



AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PLAN

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Town of Warwick, Orange County, New York
Agricultural Business Retention & Expansion Plan

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1.0 The Value of Agriculture to Warwick

The Town of Warwick has a very diverse and vital agricultural industry that produces products ranging from milk to sod. It also has traditionally been one of the most important onion growing regions of North America. Its farms support silage and sweet corn production, vineyards and greenhouses and nurseries. The following are some of the industry's most important contributions toward the quality of life within the Town and Orange County:

1.1 Farms Preserve the Working Landscapes and Open Spaces of the Town of Warwick

Agriculture accounted for 16,281 acres of Warwick land in a 1995 existing land use survey summarized in the *Town of Warwick Comprehensive Plan*. This was 26% of the Town. Truck farms occupied 9,388 acres, horse farms represented 327 acres and general agriculture took up the remaining 6,565 acres. The more recent *Town of Warwick Agricultural Producer Survey* indicates there are over 4,150 acres of Black Dirt farmland used primarily for onions, sod and other vegetables, plus over 11,000 acres of upland used for dairying, horse farms and other agricultural enterprises. Average farm sizes are about 175 acres for upland farms and 134 acres for Black Dirt farms.

| Town of Warwick Agricultural Land Use Compared to Orange County (Acres) | | | |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | Town of Warwick | Orange County | % of County |
| Truck Farms (Fruits/Vegetables/Greenhouses/Nursery) | 9,388 | 12,715 | 73.8% |
| Horse Farms | 327 | 3,676 | 8.9% |
| General Agriculture | 6,565 | 78,380 | 8.4% |
| Total = | 16,281 | 94,771 | 17.2% |

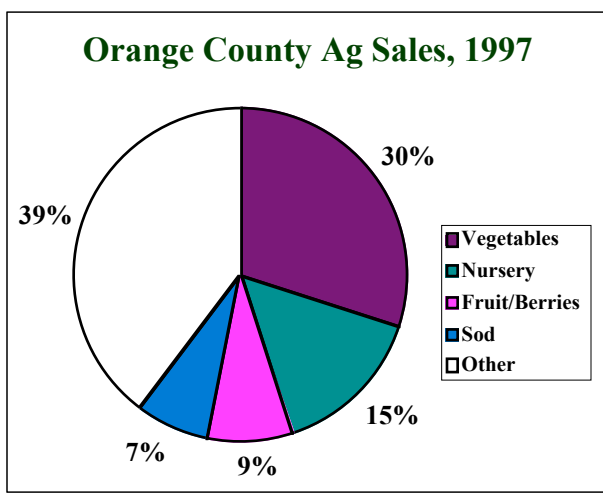
Sources: Warwick data is from a 1995 existing land use study summarized in the *Comprehensive Plan* for the Town. Orange County data is from the 1997 *Census of Agriculture* and *New York State 2000 Equine Survey* indicating 6,800 equines in County and an average of 0.54 acres per equine Statewide.

These working farm landscapes give the Town a unique appeal within the greater New York metropolitan area of which Orange County is part. They buffer other land uses, provide outstanding scenery, create interest as tourist attractions and temper the sprawl related impacts of population growth. These are among the reasons the *Town of Warwick Comprehensive Plan* recommends preserving “as many of the operating farms as possible” and creating “incentives for landowners to maintain land in agricultural use.”

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1.2 Farms Are Important Businesses That Help Drive the Town Economy

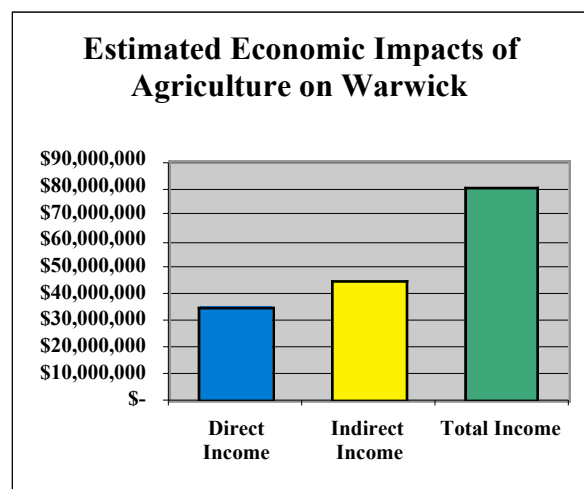
Although there are some additional farmers not included, the *Town of Warwick Agricultural Producer Survey* identified 94 different farm enterprises, 63 of which were upland farms, plus 31 Black Dirt farms. These farms include most of the County's onion growers, sod farmers and other vegetable producers. They also include a number of dairies. The average Orange County farm represented an investment in land and buildings of \$576,124, according to the 1997 *Census of Agriculture*. This indicates that farms account for approximately \$54,000,000 of investment in the Town of Warwick.



Given average sales of \$111,934 per farm Countywide, agriculture is, at minimum, a \$10,500,000 annual industry for Warwick. However, just four sectors of the Orange County agricultural economy accounted for over \$42,000,000 or 60% of sales in the 1997 *Census of Agriculture*. These were the fruit, nursery/greenhouse, sod and vegetable industries. All are heavily concentrated in Warwick, suggesting the Town's total agricultural sales are in the range of \$30,000,000 to \$40,000,000.

The State Department Department of Agriculture and Markets also estimates much higher levels of Countywide sales (over \$90,000,000/year) than the *Census of Agriculture*.

This does not, however, represent all or even most of the Town's agricultural economy. Many agricultural support industries and side businesses are not counted in the *Census of Agriculture*. Wholesale onion packers, farm supply dealers and other retail, wholesale and service businesses depend on farmers as customers. Farms export products to other regions and import dollars that are then spent with these businesses, multiplying the impact of sales. Input-output studies reported by Cornell University indicate dairy production, for instance, generates \$2.29 of total income for the State economy from every \$1.00 of sales. Crops produced a multiplier of \$2.28. This



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means \$35,000,000 of farm sales produces total income of as much as \$80,000,000 for the Town of Warwick.

The Town's farms also generate a large tax base, even after considering agricultural assessment benefits. The following table and chart, prepared from 2002 tax assessment data, gathered by the New York State Office of Real Property Services, illustrate:

| Agricultural Property by Class, 2002 | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------|----------|----------------------|------------------|
| Property Class Code | Property Class Description | Parcel Count | Parcel % | Total Assessed Value | Assessed Value % |
| 105 | Agricultural vacant land | 6 | 0.8% | \$92,300 | 0.5% |
| 110 | Livestock and products (general) | 1 | 0.1% | \$186,600 | 1.0% |
| 112 | Dairy products | 53 | 7.2% | \$5,898,100 | 33.2% |
| 113 | Cattle, calves and hogs | 7 | 0.9% | \$527,200 | 3.0% |
| 114 | Sheep and wool | 1 | 0.1% | \$103,600 | 0.6% |
| 116 | Other livestock, donkeys and goats | 7 | 0.9% | \$718,200 | 4.0% |
| 117 | Horse farms | 11 | 1.5% | \$1,392,900 | 7.8% |
| 120 | Field crops | 33 | 4.5% | \$5,550,800 | 31.2% |
| 130 | Truck crops on muck lands | 603 | 81.8% | \$2,028,200 | 11.4% |
| 150 | Orchard crops (general) | 1 | 0.1% | \$141,700 | 0.8% |
| 151 | Apples, pears, peaches, cherries, etc. | 11 | 1.5% | \$912,800 | 5.1% |
| 152 | Vineyards | 1 | 0.1% | \$154,000 | 0.9% |
| 170 | Nursery and greenhouse crops | 2 | 0.3% | \$77,200 | 0.4% |
| All Agriculture | | 737 | 100.0% | \$17,783,600 | 100.0% |

