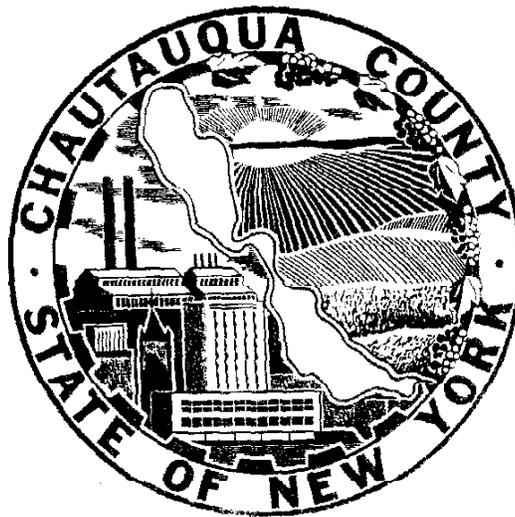


CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN



SEPTEMBER 2000

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	
Table of Contents	Pg. 1
Mission Statement	Pg. 2
Executive Summary	Pg. 3
Chapter 1 — History and Statistics	Pg. 11
Chapter 2 — The Plan	Pg. 17
Chapter 3 — Farmland-Forestland / Preservation-Conservation	Pg. 24
Chapter 4 — Dairy and Livestock Industry	Pg. 33
Chapter 5 — Forestry	Pg. 50
Chapter 6 — Grapes/Fruit/Vegetables/Nursery	Pg. 66
Chapter 7 — Agribusiness/Agritourism	Pg. 83
References	Pg. 98
Appendices	Pg. 99

MISSION STATEMENT

Enhance opportunities for the growth of agriculture and agribusiness and for the preservation and protection of viable farmland in Chautauqua County.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chautauqua County is one of the more important agricultural counties in New York State. The county has a diverse farm production sector, strong farm input and service sector, and a significant food processing and value-added output economy. While the farm production sector is dominated by dairy and grape production the county also has significant sales of cattle, vegetables, fruits, timber and non-timber forest products.

Many elements contribute to Chautauqua County's agricultural industry. The county has diverse natural resources in its soils, climates, water, ecology and landscapes. Collectively this is the base that supports a strong farm sector. The success of the agricultural industry in Chautauqua County is also the product of many far thinking, progressive farmers in the county. Their diversity in management styles, farm sizes and products contribute to the stability of the agricultural industry.

Agriculture in Chautauqua County supports or is supported by a substantial number of agricultural and non-agricultural businesses. Of particular note is the value added processing and marketing organizations in the grape industry that link our grape producers directly to markets nationally and internationally. It is critical that a core mass of farmers be maintained in order to retain these suppliers, processors and marketers and to attract new value added businesses to the county.

Farming enterprises add greatly to the scenic beauty of the county and to the "quality of life" that is attractive to residents and the many visitors who come here each year. Farms and forests help to preserve and enhance the environmental quality of the region that is important to all residents.

The following are useful considerations for farmland protection efforts:

- ◆ Chautauqua ranks as the number one county in New York State in number of farms (Census of Agriculture 1997).
- ◆ In addition to farm products, the county's natural resources include some of the most valuable timber stands in New York State with excellent cherry, maple, oak, and other hardwoods.
- ◆ There are over two dozen sawmills and a furniture production center.
- ◆ Chautauqua County encompasses half the grape acreage in New York State (Census of Agriculture 1997).
- ◆ Concords are the major grape variety grown in Chautauqua County, constituting over 90% of the grape production.
- ◆ Chautauqua County is the leading county in the nation in Concord grape acreage.

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

- ◆ Based on the Federal Order Milk Marketings, May 1999, Chautauqua County ranks in the top 100 counties nationwide for milk production.
- ◆ Market value of agricultural products sold in the county is \$88,673,000 (Census of Agriculture, 1997).
- ◆ The food manufacturing industry in Chautauqua County in 1997 had a value of shipments of \$999,303,000. This is 1/3 of the value of all shipments for manufacturing within Chautauqua County (US Census of Manufacturing Industry Statistics, 1997).
- ◆ The forest industry in Chautauqua County for 1999 – 2000 had estimated primary sales (lumber) of \$27,660,000 and secondary sales (products made from wood) of \$234,430,000 (Canham, New York Center for Forestry and Research, 2000).

Recent years have seen the development of some trends in Chautauqua County that have concerned farmers and members of the Chautauqua County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board. Among these are residential developments in vineyard areas, proposed zoning changes that favor residential and other developments in farming areas, reduced prices for milk and milk components, and a decline in grape acreage.

Although the number of acres of grapes has declined over time, as a result of market demand local processors are seeking additional plantings of both Concord and Niagara grapes. Also, there are positive trends in the dairy industry associated with farm consolidations that have increased dairy farm productivity. These consolidations have often resulted in new building construction, the addition of more cows, and the demand for more and more highly skilled labor.

Chautauqua County's Farmland Protection Plan addresses the concerns of the agricultural community, government and agribusiness over the loss of productive farmland in Chautauqua County and about maintaining and keeping agricultural industries, including the forest industry, viable. In writing this plan, we hoped to give the citizens of Chautauqua County an overall view of agriculture in the county, both the good and the bad. Each of the chapters was written so it could stand alone and be published as needed for the various industries to use or for government purposes as handouts and supplemental material.

The Chautauqua County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan was designed as a hands-on resource book to be used by county and town officials, agricultural landowners and residents. The goal was to provide basic information about land preservation/conservation strategies, about ways to enhance/make viable both the farm economy and the general economy so our citizens find this county a welcoming place to live. It is a "toolbox" for use by the agricultural community, government, and citizenry to enhance opportunities for growth and development of agriculture and

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

agribusiness and for the preservation and protection of viable farmland in the county.

This plan will suggest strategies and actions that might mitigate or solve the problems and issues raised. Some strategies and actions are already in place within Chautauqua County. Many of those are mentioned within the Plan, to not only let the public know what is being done, but to be a springboard for further action. The Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan includes the following elements:

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN MISSION STATEMENT: It is the mission of the Chautauqua Farmland Protection Board using the Farmland Protection Plan as a base to: **Enhance opportunities for the growth and development of agriculture and agribusiness and for the preservation and protection of viable farmland in Chautauqua County.**

GOALS

- **IDENTIFICATION OF LANDS TO BE PROTECTED:** The identification of lands to be protected is presented in Chapter 3 - *Farmland -Forestland / Preservation - Conservation*. These lands fall into two distinct physiographic areas, the lake plain, where grape vineyards and potential grape vineyards exist and the inland plateau, where there are significant dairy lands especially in the towns of Sherman, Clymer, Poland and Cherry Creek. These areas require preservation and conservation measures.
- **ANALYSIS OF LANDS TO BE PROTECTED:** The lands on the Lake Plain, both vineyard and potential vineyard, should be looked at as critical to the county's economy. This area is one of the few places in the world where Concord grapes can grow. Chapter 6 – *Grapes, Fruit, Vegetables and Horticulture* explains this in more detail. The food processors are here in part because grapes, especially the Concord, are here. The income derived from the Concord grape, both direct and value added, is significant and could be even greater if lands capable of supporting vineyards were preserved and protected.

The dairy industry has been the main source of farm income in Chautauqua County since the mid 1800's. Chapter 4 – *Dairy* relates the current economics of the dairy industry in Chautauqua County. The increases in milk production, despite the loss of farms and cows and the milk price reductions to the farmer, demonstrate the management abilities of Chautauqua County Dairy Farmers. The dairy industry is viable in this county, but for it to remain so there needs to be an effort made to preserve the land best suited for that use.

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

- **DESCRIPTION OF OTHER COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL LAND USE PLANS:** Chautauqua County has endeavored consistently to make farmland and forestland preservation and conservation a part of the fabric of land use in the county. This is shown by early efforts to protect farmland and forestland through agricultural districts, the county right-to-farm law, the county comprehensive plan, and the efforts to persuade local towns and villages to acknowledge the importance of farmland and forest preservation through help with zoning and comprehensive plans. The county is also helping local towns guide growth through the creation and implementation of two Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans. The two LWRP's involve 14 municipalities. Specific towns within the county still need to adopt zoning and comprehensive plans and make them consistent with farmland and forestland protection and conservation. Chapter 3 – *Farmland-Forestland /Preservation -Conservation* relates more about these activities.

KEY STRATEGIES OF THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS

There are many strategies that can be used to preserve agriculture and farmland. The advisory committee reviewed a number of them and selected the following strategies as essential to the Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan. A more extensive review of these and other strategies can be found in each appropriate chapter of the plan.

Strategy 1:

Enhance Farm and Forest Industry Profitability and Increase Economic Development Efforts in Support of Farming

- Convene a Countywide Agricultural Summit
 - Ø “Kick start” all of the strategies listed below
 - Ø Share concerns, ideas and solutions
 - Ø Who: Farmers, forest industry, agribusiness both service and processor oriented need to be involved, along with county, state and municipal governments
 - Ø Funding: Agribusiness, the farm and forestry community and all levels of government
 - Ø Time Frame: 2000-2001
- Employ an Agricultural Economic Development Specialist
 - Ø Locate monies for agricultural projects
 - Ø Aid in development of alternative farming, value-added products, and development of new agribusinesses (including agritourism) within the county

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

- Ø Develop publicity for the farm industry centered on Chautauqua County
- Ø Who: The county legislature, the county Department of Development and the Industrial Development Agency, county agribusiness and Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Ø Funding: Chautauqua County, county agribusiness, and Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Ø Time Frame: 2000-2001

- Help Farmers Meet Agricultural Environmental Challenges
 - Ø Provide additional resources, such as an agricultural environmental specialist
 - Ø Support discussions and education on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO)
 - Ø Support County Water Quality Task Force applications for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding
 - Ø Who: Chautauqua County Soil and Water Conservation District, state and county government, and individual farmers
 - Ø Funding: State and federal sources, lending institutions, the county and the Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Grants and low interest loans
 - County monies for specialist's wages
 - Ø Time Frame: 2001 onward

- Adopt Modern Technology and Management
 - Ø Maintain strong research and extension programs
 - Continue and maintain existing programs
 - Worker training programs
 - Find funding
 - Field projects
 - Enlist aid of local colleges
 - Graduate student programs
 - Work study programs
 - Ø Who: State and county government, Cornell Cooperative Extension, local colleges and agribusiness
 - Ø Funding: Grants, work-study monies, state monies and in kind dollars
 - Ø Time Frame: 2001 Onward

- Maintain Infrastructure: Both Maintenance and Enhancement
 - Ø Provide access to farm fields and maintain roads that support trucks and other farm vehicles

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

- Ø Who: Local municipalities and county
- Ø Funding: Local tax structure, grant money
- Ø Time Frame: 2000 onward

- Make Tax Structure Competitive
 - Ø Monitor competitiveness with other states
 - Ø Initiate changes to state and local tax structure
 - Ø Educate stakeholders as to what is available in exemptions
 - Ø Who: Municipalities, assessors, and state government
 - Ø Time Frame: 2000 Onward

- Recruit and Train Local Agricultural and Forest Production Force
 - Ø Increase Ag tech training in schools
 - Work study programs
 - Ø Training by forest and food industries
 - Local colleges, and BOCES used as training facilities
 - College courses offered for credit and/or a certificate program
 - Ø Educate school administrators, teachers, and students that there are viable jobs available in agriculture and the forest industry
 - Ø Who: Cornell Cooperative Extension, local food and forest industries, local colleges and high schools
 - Ø Funding: Grants, agribusiness monies, economic development monies
 - Ø Time Frame: 2000 Onward

Strategy 2:

Farmland and Forestland Protection-Preservation and Conservation

- Establish agricultural districts in all towns
 - Ø Who: Farmland Protection Board, County Planning Department, farmers.
 - Ø Time Frame: continuing

- Initiate a County Right to Practice Forestry Law
 - Ø Who: The forest industries, county legislators, and forest owners
 - Ø Time Frame: 2001-2002

- Specific Farmland Protection
 - Ø Identify specific land areas and/or farms that would require protection
 - Lands in active use
 - Lands with potential use with drainage improvements
 - Most sensitive lands

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

- Lands most at risk by proximity to urban areas
- Use GIS to help identify land areas
- Use Chautauqua County Soil Survey to identify land capability and yield
- Ø Who: Soil and Water Conservation Department, Chautauqua County Planning Department, and farm owners
- Ø Funding: County monies, grants
- Ø Time Frame: 2000-2003

- Education of local governments concerning land preservation and conservation issues and techniques
- Ø Develop locally oriented Conservation and Preservation Tool Kit for municipalities
 - Include New York State Agricultural and Farmland Protection Initiatives
 - Farmland Protection Tools
 - § Purchase of Development Rights Programs
 - § Tax Relief
 - § Land Use Planning
 - Agricultural Economic Development
- Ø Who: The Farmland Protection Board and the county Planning Department along with farmers and agribusiness
- Ø Time Frame: 2001-2002

Strategy 3: Agribusiness Retention and Development

- Promote continued financing for farmers, forest industries, and agribusiness.
 - Ø Make specific efforts to retain lending institutions that deal in agricultural lending
 - Ø Make specific efforts to bring more lending institutions to Chautauqua County that deal with agricultural lending (Community Bank, Bank of Castile)
 - Ø Identify government agencies and other organizations that finance agricultural endeavors
 - Ø Who: The County Agricultural Economic Specialist along with the county Department of Economic Development
 - Ø Funding: Economic development funds
 - Ø Time Frame: 2001 Onward

- Develop new markets and new product opportunities
 - Ø Identify linkages

Chautauqua County Farmland Protection Plan

- Ø Network with state and federal agencies
- Ø Conduct Media Campaign
 - Develop Power Point presentations
 - Develop short media spots promoting agriculture in Chautauqua County
 - Develop program-length video promoting farming and agribusiness
 - “Buy Local” Campaign
 - Coordinate with food processors’ advertising activities
- Ø Who: The County Agriculture Economic Specialist, the County Department of Economic Development and county agribusiness
- Ø Funding: Economic development funds, grants
- Ø Time Frame: 2001-2002 onward

- Develop a Chautauqua County based Food, Agricultural and Forestry Leadership Development Program
 - Ø Provide leadership training and development for future county agricultural leaders especially from within existing production agriculture (young farmers)
Assist local, county, state and national governments to adopt policies and actions that enhance farming, food production, and forestry viability and profitability
 - Ø Educate the general public, school children and local colleges about agriculture and the availability of agricultural careers
 - Programs specifically for local government officials
 - Programs specifically for children and teens
 - Ø Who: Members of the current Farmland Protection Advisory Committee, who represent Cooperative Extension, agriculture and forest producers and processors, associated farm representatives, and the Farmland Protection Board
 - Ø Funding: Agribusiness, Grant monies and the County Department of Development
 - Ø Time Frame: 2000-2001

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