



Agriculture Asset Inventory Project Survey Summary

The undertaking of the Agriculture Asset Inventory has been truly a collaboration of many agencies and groups. Some of these included: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County; the Agriculture Development Council; the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board; the Chenango County Board of Supervisors; the Chenango County Planning Department; the Chenango County Tax Department; the BOCES New Visions Ag and Environmental Science class; the Chenango County Chamber of Commerce, and the Chenango County Area Corporation. Many other private individuals contributed their expertise in reviewing the Survey and drafts of the Summary Report.

This Summary serves as a brief introduction to the Survey, and the key information gathered from the returned Surveys. A final report will be completed about August 15, 2002.

Traditional agriculture remains as the backbone of Chenango County agriculture: dairy, livestock, and hay. There is a change in these traditional enterprises, though, as some individuals take a more entrepreneurial and holistic approach to both the production and marketing of their products.

Background

The original Farmland Protection Plan for Chenango County was completed in 1998. This document recognized the importance of agriculture to Chenango County and outlined the need to protect existing farmland. Two goals for the future were set forth in this plan: strengthen agricultural enterprises and the agricultural industry in Chenango County; and retain active farmland areas of Chenango County through the development of protective and supportive land use policies.

As part of this plan, surveys were sent out to known farmers/producers throughout the county. These surveys focused on the areas of farmland use, profitability of the farms, and land use (farming and non-farming). At that time, a large number of producers expressed an interest in diversifying their production within a limited range of options. The range of agricultural producers within Chenango County was not documented or explored at that time.

In June of 2001, the remaining FPP funds were allocated to conduct an Agriculture Asset Inventory of Chenango County. The purpose was to identify and quantify the amount and diversity of

agriculture within Chenango County. This Inventory would identify agribusinesses and also those ancillary services for the field of agriculture.

Survey

The initial list of properties from the County Tax Office contained 11,201 parcels of land. This number was narrowed to 7,957 parcels by condensing duplicate property owners with more than one parcel of land, and eliminating hunting clubs, gravel operations and those few landowners who live outside the United States (those who live in Canada, Europe, Puerto Rico, etc). In this revised database, 2,942 landowners (approximately 37%) live outside Chenango County; of this number, 14% live outside of New York State, and 23% live within NYS, primarily concentrated in the New York City/Long Island area of the state.

A Survey was developed to gather information about the landowner's agricultural enterprise, including information on how they marketed their product(s). The Survey is a 15-page document. The first page gathered the identifying information about the landowner, and whether they had an agricultural enterprise on their land. The following pages had one page devoted to gathering information about each enterprise; i.e., one page for Dairy, one page for Beef, etc.

The Survey intentionally did not ask any questions about farm/producer income. It was felt that any questions like these would be considered invasive and would result in lower survey returns. This information can be interpreted from the existing agriculture economic data sources.

In January 2002, over a period of 3 weeks, 7,298 surveys were sent out to those individuals who owned 5 acres or more of property in Chenango County. To return the Survey, the landowner simply had to fill out the appropriate section, fold the Survey with the CCE address and postage showing, and put the Survey in the mail. Because many people now have access to the world wide web at work or in their home, Rebecca Hargrave, Extension Horticulture Educator, put the Survey on the CCE website.

Of the surveys sent out, 1932 were returned, which is 26.47%; 34 of these Surveys were returned with no name or identification. Of the returns, a little over 2% (2.13%) were received via a submission through the website. We continue to receive an occasional Survey in the mail.

Survey Information

Of those who returned the Survey, over one-third (35.2%) are involved in an agricultural enterprise. While the remainder reported no agricultural enterprise on their property, several property owners reported managing the property for wildlife, using it for camping or hunting, having the property as their summer home, or that it will be their retirement home.

There were also many people who reported "no agricultural enterprise" on their property, and then filled out the appropriate pages for renting the land to a farmer, harvesting the hay or managing the forest on their property. This information was included in the appropriate category listed below.

Approximately 17% of those people returning their Surveys lived outside the Chenango County borders. This is a high percentage of response considering that 36.97% of the total numbers of

landowners live outside of Chenango County. The decision to focus the mailing on those living within and near to Chenango County necessarily kept this percentage lower than the database percentage.

As stated above, about 2% of the returns were submitted through the web page. However, e-mail addresses were received for about 11% (11.4%) of the respondents who sent in their survey. Most of these respondents requested the results of the Survey.

There were also 34 surveys returned with no name or identification on them. The information from these surveys is included in the appropriate category. Some of these unidentified producers have enterprises that would fall under the “other” category; having their name and address would prove helpful in future CCE programming, as well as any countywide promotion for agriculture products.

The definition of a farm under the Census of Agriculture is: “any place which produced and sold or normally would have produced or sold, \$1,000 worth of agricultural products during the year.” The number of farms in Chenango County reported in the 1997 Census of Agriculture was 801; the most current statistics from NYS Ag & Markets (2000) set this number at 970. A new Agriculture Census will be conducted later this year, and may change these figures. The Census also tracks the size of farms in acres, and the farm income/sales.

The farm size and corresponding numbers for Chenango County from the 1997 Census are:

- 1 to 9 acres – 25 farms
- 10 to 49 acres – 124 farms
- 50 to 179 acres – 292 farms
- 180 to 499 acres – 278 farms
- 500 to 999 acres – 66 farms
- 1,000 or more acres – 16 farms

Chenango County farms by value of sales from the 1997 Census:

- sales less than \$2,500 – 201 farms
- sales of \$2,500 to \$4,999 – 88 farms
- sales of \$5,000 to \$9,999 – 78 farms
- sales of \$10,000 to \$24,999 – 93 farms
- sales of \$25,000 to \$49,999 – 57 farms
- sales of \$50,000 to \$99,999 – 108 farms
- sales of \$100,000 or more – 176 farms

Table 1 includes the most recent statistics for farms (from the 1997 Census of Agriculture), and the numbers reported through the Survey. These numbers are listed for comparison purposes only; extrapolating the numbers as a percentage of 100% will not yield an accurate portrait of the actual numbers of farms in each category.

Table 1

Enterprise	Census Data	Survey Data
Dairy	319	150
Beef Cattle	154	67
Equine	*	85
Sheep	44	31
Goats	*	9
Forest	*	49
Christmas trees	*	24
Sugarbush	*	7
Vegetables/Fruit	22 veg/17 orchards	8+1f+3v
Greenhouses	*	3
Aquaculture	*	3
Poultry	54 layers; 5 meat	20
Hogs	28	0 (see "Other")
Hay	611	94
Crops	254	18
Other (see below)	*	24
Rents	*	78
No agricultural enterprise	*	1252
Farm w/another person	*	6

* = not reported in the Census of Ag figures

The "Other" category includes: an educational, experimental organic farm (nut trees and vegetables); a livestock dealer; 2 farm/rural B&Bs; an alpaca farm; a llama farm; 2 garlic seed stock producers; a horse trucker; a grower raising herbs and pot (marijuana); a fallow deer farm; squab & racing pigeon operation; a campground with woods maintained for hiking; a person raising hogs; 2 honey producers; an individual who will start raising hogs and has experience butchering; and a small farm stand.

Expansion

Of those who responded to the survey and answered the expansion question, 20.36% indicated that they planned to expand their enterprises. This was also about 4% of the total of those who responded to the survey, and 11.7% of the producers who responded. Of those who indicated they would expand, 34.18% would expand within the next year, 51.9% in the next 1 to 3 years, and 13.92% in the next 3 to 5 years.

Further information on expansion will be addressed within each individual enterprise within the final report.

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report, please contact Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County at (607) 334-5841 ext 21, or by writing to: 99 North Broad Street, Norwich, New York 13815.