

January 15, 2007

# Ag Pulse

*Madison County....The Heart of New York*

**Dear Town Official:**

*This is the fifth issue in a series of newsletters being sent to you by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Madison County on behalf of the Madison County Farmland Protection Board. One of the goals of Madison County's Farmland Protection Plan is to inform decision makers about developments in county agriculture, describe its impact on the local economy, and clarify provisions that help maintain agriculture's predominance here.*

*One of the Goals of Madison County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan is Agricultural Economic Development, to Support and Promote Agriculture within the County. Agriculture has always been a vital component of Madison County's economy. Insuring its continuation, however, requires a comprehensive approach that supports*

*agricultural economic development through technical assistance to farmers and agricultural communities and facilitates their access to capital for agricultural business development and expansion.*

*We hope that you find the information in this newsletter helpful. We welcome your comments. Call us at either 684-3001 or 655-2075.*

**Sincerely,**

*Karen A. Baase*  
**Karen Baase**  
**Extension Issue Leader**

*April Winslow*  
**April Winslow**  
**Community Educator**



## *Mainstreaming Agricultural-Based Economic Development*

Mainstreaming is reaching out to the larger economic development community. It can increase profit-making opportunities, increase financial and community support, and engender a positive outlook for the farm and food industry. Mainstreaming recognizes farm and food industries as fundamental, component parts of the economic development process. However, there are key words to be learned, issues to be reframed, and an altered image is required to mainstream or fully integrate agriculturally based industries into New York's current

economic development agenda.

What is economic development? Economic developers and the wider economic development community are job driven. Creating jobs, retaining jobs or attracting the businesses or people to ensure jobs is a standard measure of economic development. Heavy losses of New York manufacturing jobs have changed the conversation. While the effort to attract new businesses continues, more emphasis has been placed on retaining existing businesses of all sizes and supporting

what adds to their capacity to retain jobs.

Growing the farm and food sectors can create jobs, too, but more must be known about the influence of agriculturally based development on the retention of current jobs.

Economic developers have a growing appreciation for the contribution that agriculturally based industries make to the overall rural setting. Retaining jobs depends to some degree on a pleasant environment and a working landscape that benefits from

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**Farmland Protection Board Members:**

- Karen Baase
- Rick Bargabos
- Rudy Braun
- Carol Brophy
- Steven Durfee
- Fay Lyon
- Jack Miller
- Terry Mosher
- Paul Orth
- Bee Tolman
- Calvin Wood

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the presence of active agriculture. Farmers enrich the wider community with the diversity they help create in communities.

But agriculture and food industries can spur economic development directly. Successful economic development in agriculture is exemplified by New York's value-added wine industry. About 30% of the grape crop goes to production of wine with a cash value in the \$350 mil. range. The industry achieves a higher profile because of its value as an engine for enhancing economic development, the jobs created, and contributions to attractive landscapes.

Food processing has appealing elements for economic development, especially when considering niche markets. It includes job creation and retention. Food processing uses the tools of economic development, such as loans and cooperatives. Food processing demonstrates the possibilities of value-added production. Adding value to raw farm commodities builds in the interconnectedness of agriculturally based industry and other industries.

A key factor for building success in farm and food industries is the images

they create. Too often, the reference point is that farm work is hard, the industry is stagnating, and that its survival depends on preserving farmland in the rural landscape. While these facets of agriculture need continued attention, they help fuel the perception that farm and food industries should be taken off the table when any economic development strategy is formulated

To change these perceptions, we need to change the message:

- Stress agriculture's importance but avoid repeating the unsubstantiated claim that agriculture is New York's largest industry.
- Use positive terms and less defensive terminology.
- Make sure that agriculture and food interests are at the table where economic development is discussed and planned. Look for the mutual wins.
- Come to the economic development table with a proper business plan. Today, probably less than 5% of the businesses in agriculture have a business plan.
- Present the economic development community with a broader industry focus; avoid infighting over farm size and definitions of a bona fide farmer.

- Think strategically about the critical mass that is required to support the industry and its infrastructure.
- Concentrate on a supply of "ready-to-go" projects that features a plan, outlining costs, timelines, and expected outcomes.
- Refine the open space concept to advance concepts of "working landscapes".

Agriculture needs to position its arguments with mainstream economic developers carefully and with clarity. Too often the message is confused and ambiguous. The benefits and costs of farm and food production must be spelled out honestly and clearly for a citizenry that is now often two or more generations removed from direct experience with farm and food production. Educators must rise to the occasion as well and assist in the effort to integrate food and agriculture into the economic development discussion.

*Information Taken from Community, Food, and Agriculture Program, Defining Farm & Food, Mainstreaming Agricultural Economic Development*



## 2nd Rural Issues Community Leadership Conference

Thursday, April 5, 2007

7:30 AM - 3:45 PM at the Otesaga Hotel, Cooperstown, NY.

\$25 fee per person.

Here's an opportunity for you to earn at least 4 credits needed by Municipal Planning and Zoning Officials (Chapter 662, Laws of 2006). Continuing with their agricultural theme, this conference will cover Agricultural Economic Development, the Ag District Law, Maintaining Rural Emergency Services, Bringing High Speed Broadband to Rural Communities, Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the FAGE Dairy Project, Farmer-Neighbor Issues, Renewable Energy: FAQ's for Municipalities.



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