**NE SARE Research and Education Grant:**

Use of Whole Farm Analyses to Reduce Nutrient Losses, Improve Nutrient Cycling, Carbon Status and Energy Use on Small Dairies in New York State.

**Final Report: Farmer and Farm Advisor Quotes**

Manager/Owner: “*I think it is* v*ery valuable to bring together all the team 1x per year. It’s necessary to get the crop and feed people together to avoid disconnect between these areas. We need to do what fits the whole farm system, rather than getting separate recommendations driven by each advisor’s area of interest. I see these meetings as having increased value if my operation gets much bigger than this*.”

Manager/Owner: “*The team meetings did not necessarily offer more insight than what we gathered throughout the process.”*

Manager Owner: “*The team approach was important for flushing out questions and ideas and coming up with answers that work. During the 2011 team meeting we had a discussion on capturing volatile N with immediate incorporation that was useful. We now plan to incorporate everything we spread in the spring and also the rate of our manure applications have changed based on the results of this project.”*

Manager Owner: *“I had thought of adding on cows as I have corn grain acres I could convert to silage to have enough forage for a larger herd, but I questioned what would be the effect on the farm’s nutrient status. The information from this project led me to decide that I would need to add acres if I added cows as we are in very good balance right now. I’ve concluded that I will add cows only if land becomes available and otherwise I won’t.”*

Manager Owner: *“The program evaluated my farm’s nutrient status and I like having the knowledge that things are good. If there had been a red flag, this program would have given me the opportunity to see that and to decide what to do about it. We did talk about a few things. I learned that a few fields are a bit depleted, though still adequate in P and K levels. There was one field I was surprised to see lower levels, and that info gives me room to spread more manure there than I had thought I could.”*

Manager Owner: *“Overall the project helps me in my decision making to know where I am today as that helps with my choice of direction toward the future. I have a great land base and the soil resource is pretty consistent. If I expanded and had to work more marginal land I would need more acres per cow, more crop inputs and would use more fuel. The return per acre would not be comparable to what I am used to. These are all important things to consider in looking at a dairy’s future, but often aren’t thought about until after the expansion.”*

Manager/Owner: *“I hadn’t routinely sat down to analyze soil test results before the project so that was very informative. I learned that my soil potassium levels are very, very high. I had been applying manure to maximize yield and going by visual assessments. Through the project I applied the soil test, forage analysis and yield data and changed my spreading practices to avoid the very high potassium fields. There have been some forage palatability issues and the high K could have been a factor. I also am changing my harvest practices. I was on a 3x cut per season and am moving to a 4 or 5 cutting routine. The soil tests and NMB showed “mining” of K is warranted.”*

Manager/Owner: *“Farming in an environmentally sound manner is very important to me. It (the project) fit that goal well and helped me with nutrient efficiency as detailed earlier.”*

Manager Owner: *“During the 2011 team meeting we had a discussion on capturing volatile N with immediate incorporation that was useful. We now plan to incorporate everything we spread in the spring and also the rate of our manure applications have changed based on the results of this project.”*

Manager/Owner: *“We are a CAFO organic dairy and so we have soil test information on all fields but seeing it all together and on a map was very useful and we are using it to help prioritize where we spread manure.”*

Crop Consultant: *“The meetings were very valuable. Having the on-farm research and knowing the MNB confirmed my prior advice to better track P and K levels. It is important to continue the team meetings because communication is the most important thing to the working relationships that we are part of that. It’s beneficial to everyone; the meetings generate ideas, stretch everyone’s comfort zone and provide diverse perspectives.”*

Cooperative Extension Agronomist: *“They (the meetings) were the most valuable part of the project. Four meetings (as a number) worked well as a balance between what might be ideal and what’s practical time-wise. The outcome was a little tweaking of manure distribution and crop rotation, but nothing monumental because of the high level of management already in place.”*

Cooperative Extension Agronomist: *“I was at two meetings and I got the sense that (the farmer) became very cognizant of the value of the nutrients that could be recycled on the farm”*

Cooperative Extension Dairy Nutritionist: *The meetings were very valuable because of the process of the discussion. We all learned things. Examples are the NMSPs view of the tools being developed in the project and ideas for the future. Also some specifics about the farms management*