisher , Jefferson Co - Phil Randazzle - Coyote Moon Vineyard, Clinton Co. Joe Giroux – County Treasurer, farmer and Co-chair of NNY Agricultural Development Program, Tom Everett – apple farmer, , Bill Zweigbaum – First Pioneer Farm Credit, or Franklin Co - Randy Ooms Farm Bureau VP.

We want to emphasize the importance of having a farmer representative on the Council. Agriculture is very important to the economy of Northern NY. Our issues are very different from industrial economic development. We manage much of the regional landscape. In NYS, no area is more economically dependent on agriculture and more challenged in terms of the profitability and long term vitality of its farm businesses than the North Country. These challenges are exacerbated by factors that include, but are not limited to, the regions climatic constraints, its soil resources, and its distance from markets.

- i. There were 4,268 farms in NNY in 2007 at the last agricultural census and nearly \$600 million of sales from 1.16 million acres
- ii. 1,050 are dairy farms selling \$438 million from 123,000 cows.
- iii. 619 are direct market farms selling \$4.16 million

2) **NCREDC Project review**

- a. 2011 USDA Poultry Processing – Renee Smith of North Country Pastured has picked up the processing unit. The grand opening was held with Assemblywomen Addie Russell, Tony Collins, Patrick Kelly SLC IDA and David Button Town of Canton Supervisor. present. They are looking to process people's chicken and we are putting together a market, but we aren't able to market all the poultry.

- b. 2012 North Country Food Hub – Renee Smith @\$350,000 funded from the \$1.2 million request – United Helpers, and Sparx Corporation along with North Country Pastured has formed the North Country Regional Food Hub. The contract is signed.
- c.
- d. 2012 Adirondack Meat Co is in construction. The foundation is poured, connections made and the Morton Building is delivered. They report being on track to start in October. They are hosting an open house on August 28.
- e. 2012 Kraft Fill Line done and working
- f. 2012 Cape Vincent willow harvester is in process of buying
- g. 2012 Development Authority of the North Country revolving loan fund for value added processing was not funded. They are proposing to reapply and to cover all 7 counties this time.

3) Agricultural projects funded by others

- a. Private funding:
 - i. Jordan Brandt of Lewis Red Barn Meats new USDA certified meat slaughter house outside of Croghan, was privately funded.
 - ii. Smith Farms in Ogdensburg set up their own slaughterhouse for 20,000 poultry.
- b. Lake Champlain Basin Program
 - i. Purchased a No-Till seeder and a Broadcast seeder for farmers to plant cover crops that reduce erosion and nitrogen losses from fields over the winter.
 - ii. Helicopter seeding project to aerial seed cover crops on over 2000 acres before the corn is harvested.
 - iii. Regional agricultural conservation specialist Myra Lawyer was hired to help farmers implement their Agriculturalw environmental Management plans.
- c. The Adirondack North Country Association secured a Grazing Lands Project and hired Josh Bakelaar to do management intensive grazing plans and soil health projects in their 14 county region.
- d. Special County Funding
 - i. The Jefferson County legislature funds the Jefferson County Agricultural Development Council with Jay Matteson to serve as a resource to help develop financial and marketing programs and acts as a spokesperson for agriculture.
 - ii. Franklin County funded an Agritourism Project from county dollars to enhance agriculture and tourism for Bernadette Logozar.
 - iii. Essex County continues to fund the Adirondack Harvest program to help farmers sell their products locally. Their goal is to develop a picturesque and productive working landscape connecting local farmers to their communities and regional markets. Their goals are to increase opportunities for profitable, sustainable production and sale of high quality food and agricultural products; and to expand consumer choices for locally produced healthy food.

- e. The Development Authority of the North Country – has a low interest revolving loan fund for farmers to buy needed resources such as tile drainage, and maple evaporators
- f. NYS Agriculture and Markets funded two specialty crop promotions to Adirondack Harvest and Garden Share. They created local agricultural brands for the farmers in their region to help differentiate their products and promote to local buyers.
- g. Northern NY Agricultural Development Project received \$500,000 for research and demonstration projects on farms and to help support the Cornell Willsboro, the Cornell Uihlein Maple and the Cornell Uihlein Potato Research Stations. Over 20 research and demonstration projects were funding in 2013.
- h. USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture funded educational program for high tunnel producers, and a poultry hoop house education program. As a separate project they also funded a dozen new high tunnels for farmers in the North Country Region.
- i. USDA Risk Management
 - i. Education program on crop insurance to help farmers in the event of disastrous weather.
 - ii. 3 Poultry Hoop Houses for loan to farmers interested in raising chickens from USDA Risk Management.
- j. USDA Natural Resource projects 1.1 million for St. Lawrence,
 - i. Sara Fitzwater says that there are 44 contract for \$973,900 on 4,850 acres in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, and St. Lawrence Counties
 - ii. They fund projects for: Winter Cover Cropping, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning, Forest Management and Stand Improvement, Agricultural Energy Management, Critical Area Plantings, Seasonal High Tunnels, Early Successional and Upland Wildlife Habitat Development, Obstruction Removal from Flooding, Manure Storage Facilities, Roof Runoff Management, Mulching of Road Side Ditches, Underground Outlets and Subsurface Drainage,
- k. USDA Value Added Grant for Essex Pallet and Pellet to make wood and/or grass pellets
- l. USDA - CCE Jefferson received \$180,000 from 3 separate USDA programs covering Lewis & Jefferson Counties to promote local foods, address food deserts and increase value added agricultural activities.
- m. The Open Space Institute is purchasing farmland and offering lease to buy contracts for new farmers with enough experience to operate a farm. They have funded six new operations in Essex County.
- n. The Western NY Regional Economic Development Council supported 5 Northern NY farm with “cool bots” for refrigeration of direct market produce, eggs and milk products. These grants are under \$5,000 each.

4) Recommendations

We feel it is important for farmers to expand production in order to remain competitive, and sustainable. We also would like to see more local and regional sales to increase food security in Northern NY and to connect our residents to their agricultural neighbors. We especially want

to increase milk production and the profitability of dairy farms in the North Country as this is the largest segment of agriculture and most suited to our climate and soil resources. This is also in support of the Governor Cuomo's goals of increasing milk production in NYS by 20%.

To accomplish this goal, we need to promote practices that would lead to improved profitability through better animal nutrition management, animal comfort, crop production and business planning by:

1. Expanding availability of technical assistance to help implement new technology and profitable systems.
2. Providing low interest loans or support for tile drainage, manure management systems, energy efficiency – ex LED lighting, and other investments that are needed for expansion or environmental protection
3. Assisting farmers in implementing Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation Plans to protect the environment as they expand
4. Developing business plans for farmers to evaluate their potential for growth
5. Continues research and demonstration for dairy, crops, business management, marketing, livestock, horticulture, and maple/forestry systems tailored for the needs of Northern NY

In addition to expansion of product we need more efficient marketing of local products both regionally and locally. We recommend studying the impediments to marketing locally and long distance and developing strategies to address these impediments. This could include food hubs or places where local food is marketed cooperatively in a community. This committee recommends that an organized evaluation of current agricultural marketing resources, identification of needs, and considerations for locating food hubs be developed. This would give us a set of Northern NY parameters upon which to make decisions for future investment.

We recommend support for processing, marketing and delivery of local products. This includes value added businesses such as community kitchens, signage for farms, and guides to help consumers find local products.

The agribusiness infrastructure is crucial to the viability of farms in Northern NY. As the farms grow agribusiness also needs to expand. They have heavy trucks, energy needs, and modernization requirements that need investments to stay competitive. Agribusiness also provides the supply chain resources to deliver, process, and market our products. There are a variety of supply chain systems, each with their own needs. We need to be sure that the large and small are able to grow. Agribusiness processes food to help make them more shelf stable and to add the ability to eat local food year round.

There are several agricultural related infrastructure investments that are needed in rural Northern NY that are helpful for other industries as well. We support: broad band access, anaerobic digesters for communities with compost to spread on farmland and create electricity, road and bridge maintenance for heavy trucks such as milk trucks, 3 phase power, natural gas pipe connections for agricultural businesses, and cell service available to rural area including farms.

Specific projects that are supported by the committee are:

1. Development Authority of North Country proposal to capitalize a seven-county revolving loan fund targeting value-added agricultural activities. We would also like

similar funding for tile drainage, manure management systems, solar panels, manure digesters, and energy conservation equipment such as LED lighting.

2. Conservation Easements to ensure agriculture continues on high value soils and around sensitive business such as Army Bases (ACUB program) and others
3. Wine Trail Signage project to identify local wineries and vineyards. This is a new agricultural industry that needs promotion. The wine industry is especially beneficial to the tourist industry as well. Enophiles love to try the terroir of a local region and special tastes of the local varieties.
4. There are several proposals for partial food hub systems.
 - a. This committee recommends that an organized evaluation of what is available, what is needed and where food hubs should be located be done. This would give us a set of NNY parameters upon which to make decisions for investment. We would be studying the impediments to marketing locally and long distance and developing strategies to address these impediments.
 - b. Mobile markets or expanding Farmers' Markets to take fresh foods to "food deserts," senior centers, and other critical locations.
 - c. 20-C kitchens -to help add value through processing
 - i. Develop teaching kitchens to help value added processors and farmers learn how to create and produce their own recipes. – Paul Smiths VIC center.
 - ii. Whallonsburg co-packer kitchen to process/add value to Adirondack/Champlain Valley products. They need more processing equipment.
 - iii. The Extension Learning Farm wants to set up a 20 C kitchen for farmers or processors to use to start their value added business.
 - iv. Hohmeyers of Lake Clear Lodge would like have a co-packing food store in addition to the restaurant.
 - b. Northern Adirondack Sheep farmer's cooperative marketing project to supply Plattsburgh, Lake Placid and the Healthy Living Store in Burlington.
 - c. Work with Wholeshare, Regional Access and others to develop markets and delivery systems across the region and the state.