



Northern NY Agricultural Development Program 2013-14 Project Report

Strengthening the North Country Food System Through Increased Producer Connections to Markets

Project Leader(s):

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Collaborator(s):

- . Cornell Cooperative Extension educators: Amy Ivy, Laurie Davis, Peter Hagar, Betsy Hodge, Brent Buchanan, Steve Ledoux, Melissa Spence
- . Adirondack North Country Association: Josh Bakelaar
- . Wholeshare: Dan Livingston

Producer-Collaborators:

Clinton County: 24 farmers

Essex County: 36 farmers

Franklin County: 13 farmers

Lewis County: 23 farmers

Jefferson County: 13 farmers

St. Lawrence County: 13 farmers

Note: Total number of participating farmers is greater than total number of farms.

Background:

Local food is good for communities for a variety of reasons:

- it supports family farms,
- conserves farmland and open spaces,
- local dollars stay local to support other businesses,
- fewer miles from field to table reduces fossil fuel consumption and resulting air pollution,
- food is fresher,

- local food varieties are chosen for flavor instead of shipping characteristics, so they are more likely to be eaten (especially by children).

Coordinating ordering and deliveries in NNY will increase farmer sales and decrease costs and pollution from several trucks going to different areas. It will also allow groups in underserved areas to collaborate with local businesses for deliveries.

By building a collaborative network we will allow producers easier access to consumers in NNY who desire locally produced food. By organizing, marketing and delivering local food to more local people, we will increase understanding, communication, and connections that will efficiently and cooperatively supply the North Country with local food. This will allow producers and marketers alike to expand sales.

This evaluation will help the North Country Economic Development Council target recommended areas and projects.

Methods:

We developed, tested, conducted, and summarized a survey. Educators spent many hours driving to farms and talking with farmers about their needs and hopes. Data was provided to Roberta Severson with the Cooperative Enterprise Program of the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University for analysis.

We held 2 meetings: Lake Placid, March 11 at the Arts Center (34 attendees) and Watertown, March 12 at the CCE Jefferson County meeting room (28 attendees) to present the initial findings (see PowerPoint Appendix). At these meetings we gained additional input from the farmers, local government and economic development people that attended.

Results:

- 48% of the farmers made less than \$25,000, 26% of the farmers made from \$25 to \$100,000, and 21% made more than that.
- The size of farms we sampled were even across the board for acreages with 14 falling into each category: 1-3 acres, 4-10 acres, 10-20 acres, 20-40 acres, 60-100 acres, 100-250 acres, over 250 acres.
- Those that farm 90% or full time are more likely to make over \$100,000 per year.
- Items grown in order of the number of farmers growing them are in decreasing order: vegetables, meat, fruit, maple, other, dairy.
- 55% called themselves conventional growers, the rest called themselves organic.
- Plattsburgh and Watertown were the primary markets that farmers identified as their target market.
- 68% of the farmers traveled less than 40 miles to a market, 13 farmers traveled more than 300 miles to market.
- 34% sold from farm stands, 22% at farmers' markets, and 14% used wholesalers or distributors. However 43% of the over \$250,000 in sales per year group used wholesalers.

- Those that wanted to use a food hub were the smaller farmers under \$25,000 in sales. The larger sales farms already were in the system and were not interested in helping to subsidize the smaller farms.
- Of those interested in participating in group marketing 22% would pay from 1 to 10% and 23% were willing to pay 11% to 20%.
- All viewed contracts as important and most wanted prepay or pay at delivery.
- The most valued functions in descending order were: transportation, warehousing and storage, operating year round, close to markets, distributes local only, has web-based trading site.
- Very few were interested in investing money or time in a food hub, but some were.
- Data from stores, restaurants, co-packers, schools, and consumers on what they want to buy and how was collected under another grant; data link will be provided for the nnyagdev.org website.

Conclusions/Outcomes/Impacts:

We are still analyzing the results; conclusions will be available in a future report.

Outreach:

Articles were written in the six NNY county Extension publications about the project. Press releases were published in 18 local papers. The articles and surveys were posted on the www.ccenny.com web site.

Letters were included in the survey mailing. We held 2 meetings: Lake Placid, March 11 at the Arts Center (34 attendees) and Watertown, March 12 at the CCE Jefferson County meeting room (28 attendees) to present the initial findings (see PowerPoint Appendix). At these meetings we gained additional input from the farmers, local government and economic development people that attended.

Next steps: We have funding for additional work.

Acknowledgments:

NNYADP, NIFA Specialty Crops, and County Extension offices in Clinton, Essex, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties; the Franklin County component was conducted by educators in Clinton and Essex counties.

Reports and/or articles in which results of this project have been published:

No results reports have been published yet.

For more information:

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