



AEM Tier I Agriculture Interest Links

Please use this document to provide information to farmers they requested by using the New York State Agriculture Assessment section on the Tier I worksheet.

Agricultural Tax Relief – NYS has programs that can help reduce taxes for agricultural operations, including, but not limited to: Real Property Tax, School Tax, Farm Building Exemptions and Sales Tax. Information on agricultural tax exemptions and reductions can be obtained from the NYS Office of Real Property Services <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/assessor/valuation/agriculture/index.htm> and the Department of Agriculture and Markets, Division of Agricultural Protection <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/APHome.html>. The New York Beginning Farmer Project sponsored by Cornell University has a ‘Guide to Farming in NYS’ PDF available online at <http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pdfs/Guide/Guide%20to%20Farming%20in%20NY%20Revised%2012-21-07.pdf>, which can help answer questions regarding Agricultural Tax.

Agri-Tourism - As agri-tourism grows in popularity, so do the opportunities to get involved and learn more. The Department of Agriculture and Markets has a searchable online Guide to Farm Fresh Products, statewide directory of farmers markets, NYS harvest calendar, and information on the NYS Fair and County Fairs. In addition, there is also information on funding opportunities, all of which are posted on the Department website www.agmkt.state.ny.us. Other sources of information include the Cornell Small Farms Program, www.smallfarms.cornell.edu, and New York State Tourism www.iloveny.com/SeeDoInNY/Agriculture.aspx. Marketing information, including results from an agri-tourism marketing survey conducted by Cornell University and NY Seagrant such as agri-tourism fact sheets can be found on the following website http://media.cce.cornell.edu/hosts/agfoodcommunity/afs_temp3.cfm?topicID=270.

Air Quality – Agriculture can potentially cause a number of concerns related to air quality. Some of the more common ones in New York are odor issues, particulate matter from wind erosion, chemical drift and greenhouse gas emissions. There is a number of conservation practices that can help reduce and eliminate air quality concerns. They range from methane digesters to cover cropping. Information can be found in your local NRCS field office <http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/> or the Ag. BMP Catalog. The NRCS has also established a national task force to address air quality issues www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov. Additional information can be found with NYS Energy Research and Development Authority <http://www.nyserda.org/default.asp> and the US Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/>.

Biofuels – Biofuels are fuels produced from biomass and include biodiesel, ethanol and wood-based fuel products. In an effort to decrease the nation’s dependency on fossil fuels, the production of biofuels has grown in popularity. Information on biofuels is available from the Renewable Fuels Association at <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/> and from the National Biodiesel Board at www.biodiesel.org or by contacting the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Ron Rausch 518-457-2771. For local information, you may want to try contacting your regional Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) <http://www.rcdnet.org/about.php>.

Biosecurity – The transference of pests and disease on and off of farms can have devastating effects on both human health and herd health. The following links will provide more information on how to best protect farms, animals, crops and humans:

- NYS Cattle Health Assurance Program at www.nyschp.vet.cornell.edu/
- NYS Horse Health Assurance Program at www.agmkt.state.ny.us/NYSHHAP/horsehealth.html



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- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Division of Plant Industry
www.agmkt.state.ny.us/PI/PIHome.html
- USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service
www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/plantbiosecuritynri.cfm

Conservation Easements – A conservation easement is a legal agreement voluntarily entered into by a property owner and conservation organization which will restrict the use or development of the land in order to protect its conservation value. Conservation easements may be for a predetermined number of years or they may be permanent. Several Farm Bill programs include conservation easements (such as Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Wetland Restoration Program and the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program) and information can be obtained from your NRCS field office <http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/>, some County-based land trusts, or from the Farm Service Agency <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=fsahome&subject=landing&topic=landing>. The US Fish and Wildlife Service <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pfw/r6pfw8b.htm> also offer conservation easements.

Energy Conservation/ Generation – Energy costs are a large part of the operating expense for most farm operations. Reducing these costs or even generating on-farm energy is an appealing prospect to most farmers. Over the past decade, several large animal operations have installed methane digesters to help manage manure, reduce odors and generate their own electricity. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority <http://www.nyserda.org/default.asp> offers a variety of incentives, grants and loans to agricultural operations to address energy on-farm energy conservation and generation. The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy www.aceee.org also has information related to agriculture.

Environmental Management Systems (EMS) – The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) <http://www.iso.org/iso/home.htm> recognizes the Environmental Management Systems (14001) as a certification for agricultural operations to demonstrate that they are in compliance with environmental policies. An EMS focuses on management practices that the operation employs, rather than individual activities. This allows the farm manager the flexibility to make adjustments to farming activities, without compromising its overall goal for environmental management. In New York State, the AEM program can be used to help farms obtain an ISO 14001 certification. An EMS does not take the place or supersede any State or Federal regulatory program. It is a voluntary approach for farmers to document themselves as environmental stewards. For more information, visit the EPA website at www.epa.gov/agriculture/tems.html. Additional publications about EMS's are also available for purchase at www.mwphq.org.

Farmland Protection – Each year New York State continues to lose more of its agricultural resource base to farmland conversion. Prime agricultural soils are also prime soil for housing and commercial development. Both from an environmental and economic standpoint, it is important that these lands be kept in agriculture and preserved for generations to come. To encourage farmers to preserve their prime farmland, the NRCS offers the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/>. In addition, the State also offers a Farmland Protection Program <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/ap/agsservices/farmprotect.html> both of which purchase development rights. More information and publications can be obtained from American Farmland Trust at www.farmland.org, and the Land Trust Alliance <http://www.lta.org/>.



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Feed Management – The balance between nutrients imported and exported from the farm is a key to reducing environmental risk and maintaining the economic viability of a farm. Careful feed management can reduce the amounts of accumulated nutrients in farm fields while still maintaining proper herd diet. To learn more about feed management contact Cornell PRO – DAIRY at www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy or Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County. http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/delaware/index.php?cat_id=122&nav_tree=59,122&content_id=536.

Fisheries Habitat Management – Protecting the water quality of New York’s freshwater and marine habitats is a primary goal of the Agricultural Environmental Management Program <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/soilwater/AEM/index.html>. Runoff from farms can have negative impacts on fish populations, but with careful management farms can also play an important role of protecting these habitats. The NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/SoilWater/index.html> and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>, both offer cost-share programs aimed at improving and protecting surface waters. In addition, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation <http://www.dec.ny.gov/> and the US Fish and Wildlife Service <http://www.fws.gov/fishing/> also have programs to assist landowners in protecting and creating fisheries habitats, as do organizations such as Trout Unlimited <http://www.tu.org/site/c.kkLRJ7MSKtH/b.3022897/k.BF82/Home.htm>.

Forest Management/ Timber Harvest – Forest maintenance and proper timber harvesting provide numerous natural resource benefits, including reduced wind and soil erosion, enhanced water quality, wildlife habitat, as well as helping to assure a reliable future supply of timber. At the same time, timber harvesting can also provide additional income to a farm. The Agro-forestry Resource Center in Greene County can provide a wealth of information for landowners, including a monthly fact sheet <http://arc.cce.cornell.edu/>. For landowners with less than 1,000 acres of forestland, the Forestland Enhancement Program (FLEP) <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flep.shtml> can offer cost-share assistance for landowners wanting to maintain sustainable forests. More information about the FLEP and other forestry programs can be found on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation website at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4972.html.

Grasslands Farming – A well managed pasture can provide cost effective, high quality feed for livestock operations. However, factors such as compaction, over-grazing, weed management and manure loading all have an impact on the feed quality and the environment. To learn more about grazing systems and pasture management, go to the Graze New York website at www.grazeny.com. Graze NY is sponsored by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The website has a number of valuable links and publications.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) – IPM balances environmental, economic and human health issues in pest management decision-making. The goal is to insure high-quality agricultural products while minimizing the adverse impacts on the environment by employing pest monitoring techniques to reduce the amounts of pesticides used. For more information on IPM, visit the Cornell IPM website at www.nysipm.cornell.edu.

Irrigation Management – Irrigation management can be an important factor in crop production. However, to avoid potential negative impacts to surface and groundwater resources, irrigated water must be carefully balanced to meet plant needs while avoiding runoff and groundwater leaching. Irrigation Water Management Systems are eligible for cost-share under the NYS Agricultural NPS Control Grants <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/SoilWater/aem/nonpoint.html> and the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives



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Program (EQIP) <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP/>. In addition, more information may be found on the Irrigation Water Management Society website at www.iwms.org.

Manure Treatment Options – Manure management can be a complex issue. Excess nutrients or odor concerns can sometimes be a cause for concern on and off the farm. Rather than directly applying manure to the land, it is sometimes in the farms best interest to use a manure treatment practice prior to application. Manure treatment options range from anaerobic digestion to composting. Treatment systems vary greatly in complexity and cost. To learn more about treatment options, visit the Cornell Manure Management website at www.manuremanagement.cornell.edu. This website contains a number of articles and fact sheets to help understand the pros and cons of manure treatment options. Depending on the type of treatment option that is selected, cost-share assistance may be available to help fund.

Neighbor – Farm Relations – The recent trend in housing has seen more people willing to commute long distances in order to live in the country. This influx of non-farm residents in rural areas has caused an increase in complaints about agricultural operations. While some complaints may be legitimate, some stem from a lack of understanding about agriculture. Likewise, farmers today have more neighbors than ever, and yet know fewer of them. It is important that both farmers and non-farmers learn to respect each other and they should know that there are resources to help work through some of these issues. Cornell Cooperative Extension PRO-DAIRY has posted a number of articles on neighbor relations on their website at www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/index.html. In addition, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Division of Farmland Protection (518-457-7076) also offer assistance in neighbor disputes. The NYS Agriculture Mediation Program also offers dispute resolution assistance for all agriculturally related issues www.nysdra.org/adr/adr_nysamp.html.

Nuisance Wildlife Control – Farmers work hard to produce high quality crops for market and for livestock feed and it is no surprise that wildlife have also appreciated these efforts. While most farmers anticipate some crop loss to wildlife, these losses can easily escalate and the wildlife is then considered a nuisance. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has a number of species specific fact sheets that help landowners understand the feeding habits of common species and how to prevent them from becoming a nuisance. Their website also contains information on how to control or remove nuisance wildlife. For more information, go to www.dec.state.ny.us/animals/265.html or the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service website http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/.

Organic Farming – Consumer awareness to how foods are produced has created enhanced opportunities for organic farming. Organic farming provides opportunities to lower operating costs while getting a premium return on investments. Organic dairy farming has now become one of the fastest growing agricultural sectors in New York State. However, in order for farmers to market their products as organic, they must become certified. For more information on organic certification and transitioning to organic farming, visit the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets website at www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/Organic/OrganicFarmingInformation.html. This new website will help answer questions and direct both farmers and consumers to more information. The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York will also be helpful <http://nofany.org/index.html>.

Pollution Credit Trading – Pollution Credit Trading is one method used by regulating agencies to enforce emission reductions. Businesses are granted a limited amount of pollutants that may be emitted (a cap) which is usually lower than it has previously emitted. In order to not exceed the limits of this cap, business must reduce



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emissions or buy credits from other sources that have reduced emissions. Pollution Credit Trading is being used or consider for reducing several different types of air pollutants. For more information, visit the US Environmental Protection Agency website at www.epa.gov or contact Ron Rausch at the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets 518-457-2771.

Right to Farm – Right to Farm protects farmers against private nuisance lawsuits if the farm is using sound agricultural practices. It also limits the enactment of local laws which would unreasonably restrict farming operations. These protections, and others, have been created to help keep New York farms in business. For more information about the Right to Farm and farm protection laws, contact the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Division of Agricultural Protection and Development Matt Brower at 518-457-2713 <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/APHome.html>. The New York Beginning Farmer Project sponsored by Cornell University has a ‘Guide to Farming in NYS’ PDF available online at <http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pdfs/Guide/Guide%20to%20Farming%20in%20NY%20Revised%2012-21-07.pdf>, which can help answer questions regarding the Right to Farm.

Stream Management – One of the primary goals of the AEM program is to protect and improve the water quality of streams throughout New York. Most streams in New York have been classified and those that are impaired for their historical use (drinking water, trout habitat, recreation, etc) are listed on the State’s Priority Waterbody List or PWL. The NYS Agriculture Non-Point Source Grants <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/SoilWater/aem/nonpoint.html> and the USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP/> both offer cost-share assistance to farms for installing practices that will improve or protect water quality. These practices can include stream restoration when it is determined that erosion control is needed to restore a stream segment. In addition, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep> offers further cost-share assistance to farmers that want to protect their streams by excluding livestock and installing riparian buffers. The Izaak Walton League of America Save Our Streams (SOS) is a national watershed education and outreach program, the website <http://www.iwla.org/index.php?id=19> offers a lot of information on stream management.

Water Conservation/Management - Water quantity concerns tend to vary upon area. While some places still seem to have an unlimited supply of surface and/or groundwater resources, others have had to face issues of dry wells and drained ponds. Whether a farm is irrigating crops or watering livestock, a dependable water supply is critical. During times of drought, the lack of water can have a devastating effect on farms and can often result in poor quality crops or purchases of water for livestock. All farms with a limited water supply should have an emergency action plan to help deal with these situations. To learn more about water quantity, contact the Cornell Water Resource Institute at <http://wri.eas.cornell.edu/> or your local USDA NRCS field office <http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

Wellhead Protection – Preventing contaminants from entering wells, particularly wells that are used for drinking water, is a primary goal of the AEM Program, as well as many other State programs. Nutrients and pathogens from agriculture can have potentially lethal effects if allowed to enter private or public drinking water supplies. The good news is that with proper management, these problems are easily avoided. It is critical that all farms which spread nutrients or manage livestock, understand the risks associated with wellhead areas and how to protect them. For more information, contact your local NRCS field office or the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee. More information can also be found on the NYS Department of Health’s Wellhead Protection Program website at



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www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/water/drinking/wellhead/wellfact.htm. The NY Rural Water Association website also includes wellhead protection information and articles on agricultural impacts www.nyruralwater.org.

Wetland Conservation – Wetlands are a vital part of our landscape. They can help to prevent flooding, store nutrients and sediments, provide habitat to wildlife and act as natural filters for water quality. There are a number of agencies and organizations that recognize the value of wetlands and can offer technical assistance and/or financial assistance in restoring and preserving them. The USDA NRCS Wetland Reserve Program is one example <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/WRP/>, as is the Conservation Reserve Program <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/crp/>. Other non-governmental agencies, such as Ducks Unlimited, www.ducks.org also offer assistance through land easements and acquisitions.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement – Sportsmen and naturalist alike enjoy the benefits of wildlife. The best way to attract wildlife is by providing them with year-round food and shelter. Landowners first need to decide what species they would like to attract and then it can be determined which plant species will provide the best food source and shelter. The USDA NRCS offers the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program <http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/programs/whip1.html> which offers cost-share assistance to landowners for developing wildlife habitat. The US Fish and Wildlife Service also offers assistance to individual landowners interested in creating habitat for at-risk species www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/private_stewardship/FY2007/index.html. Other federal programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/crp/> provide financial assistance to farm owners, as do non-profit organizations such as Ducks Unlimited www.ducks.org and Pheasants Forever www.pheasantsforever.org