

# Yates County, New York

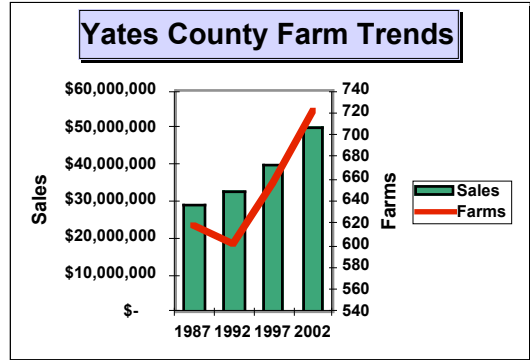
## Agricultural Development and Farmland Enhancement Plan

### 1.0 Agriculture's Top 10 Contributions to Yates County

Farming is the centerpiece of Yates County. It represents economic opportunity and pays large cultural, environmental and social dividends. Consider the following:

#### 1.1 Farming is big business to Yates County and growing.

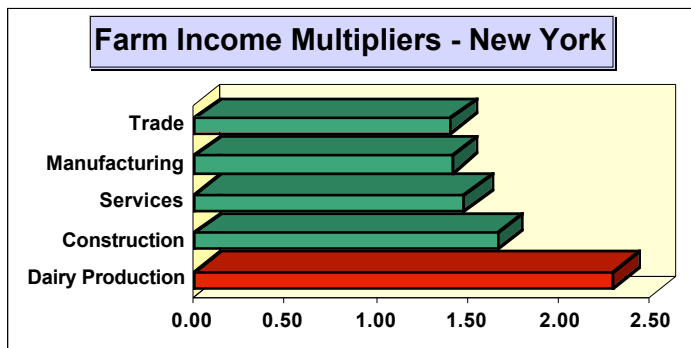
Farming in Yates County involved some 722 business locations, both large and small, that generated sales of \$50,373,000 million in 2002. These numbers were up from 659 farms and \$40,259,000 in sales 5 years earlier. The average value of land, buildings and equipment used in each of these businesses was \$357,884 for a total investment in the Yates County economy of \$258,392,248.



#### 1.2 Farming provides year-round business for other Yates County enterprises.

Agriculture is much more than farming. Many nonagricultural businesses supply the needs of farmers. These include processors, vehicle and equipment dealers and other enterprises. Yates County farmers, for example, maintained 482 balers, some 2,537 tractors and numerous other pieces of farm equipment in 2002. They purchased \$1,256,000 of utility services, \$1,774,000 of petroleum products, \$5,050,000 in supplies, repairs and maintenance, \$5,050,000 of hired farm labor, \$6,246,000 of feed and \$17,573,000 of other products and services from Yates County and regional enterprises, many of which would not be considered farm supply businesses. They also paid \$3,209,000 in real property taxes.

#### 1.3 Income from agriculture goes further than other sectors in helping the economy.

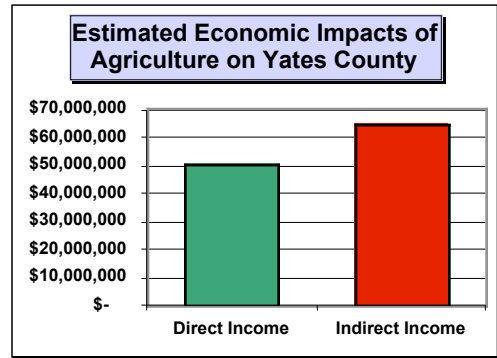


Agriculture produces much higher economic multipliers than any other sector of the economy. These multipliers indicate how many times a dollar of sales recirculates in the local economy for feed, supplies and labor. Cornell University reported in 1996 that dairy production, for example,

# Yates County, New York

## Agricultural Development and Farmland Enhancement Plan

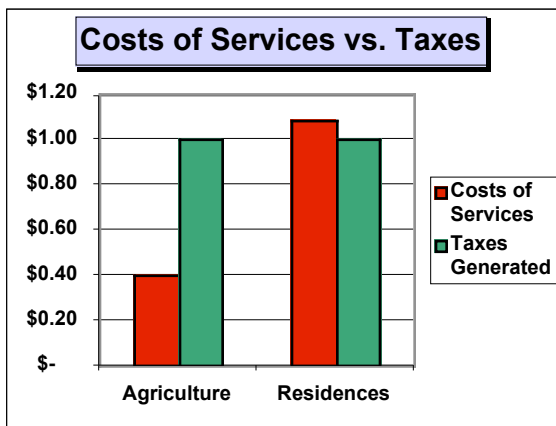
enjoyed a 2.29 income multiplier compared to 1.66 for construction, 1.48 for services (which includes tourism), 1.41 for manufacturing and 1.40 for retail and wholesale trade. Applying these multipliers indicates agriculture represents a total contribution to the economy of over \$115,000,000, not including forestry, wine or agricultural tourism enterprises, many of which take place on farms and all of which are part of agriculture.



### 1.4 Agricultural opportunities can actually increase with growth of an area.

While development can, obviously, create conflicts for farmers, the leading agricultural county in New York is Suffolk County. It is home to 1.3 million people and one of the most highly developed suburban environments in the nation, suggesting not only that farming and urbanization can coexist, but also that the local demand for agricultural products increases with the latter and raises the value of farming as an economic enterprise. Yates County is growing faster than the rest of the State (7.9% between 1990 and 2000, compared to 5.5% statewide). Farming will, therefore, become ever more important to the County as it continues to develop and grow in population. This is particularly true for fruit and vegetable growing operations that depend so much upon direct marketing.

### 1.5 Farms lower the demands for community services and help keep taxes low.



Farms are tax winners despite preferential assessments afforded by the Agricultural District Law. A 1995 study of nearby Tompkins County found "agriculture .. uses should be recognized as beneficial because they do not demand a large amount of services and provide other benefits such as employment." The data, in fact, indicate agriculture typically produces \$1.00 in tax revenue for every 15¢ to 40¢ of town and school expenditures it generates.

Residential development, by contrast, typically costs \$1.09 to \$1.56 per \$1.00 of taxes gathered. Similar analyses in Schoharie County for 1998 indicated agriculture produced \$1.09 to \$2.06 in tax revenue for every \$1.00 of municipal and school costs created. These results are consistent with those of many other similar studies done throughout the Northeast. There are, clearly, other tax winners, including commercial development,

# **Yates County, New York**

## **Agricultural Development and Farmland Enhancement Plan**

---

industrial development and second homes, but agricultural offers the additional open space benefits that are so critical to both quality of place and tourism.

### **1.6 Farms create rural character and attract tourism.**

Farms contribute to Yates County's rural character and protect open spaces essential to the quality of life for both permanent and seasonal residents. Any number of surveys of rural residents and second-home dwellers indicate the primary reasons people live in such areas have to do with their appreciation of the natural resources and open spaces offered, but the anecdotal evidence is perhaps even stronger and local tourism brochures provide examples. They include references not only to the County's "wine, water and wilderness" but also to its "Finger Lakes Countrysides."

These facets are directly created by working farm landscapes. They help support some 17 bed and breakfast operations throughout the County, 5 camps, 9 motels and 10 vacation rentals. There is, indeed, a direct relationship between farming and the attractiveness of Yates County as a place to both live and visit.

### **1.7 Successful farming limits suburban sprawl.**

Successful farming discourages expensive suburban sprawl, steering development toward hamlets and villages with existing services. A recent update of the famous "Costs of Sprawl" report suggests that these more compact forms of development require infrastructure investments of only 75% to 95% of those in sprawl situations. The differences are attributable to the high costs of servicing development spread out along highways. The deficits must be made up by all taxpayers. Sprawl is, of course, a response to the availability of less expensive land away from centers but a strong agriculture supports higher land values in these outlying areas that lower the incentives to move out of town.

### **1.8 Farms and forests preserve natural environments.**

Farms and forests provide working self-sustaining landscapes that preserve and enhance environmental quality. Forest land, which is a part of nearly every farm, "may reduce sediment, nutrient and other pollutant loadings by as much as 85% by minimizing soil erosion and filtering watershed runoff" according to a Watershed Agricultural Council publication. A recent study of land use and water quality along 100 Wisconsin streams also found that "watersheds with more than 20% of land in urban use had very poor biological diversity." This is particularly important to Yates County, with its frontage on three of the Finger Lakes, as environmental requirements tighten.

# Yates County, New York

## Agricultural Development and Farmland Enhancement Plan

---

### **1.9 Farms and forests support wildlife, sport hunting and other recreational land uses.**

Farms support wildlife such as deer, turkeys and small-game and thereby sustain hunting as a source of tourism to the area. The 1998 Yates County white-tail deer harvest was some 4,377 deer. The 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation estimated that \$322,919,067 in retail sales and \$575,535,000 in total economic output was generated for New York State from deer hunting (an economic multiplier of 1.78 Statewide). This represented \$1,399 in retail spending and \$2,494 in total economic output for each deer harvested, potentially yielding a \$6,123,000 deer hunting economy for Yates County before considering multiplier effects. Bird watching and other forms of hunting (e.g. bear), fishing and outdoor recreation and ecotourism are also supported by farming.

### **1.10 Farmland is an invaluable resource for future generations.**

Farmland is a valuable future resource for the County in providing a healthy and plentiful local supply of food products and generating new sources of farm income. Many new residents of the County and visitors to the wine trails and lakes, are seeking locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers, both organic and non-organic. County farmers are already capitalizing on these opportunities via farm markets such as the Windmill Farm and Craft Market, which attracts 8,000 to 10,000 visitors per week. Likewise, the County's base of both small and mid-sized farms provides a foundation for exploring new dairy and nondairy added-value ventures and niche markets.