

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

3.0 Agricultural Business and Retention Objectives

The following measurable goals and objectives have been established regarding the retention and expansion of the agricultural sector of the Town of Warwick’s economy.

3.1 Goal: Develop the Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region as a “terroir” for farm products and agricultural tourism.¹

- 3.1.1 Develop a Warwick Valley Wine Trail (either independently or as a distinctive offshoot of the Shawangunk Wine Trail), including distinctive official trail signage to lead visitors from Routes 17 and I-84 to the area and a separate wine brochure or section within the “Warwick Valley Tourism Guide.”
- 3.1.2 Promote the Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region as a culturally unique area by encouraging, through zoning and other means, and supporting, through marketing, the development of additional cultural attractions that complement consumer purchases of wine and other Warwick agricultural products. The outdoor music festivals at Little York are an excellent example. There is potential for additional promotion using books, recipes, unique products (e.g. onion jelly) and festivals (e.g. a “U-Pick Onion Festival and Picnic”).
- 3.1.3 Employ a Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region label on locally produced farm products whenever possible, ranging from onions to nursery products. A Warwick Valley Family Farm program would aid in developing this label.
- 3.1.4 Promote the development of additional agricultural tourism to the Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region as a business, using brochures, the Warwick website and other techniques (including organized bus tours that would help to reduce traffic congestion) to advertise specific agricultural tourism enterprises that are geared to generate additional income for farmers (e.g. corn mazes, fishing ponds, etc.).
- 3.1.5 Support the further development of the horse industry by incorporating equine events and images in promotions and promoting the development and maintenance of riding trails wherever possible (including along the gas line and other utility corridors).
- 3.1.6 Identify and work with at least one dairy farmer interested in adding on-farm

¹ “Terroir” is a French term. It is used to describe a territory or region by a combination of geography, attitudes, culture and history. It goes beyond the concept of “appellation” as used in the wine industry to encompass a broader sense of what an area is all about.

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processing of dairy products such as cheese, yogurt or ice cream. This will require a combination of financial, marketing and technical assistance. A successful on-farm dairy processing operation would become a significant tourist attraction and help to round out the farm image of the Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region.

- 3.1.7 Develop a “Pride of Warwick” or “Warwick Valley Family Farm” designation and sign program on the order of the Century Farm program with linkages, if possible, to the “Pride of New York” and quality assurance programs, to promote the concept of the region and agricultural tourism. The Town should seek 100% participation in the Pride of New York program (which costs but \$25 per year at present).

3.2 Goal: Promote further diversification of the Warwick agricultural economy into higher margin lines of business.

- 3.2.1 Provide financial, marketing and technical assistance to Black Dirt and other farmers to diversify into new products lines such as cut greens for packaging, sweet corn, farm market products and unique lines of vegetables of appeal to the New York City market.
- 3.2.2 Promote new agricultural businesses such as custom-cut beef by developing a Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region farm products brochure and adding much more detailed information on product offerings to the Interactive Agricultural Map website, effectively transforming the website into an Internet Mall that visitors can use to request more information and even order products.
- 3.2.3 Identify and promote nonessential high margin farm products that the Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region would be able to grow or raise efficiently for higher profits. Added value can often be created with frills that are anything but cheap. A 5¢ ribbon tying together decorative ear corn, for example, can add 50¢ of value.
- 3.2.4 Encourage rental of farm cottages to visitors who wish to experience the country as another form of farm diversification.

3.3 Goal: Establish and identify sources of capital and labor for new and expanded agricultural ventures.

- 3.3.1 Promote Warwick’s PDR/TDR tools as sources of equity for farm transfers to younger generations and capitalization of expansions. This would make PDR a powerful tool for promoting agricultural economic development. As local PDR

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funding is used to leverage State and Federal monies, the Town should also consider using a portion of its funds to pay either a premium over and above market value in the form of PDR options or secure rights of first refusal that would guarantee the Town a place at the table in the face of heavy land competition and increase the capital available for new ventures. See Section 4.1 for a description of the recommended program.

- 3.3.2 Identify and publicize sources of financial capital and labor for new enterprises, creating an Agricultural Economic Development Financial Guide (see Appendices) for distribution to area farmers and establishing a labor pool, using the Cooperative Extension Service or Agricultural Economic Development Specialist as clearinghouses.
- 3.3.3 Identify and publicize sources of custom services as a means encouraging the further development of such sources and the lowering of equipment costs for smaller farmers in particular. Custom planting services using no-till planters, custom tile laying services for the Black Dirt region and other farm machinery services are good candidates.

3.4 Goal: Increase the number of strategic alliances among Warwick Valley farmers.

- 3.4.1 Engage the Cooperative Extensive Service and the Orange County Agricultural Development Specialist in efforts to facilitate strategic alliances between Black Dirt farmers and Orange County's large dairies. This might include, for example, growing silage corn and other forage and grain crops for dairies in rotation plans. Methods of facilitation might include incentives to construct commodity sheds or assistance with intra-county marketing of future rotation crops.
- 3.4.2 Identify and promote opportunities for new enterprises on farms that might be pursued in partnership with other farmers or other businesses with the time to pursue such endeavors. Large farms typically have to specialize and cannot divert their management time to side enterprises but could lease land to others to pursue them. Matching up these parties could be very productive.

3.5 Goal: Increase profit margins for Warwick Valley farmers by adding value to farm products at the local level and developing improved distribution channels.

- 3.5.1 Support direct marketing of farm products through favorable zoning provisions

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plus promotion in the Warwick Valley Visitors Guide, an improved website (including the excellent Interactive Agricultural Map) and additional materials aimed at consumers.

- 3.5.2 Support the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in its efforts to investigate the feasibility of establishing a secondary processing facility for onions in the Black Dirt region.
- 3.5.3 Work with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and New York City to pursue the development of a wholesale farmers' market in the City where independent and specialty food stores, restaurants, institutions, food manufacturers and purveyors could purchase regionally produced food and agricultural products. As the prime agricultural area closest to the City, the Warwick Valley and Black Dirt region would also be the primary beneficiary of such a market. Such a facility would allow Warwick farmers to exploit their two greatest strengths - extraordinarily fertile farmland and proximity to New York City.
- 3.4.4 Develop, as a complement or alternative to the New York City wholesale farmers' market, a regional produce auction or shipping point marketplace where farm stand owners, independent and specialty food stores, restaurants, institutions, food manufacturers and purveyors could purchase regionally produced food and agricultural products. Developing capacity to serve Korean and Spanish speaking customers will be particularly important if New York City is the primary market.
- 3.5.5 Increase the scope of the Warwick Farmers' Market by soliciting additional vendors and adding space, to accommodate growing visitation and provide additional outlets for local farm products.
- 3.5.6 Develop agricultural tourism as a profit center on farms, providing farmers with the skills to manage farm tourist operations, offer added value products and secure fees from visits.
- 3.5.7 Work with the County Industrial Development Agency to create a specific agricultural tax abatement program to encourage the development on secondary processing and retail sales operations on farms. Dairy processing ventures, farm resorts and wineries do not necessarily enjoy agricultural tax exemption for the industrial, retail or lodging aspects of the operations, but the County IDA can offer such abatements and should as an incentive to their development.
- 3.5.8 Work with the County to create a revolving loan fund for new added value

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agricultural ventures in the Town to help fund dairy processing projects in particular, as well as farm resorts and wineries.