

# **Broome County, New York**

## **Agricultural Economic Development Plan**

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### **4.0 Action Program - Major Agricultural Initiatives**

Agriculture, like any industry, has to change with the times if it is to keep growing. New markets, new products, new ways of doing business and new partnerships are ever needed. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board can assist the industry in meeting these challenges. Substantial payoffs in tourism, quality of life and the long-term growth of the Broome County agricultural economy will result if it does so. The success of the nearby Finger Lakes wine industry provides a superb illustration of the possibilities. The preceding Goals and Objectives set forth a comprehensive program in this regard. The following represent six major initiatives that should serve as an action program for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and cooperating agencies over the next 5+ years.

#### **4.1 Added Value Enterprise Initiative**

As a center of commerce surrounded by rural farm areas and major highway crossroads, Broome County is an ideal location for added-value agricultural processing operations. Additional efforts should be made to target these industries for solicitation and development, through creation of improved sites, promotion of tax abatement programs and use of other incentives.

Short-term incentives should be used to initially attract such enterprises to Broome County. These must be competitive with other regions and help to off-set some of the capital costs relating to investment by these new businesses in Broome County. The most important incentives, however, are inherent. They relate to location, availability of labor, access to raw products and markets and relatively inexpensive land. Documenting and promoting these marketable competitive advantages is essential. While this is largely the task of Broome County's economic development agencies, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board must be an active partner to ensure that added-value agricultural processing get the attention they deserve.

Such enterprises are already to be found in the County, indicating that attracting new similar businesses is feasible. It, too, suggests the potential for strengthening and growing existing industries. They include the Crowley dairy processing operation, the Frito-Lay plant, two food distributors and some wood processing facilities. Pennfield Feeds had proposed to locate in the Conklin Industrial Park but faced zoning obstacles related to building height. A meat fabricator also proposed to locate in the park but ultimately decided not to come to Broome County because it wanted to concentrate more on Mid-Atlantic than Northeast markets.

The County IDA offers a 15 year tax-abatement program that phases in real property taxes

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for industrial projects at 25% of normal for the first 5 years, 50% for the next 5 years and 75% for another 5 years, transitioning to taxation at 100% of value in the 16th year. State law requires that IDAs apply uniform policies but separate abatement schedules can be adopted for different classes of industries. Broome County, indeed, offers a reduced program of benefits (50% abatement for the first 5 years and 25% for another 5 years) for commercial projects such as wholesale and office projects.

The following are the specifically recommended elements of this initiative:

- **A continuing education program to help farmers identify and capitalize on opportunities in various new products that can be produced on-farm (e.g yogurts) should be launched by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County.** This should include a combination of seminars, field trips and consultations designed to equip farmers with the knowledge to know what types of on-farm processing may be economically feasible as well as the skills to be successful should they pursue these opportunities.
  
- **The County Industrial Development Agency should, in consultation with local taxing authorities, develop a special tax-abatement program to promote investment in new or expanded agricultural enterprises.** This is necessary because many businesses, particularly those next door to Pennsylvania, are tempted to relocate out of New York State due to high taxes. Additionally, many farm-related enterprises engaging in retail services are excluded from agricultural tax benefits in New York State and are also outside the mainstream of manufacturing activity. While Broome County's existing program is generous, one of similar nature targeted to agriculture, will allow the County to more effectively market to agricultural industries by showing that it values the industry enough to create a special program for it. Individually negotiated abatements cannot substitute because they cannot be promoted. The IDA might well consider a targeted tax abatement program with an abatement schedule similar to the following:

### **Possible Agricultural Industry Tax Abatement Program**

<u><b>Years</b></u>	<u><b>% Taxes Abated</b></u>	<u><b>% Taxed under PILOT*</b></u>
1-5	100%	0%
6-10	50%	50%
11-15	25%	75%

\* PILOT = Payments In Lieu of Taxes

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This schedule is very similar to the existing one but designed to provide maximum benefits during the period of time when an agri-business is paying off equipment and start-up loans and, therefore, will be of direct aid in capitalizing these businesses. Other counties have used comparable incentives. Sullivan County, for example, has a similar program already used by feed and farm machinery dealers to expand their operations, increasing their commitment to that County as a place of business. An aggressive program is required to get attention and market the County as a location with a valuable competitive advantage. This program should, wherever possible, also be combined with Empire Zone benefits to leverage the economic incentives.

- **The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should work with Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board to encourage use of its EDA Title IX Revolving Loan, Rural Micro Loan and Regional Revolving Loan Trust Funds by County agribusiness.** These funds can be used for agricultural and forestry processing projects as well as other agribusiness ventures. A "Funding for Farm and Agri-business Projects," brochure should also be developed by STERPDB. It should be distributed by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County to promote various funding sources available to assist agri-businesses and farms. It would differ from existing handouts in that it would be more focused on agriculture and also identify additional programs not available to non-farm entities. It should, for instance, include programs such as those offered by Empire State Development Agency, the Department of Agriculture and Markets and USDA Rural Development. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should also meet with local financial institutions to explore ways to enhance this fund with leveraged below-market rate or market rate financing that would help to meet their Community Reinvestment Act obligations.
  
- **The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should also work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Broome County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Broome County Planning and Economic Development Department, USDA Rural Development and the Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board to pursue grant funds for agricultural economic development.** The agricultural sector of the economy needs to be brought into the mainstream of development efforts. Securing grant assistance from non-agricultural as well as conventional funding sources for agricultural economic development initiatives should be part of that.
  
- **As the County develops additional industrial sites it should designate a portion of these for potential agricultural use with special attention to removing any local zoning or restrictive covenant barriers such as those Town regulations that**

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**blocked the Pennfield Feed plant from locating in the Conklin Industrial Park.** Ontario County provides a model in this regard. It offers agribusiness sites within a designated agricultural industrial park designed to attract food processors and similar industries that use regional farm products. A significant obstacle to the development of additional sites will be the limited sewer and water infrastructure capacity within those areas where large processors would have to locate today. A meat processing facility that was considering the County as a location, for example, would have consumed all the remaining capacity available to the site it was considering. This forces the County to be very selective in choosing tenants, focusing on job creation criteria that may not favor agricultural enterprises despite their high income multipliers. Therefore, it is essential to both extend the sewer and water infrastructure to additional sites and expand the capacity of existing systems to be in a position to accept agricultural processors interested in Broome County. County studies are now underway for this purpose.

**Implementation Period:** 2002

**Responsible Parties:**

- 1) Broome County IDA
- 2) Southern Tier East Reg. Planning Dev. Board
- 3) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County
- 4) Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- 5) Broome County Soil and Water Conservation District

#### 4.2 Direct Marketing Initiative

It is recommended that Broome County initiate a coordinated advocacy effort to market more farm products and develop the skills needed within the farm community to do so on a continuing basis. The first step in this program should be to create an Agricultural Marketing Specialist position. This person should lead a coordinated effort by the Broome County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County, the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Southern Central East and the Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development to implement the recommendations of this Plan. He or she should help to identify new markets for agricultural products and services and be assigned to provide technical assistance on a circuit-riding basis to farmers and agri-businesses in selling to those markets.

The person hired could be employed by any one of the above organizations but should be assigned specific responsibilities to both the Broome County Department of Planning and Economic Development and the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board as a resource person. The shared responsibilities are essential to highlighting the value of

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agriculture and forestry to the local economy and further integrating agriculture into the County's economic development program. Funding for this position could come from a variety of sources including the County but, initially, this endeavor should be approached as a demonstration project. It should be possible to secure grant funds from State and/or Federal sources to help launch the project. The position should, however, be designed to be at least partially supported by producers and agri-businesses over the long-term on a fee-for service or cooperative basis.

The tasks of this Agricultural Marketing Specialist should include, but not be limited to the following projects:

- **Development of new markets, both within and outside the County, for Broome County's farm products.** This should include direct/technical assistance to farmers, agri-businesses and farm organizations (including cooperatives) in selling, promoting and structuring the distribution of these products as well as the development of new lines.

One example might include establishing a permanent farmers market in downtown Binghamton. A market within the Kirkwood I-81 Visitors Center would offer excellent opportunities to market products and there are several successful examples of such markets to draw upon for experience. This Visitors Center should, at a minimum, be used as a location to promote Broome farm products with brochures/maps and displays.

A concerted effort should also be put into the creation and support of additional Consumer Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups serving both the Binghamton and New York City metropolitan areas.

Still another possibility that should be explored is the creation, on either a public or private sector basis, of a livestock shipping point market where cattle and other animals can be pooled for shipment to New York City area meat processors serving certain ethnic and niche markets.

- **Training farmers and agri-businesses in marketing practices, including direct marketing, Internet sales and exporting.** There are significant opportunities in each of these areas. The presence of an urban market within the County suggests the potential for direct marketing is large. Moreover, the resident population includes many upscale buyers with IBM managerial positions. Some farmers are already using the Internet to sell product from websites and much more can be done in this area by helping to develop those websites on a cost-effective basis.

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Special opportunities abound because New York State can supply more demand for a niche product than found for ordinary products in most states. The skills required to tap these markets need developing, however, because much of agriculture has been commodity driven where farmers have essentially been "price-takers." They must be converted to "price-makers," though better marketing.

- **Identifying opportunities for adding value to existing farm products before they are sold.** Forestry products for instance, offer possibilities to craft patio furniture, storage sheds and wooden novelties in the manner of so many Lancaster, Pennsylvania enterprises. On-farm dairy processing of cheeses, yogurts and ice cream also offers opportunities. The Triple Cities market is immediately accessible to such producers if someone can help them exploit it. Additional work is involved but, when combined with quality assurance and relatively low-key marketing, farmers can deliver added value to customers for higher income and better cash flow. The key is to establish relationships with end-users, vertically integrating the industry wherever possible.
- **Disseminating information on market opportunities.** A key element in development of new markets is the communication of information on demand, supply and prices. No market is forever and farmers need to continually adapt and respond to developing opportunities. These include, for example, growing demands for dairy/beef crosses at nearby Taylor Packing, as well as meat goats for the ethnic market buyers at livestock auctions. Publication of market data from livestock auctions is also important. There is, too, a demand for technical information and Extension support for growing niche businesses.
- **Promoting sales of existing Broome County farm products.** A Broome County Farm Markets Brochure and Map (or section on the existing Chamber of Commerce map) should be created to promote local farm products. Additionally, too few of the County's producers are making use of the Pride of New York label. Despite heavy demand for "Made in New York" products - there are only four Broome County participants. The Agricultural Marketing Specialist should be helping to develop the enterprises appropriate for these programs and soliciting participation in them.

**Implementation Period:** 1) Start-up 2002  
2) Demonstration period 2003-2006

**Responsible Parties:** 1) Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board  
2) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County  
3) Broome County Dep. of Planning & Economic Dev.

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### 4.3 Agricultural Tourism Initiative

A more extensive Broome County agricultural and natural resources tourism industry needs to be developed with linkages to downtown Binghamton (e.g. to the "Gorgeous Washington" project) and other attractions such as the Botanic Gardens at the offices of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County. Also, Route 79 is a particularly picturesque highway, with a great deal of agriculture along the way, that could be developed into a trail of agricultural tourism activities. There is a group working on designating it (and connected routes) as a New York State Scenic Byway and this could present a tremendous opportunity to promote agricultural tourism. The following are some essential elements of the recommended initiative:

- **Professional marketing is needed to package attractions with local bed & breakfast offerings, farm tours, visits to farm markets and downtown attractions to create variety and interest.** The potential for making tourist attractions out of farm enterprises is considerable. However, many of the County's farmers are not aware of the tourism assets they possess and more effort needs to be put into assisting farmers in developing this potential. One of the most important assets in this regard is the fact most of the farms are family operations. Family history is a great marketing device of much interest to visitors who like to take home plants, fruits, crafts and vegetables they can tell others they purchased at a little family-owned farm in Upstate New York. Visitors want to not only buy the farm product but also to see how it's made and know who's making it.
- **The County also needs to concentrate on creating a better family tourism image for the area with the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board taking the lead with respect to farm-related activities.** These might include corn mazes, equine activities, pond or fee-fishing and farm visits, for example. Other farm-related tourism could include tours of a modern high-tech farm. The County tourism brochure should include farm market information and opportunities for farm tours so that visitors can better understand present-day agriculture. There is great interest in how working dairy farms, for example, operate today.
- **Many farms with tourism potential don't promote because they see no profit in it and, therefore, the Agricultural Marketing Specialist (and others) should work with these farmers to create things to sell.** These might include an admittance, merchandise or schooling, but if a price is not charged then the tourism is just apt to be a bother as an opportunity for the farmer. Many farmers are simply unaware of the level of interest in their activities or the fact that tourists will pay for it. They will,

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however, and there are good examples in nearby counties including "Herb Camps" and "Draft Horse Schools." Similar opportunities exist with recreational leases for hunting and fishing, petting zoos and other activities. These all present profit potential that should be explored with interested farmers. Also, rural landowners are often unsure how to manage liability issues and need additional education and technical assistance in this regard.

- **Packaging should also involve linking the attractions under a common theme such as "Broome County - The Crossroads Where Farm and City Meet."** This is a major challenge for Broome County because it is a crossroads rather than a widely recognized region like the Finger Lakes, Catskills or Mohawk Valley. A Scenic Byway along Route 79 could help but it will always be difficult to create an image of Broome County that does not center on the Triple Cities. They do enjoy some name recognition and the best approach is to embrace them and build on this asset with linkages between the farm and city aspects of the County. A permanent farm market downtown to complement the Gorgeous Washington project with cross-promotion of the participating farm locations ("come and visit us at the farm, too") makes a great deal of sense and illustrates the importance of a comprehensive economic development strategy for the County that looks to both urban and rural needs and ways to jointly meet them. Vestal, because of its wealthier demographic profile, is another excellent location for creating a permanent indoor farm market. The Johnson City market has appeal as an ethnic marketplace only possible in an urban environment. It illustrates the advantages Broome County offers for certain types of agricultural enterprises.
- **The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should provide the initial leadership in developing an ag tourism program by assembling a task force of representatives from the farm community, South Central New York RC&D, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chambers of Commerce and local lodging places to identify the best opportunities and the measures needed to stimulate interest by providers.** From this a conceptual plan for ag tourism promotion purposes can be developed. Providers can then be solicited and an advertising campaign launched. It need not be expensive. Bucks County, Pennsylvania, for example, does a very effective job with a plain paper booklet advertising several dozen sites and combines this with a website where such attractions are packaged with bed and breakfast accommodations. This is the type of program Broome County needs.

Summarizing, the keys to a successful agricultural tourism program are two-fold: 1) having enough activities to attract interest and package with other activities, and 2) establishing a price that connects with each activity to generate income.

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**Implementation Period:** 2003

**Responsible Parties:**

- 1) Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- 2) Broome County Conference & Visitor Bureau
- 3) Broome County Dep. of Planning & Economic Dev.
- 4) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County
- 5) Broome County Chamber of Commerce
- 6) South Central New York RC&D

#### 4.4 Forest Management Initiative

Broome County's forest industry offers significant additional profit potential for farms and is extremely important to the County as a whole. Needs that the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board can help address include the following:

- **Secondary processors of wood products, particularly the smaller enterprises, need to be encouraged with the same financial incentives offered agribusinesses.** These include woodcraft industries, cabinet-makers, manufacturers of storage buildings and outdoor patio furniture and similar enterprises. Another critical need at the present time is assistance in developing new markets for low-grade timber (e.g. firewood or pallet manufacturers). Financing and tax incentives for both small and large manufacturers are needed, from woodcraft shops to sawmills.
- **Forestry presents significant possibilities for generating additional tourism to the area.** Recreational leasing of forest property for hunting and fishing is the most obvious economic opportunity but there are also possibilities in hiking trails, bird-watching and eco-tourism. Links to eating places, bed & breakfasts and other activities where landowners can earn an economic return are needed. Additionally, education regarding liabilities and insurance is needed to gain the interest of farmers in recreational leasing. Group purchases of insurance should be possible. Marketing will, too, be essential and this is an area for the proposed Agricultural Marketing Specialist.
- **Forestry processors are typically large users of electricity and need help in negotiating special utility rates.** This need is shared with the agriculture sector and can be addressed by organizing farmers and forestry enterprise owners as purchasing cooperatives or consortiums. Consultants who specialize in such negotiations should be made available to these groups to assist.
- **The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should work with the South**

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**Central New York RC&D District to create a regional Wood Products Directory.** Data on primary and secondary wood product manufacturers in the area should be gathered, transferred to a brochure or website with follow-up work to establish communications among buyers and sellers. Other types of promotion are also needed. Small wood processors engaged in producing crafts and furniture, for example, could be jointly marketed using a simple brochure giving products, prices and directions. This is done very effectively in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, for instance, where many similar enterprises flourish.

- **A comprehensive marketing study is needed on a regional basis to attract users of low-grade forest products by validating the flow of supply within the region.** This involves quantifying the regional supply of wood chips, other mill residues and low-grade standing trees available. It also demands research to identify different products that can be manufactured from these resources including minimum wood requirements, break-even sizes of potential commercial operations, utility requirements, market evaluations, studies of the competition, probable pricing, financing required and analysis of siting options. An independent forestry marketing consultant should be used to do the study but either South Central New York RC&D or Southern Tier East could manage it. Trade Adjustment Assistance Program funding may be available if a loss of business to imports can be documented (as is the case with nearby P&G).
  
- **Woodlot management skills need developing.** Many farmers and most new landowners in the County lack understanding of sound forestry management practices. Accordingly, continuing education efforts (Forest Owner Workshops ) in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and New York State Forest Owners Association are necessary. Both general education and advocacy type technical assistance for landowners and mill owners in finding and developing markets for products is required. There is a particular need for forestry awareness education for consumers to illustrate that sustainable forest management involves harvesting.

**Implementation Period:** 2003 (Continuing)

- Responsible Parties:**
- 1) Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
  - 2) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County
  - 3) South Central New York RC & D Council
  - 4) Broome County IDA
  - 5) New York State Dep. of Environmental Conservation
  - 6) New York State Forest Owners Association

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### 4.5 Agricultural Planning Initiative

Although Broome County is facing little development pressure in the classic sense, it is already both urban and rural. This has created numerous conflicts between agricultural enterprises and residences, particularly in those communities on the immediate periphery of the Triple Cities. They are, despite declines in population, experiencing both commercial and residential growth as households and commercial enterprises move outward and household sizes shrink.

New "Smart Growth" land use regulations are appropriate in some of these circumstances. Such regulations typically encompass mechanisms such as "conservation subdivisions" that concentrate growth in selected areas in return for preservation of open space, including valuable farmland. The selected growth areas are typically those near existing centers where infrastructure exists to accommodate new development. The Department of Planning and Economic Development promotes "Smart Growth" and the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should do the same.

However, there is more to the issue. Local officials in urbanizing communities often lack knowledge and experience with agricultural issues. New niche agricultural enterprises also don't fit the model many officials have in mind when they plan for agriculture. Regulations intended to control "hog factories" can also prevent small greenhouses that should be able to locate almost anywhere. Setbacks written to deal with manure issues can render small properties completely unusable for enterprises that generate little or no manure. Limitations on selling retail products not produced on the farm can make it unfeasible to sell those that are.

As a general matter, farming can be either greatly helped or greatly hurt by land use regulations, depending on how well agricultural interests are incorporated in the land use planning which undergirds those regulations. Education to ensure the former, and not the latter, takes place and to reinforce the value of land use regulation as a tool for agricultural protection is demanded. Recommendations in this regard are outlined below:

- **Where zoning laws exist within the County, the zoning laws should include agricultural zoning districts generally matching the New York State Certified Agricultural Districts within those borders.** The Agricultural Farmland Protection Board should, with the Planning Department, develop a model set of district regulations for this purpose. The regulations should permit a wide range of uses in such districts but only at densities compatible with farm activities so that adequate buffers can be provided and reduce potential nuisances suits. Permitted uses should also be limited to

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compatible activities like campgrounds, farm resorts, light manufacturing and other activities where the potential for conflict with agriculture is minimized. Residential development of any intensive nature should be discouraged.

The districts should discourage activities that will require the extension of sewer and water lines into active farm areas but encourage "conservation" or "farm-friendly" subdivisions that allow the area to develop in a reasonable and compatible manner and permit farmers to secure extra income from sale of equity in land not essential to their farm operations. Such subdivision regulations typically require clustering of housing and development along the edges of properties or wooded areas to avoid using up valuable farm fields. Some sample language along this line might be as follows:

"Proposals for subdivision of parcels including active farm or crop land within New York State Agricultural Districts shall include delineation of proposed building sites on each lot, which sites shall be located outside of or along the edges of the active farm and crop lands. Subdivisions of five (5) lots or more shall ordinarily be required to employ conservation subdivision or clustering techniques which provide for preservation of active farm and crop land without reducing overall density of development."

Some caution must be exercised, however, in planning developments of this nature to avoid creating conflicts between homeowners and farmers engaged in normal agricultural practices such as manure spreading, weed spraying and cattle pasturing. Density of development and buffering are both factors that should be considered in this regard.

- **Local zoning laws should also provide for new small and niche type agricultural enterprises outside conventional agricultural zoning districts and New York State Certified Agricultural Districts.** Many new agricultural enterprises, small greenhouse and crops in particular, can take place on tracts of 2-5 acres with little or no impact on neighbors. The community impacts, in fact, can be quite positive in terms of reinforcing rural character and offering convenient shopping opportunities. These need to be provided for in non-agricultural zoning districts as well as traditional farm areas.
- **Local officials and, particularly, planning board members, require continuous education on planning issues in general and agricultural law.** Many planning board members often come from non-farm backgrounds and are unaware of farm issues and the law as it pertains to agriculture. They also need instruction on "Smart Growth" and "Growing Greener" planning options that concentrate growth near existing centers and infrastructure. An Agricultural Planning Guide to assist planning officials with these and related issues is attached as an Appendix hereto. Planning schools, seminars

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and resource materials for local officials should also be prepared and/or conducted to help them understand how the Agricultural Districts Law works and the considerations they should give to development adjacent to farms.

- **A concerted effort is needed to get members of the agricultural community involved in local government and planning.** As an example, Section 271.11 of the New York State Town Law specifically provides towns with the authority to appoint to Planning Boards one or more agricultural members who earn at least \$10,000 per year in gross income from agricultural pursuits. Such members can be in addition to the other members the Law specifies each Board must have. All major agricultural towns should take advantage of this provision to designate additional farm members. Such members are more effective in the long-term than simple appointments of farmers to regular planning board positions because there is no guarantee with the latter that farmers will stay on the boards in the case of reappointments over the years. Getting towns to make such appointments will demand not only some initial persuasion but also continued follow-up and technical assistance.
- **Right to farm laws should be encouraged in all of Broome County's major agricultural towns.** A suggested model is included as an Appendix to this Plan and representatives of the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should meet with local officials of these towns on an individual basis over the next two years to explain the benefits of agriculture and propose the adoption of this model or a close facsimile. It is town government that typically receives agricultural complaints and takes responsibility for mediating these conflicts. Towns also control building and development and, therefore, are the logical entities to administer Right to Farm laws.

Right to Farm laws, it should be noted, are intended to complement the New York State Agricultural District Law and provide a means for resolving farm-neighbor conflicts. They do so by protecting the rights of farmers using sound agricultural practices to continue those practices and to grow and expand within the community. They establish a policy which recognizes agriculture as a priority land use and puts the burden of proof that a farm practice constitutes a nuisance squarely upon those who would oppose such practices.

The model law establishes specific criteria which broadly define the nature of a sound agricultural practice and make it extraordinarily difficult for such practices to be declared nuisances. The real strength of such laws, however, is that they create a mechanism to discuss problems, educate the parties and resolve conflicts on a local level. They also serve to establish a statement of town policy which, it is hoped, will carry over to other aspects of local government.

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**Implementation Period:** 2002-2007 (Continuing)

**Responsible Parties:**

- 1) Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- 2) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County
- 3) Broome County Dep. of Planning & Economic Dev.
- 4) Broome County Farm Bureau

### 4.6 Agricultural Awareness Initiative

A major concern of virtually every farmer in Broome County is maintaining a good relationship with farm neighbors. Farmers are worried about complaints regarding odors, noise, slow-moving traffic and the use of pesticides. Some have opted to buy as much land as possible to buffer their activities, others have informal arrangements to notify neighbors when they plan to spread manure and still others invite their neighbors to barbecue events or provide free vegetables as good will offerings.

- **More important than anything is consumer education.** Broome County's largely urban population obviously includes large numbers of residents who have not visited a farm in recent years (or ever). Many have a nostalgic view of farming that is totally at odds with the reality of agriculture as a heavily diversified and often high-tech business. These individuals need exposure to the agriculture industry, the practices it involves, the science it requires and the practical difficulties of farming, if they are to be expected to sympathize with the attributes of the farm next door. This requires regular events such as Sullivan County's "Down on the Farm Week" and Tioga County, Pennsylvania's "Farm-City Day." Tours, farm maps, school presentations and other techniques need to be continually offered to schools, visitors and adult groups.
- **An annual publication similar to Saratoga County's "Saratoga Farms" resource guide to farms in the County should be developed to map Broome farms and promote agriculture in general.** This might simply be a Farm-City Day newspaper insert or it could be done in the manner of a "Business Journal" publication. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board could also develop such a publication on an annual basis as the vehicle for agricultural promotion. It should include not only the map but also economic data on agri-business and farming, excerpts from this plan, descriptions of all significant farms in the County by category, advertising and promotional material. The goal should be to use the piece for education of both the farm and non-farm community and to instill pride among members of the industry. Numerous parties who attended hearings on this Plan commented that they never knew before just how much agriculture contributed to the County.

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- **Another very effective tool for good neighbor relations is New York State's Agricultural District program.** Location in an Agricultural District provides farmers with the protection of the State's right-to-farm legislation. Municipalities cannot impose standards that unreasonably restrict farm activities. The same provisions also offer Department of Agriculture and Markets assistance in fighting nuisance suits directed at what are ordinary and sound agricultural practices. Most importantly, sales of property within Agricultural Districts or near farms located in such Districts are subject to a notice requirement. Purchasers receive an Agricultural Data Statement telling them they are in an agricultural district where farm practices creating odors and other impacts are routinely conducted. It also establishes a legal foundation for farming and helps to eliminate causes of action by neighbors against farmers. This feature of the legislation discourages litigation and encourages resolution of disputes by other means that respect the interests of both parties.
- **Broome County's Agricultural District program, is, therefore, extremely important and participation by every farmer is essential.** Public education regarding the value of the Districts must be a continuing process. The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should increase their efforts to solicit farmers to join existing Agricultural Districts as they come up for renewal. All landowners within a district undergoing review should receive a direct mailing that includes the renewal form and a fact sheet concerning Agricultural Districts. The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should also develop and distribute Fact Sheets regarding the program.
- **The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board should work with local educational institutions to place more emphasis on agricultural career development.** This includes introducing agricultural education at some level in all schools. Agricultural vocational training in BOCES and local high schools is also important. The "Feed the Green Machine" video is a place to start. From this base, a program of seminars and courses should be developed, particularly in the areas of agricultural diversification and specialization with emphasis on the high-tech nature of agriculture today and the many applications of science that it involves. The "Agri-Core" curriculum programs used in Cortland, Ontario and Cayuga Counties are also excellent models.

**Implementation Period:** 2002-2007 (Continuing)

**Responsible Parties:**

- 1) Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- 2) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County
- 3) Broome County Farm Bureau
- 4) Broome County Dep. of Planning & Economic Dev.