

# HARVEST NEW YORK GROWING NEW YORK'S AGRICULTURE & FOOD ECONOMY



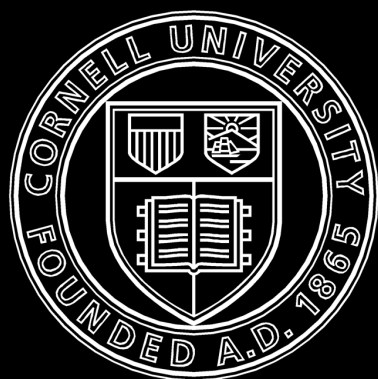
## QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS April- June 2019

### HARVEST NEW YORK

An innovative Cornell Cooperative Extension team that focuses on workforce development and business expansion projects that increase profitability and investment in key sectors of New York's agriculture industry.

### MAXIMIZING CONNECTIONS

Harvest New York Specialists respond to emerging issues and develop new opportunities using the research of Cornell University, the resources of Cornell Cooperative Extension and relationships with partnering organizations statewide.

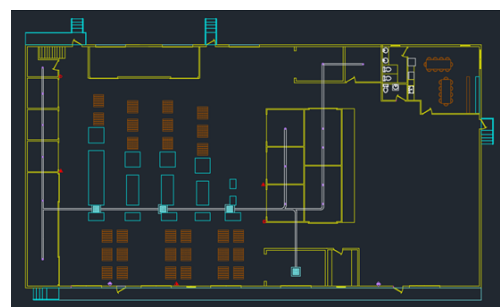


### FARM STRATEGIC PLANNING

#### Harvest NY Tag Teams with Cornell Vegetable Program

Harvest NY continues to expand its educational capacity as it teams up with members of the Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP) on two projects – one in central New York and one in western NY.

The first is a new fresh vegetable processing (wash and pack) facility. This \$600,000 investment will centralize operations from three growing units; speed the washing, packing, and cooling processes; as well as meet new food safety regulations. CVP, via Robert Hadad, has provided the food safety expertise required for the design. With the increased capacity, efficiency, and quality they will be able to expand their current distribution into farmer's markets and restaurants in the southern Hudson Valley and New York City.



*Pictured: Plan View of proposed fresh vegetable processing facility*



*Pictured: Aerial View of proposed drip irrigation system (white lines)*

The second project is located near Gowanda, NY in southwestern Erie County. Working with the Seneca Nation of Indians, Harvest NY developed a drip irrigation system to supply their fledgling fruit and vegetable enterprise. Because this system is based on the irrigation water management plan developed through USDA they will be able to apply for cost-share funding through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). HNY's role was critical here since both NRCS and Erie Co. Soil and Water Conservation District lacked the technical capacity to develop the needed system.

Implementation of the plan will allow the Seneca Nation to overcome climate change challenges and grow their heritage varieties of vegetables, many of which are important in their celebration ceremonies. Moreover, as this enterprise develops they will be able to satisfy internal needs as well as increase external sales.

## New York Farm to School 2nd Quarter Update

### Buffalo's Board of Education Awards Food Bids to Local Farmers and Small Food Producers in the Amount of \$1,113,537

On April 17th, the Buffalo Board of Education accepted a series of recommendations put forth by Bridget O'Brien Wood, Food Service Director with Buffalo Public Schools, awarding food-related bids to local farmers and small food producers in the amount of \$1,113,537. The Farm to School program, now in its 5th year, took a giant leap forward this year in preparation for the 2019-20 school year. The Food Service Department not only increased its demand for locally grown produce to the tune of \$457,021 but also requested 130,000lbs of local beef, resulting in the award of \$656,516 to local farmers and food producers. Collectively, these awards account for 8% of Buffalo's total food budget, which coupled with their New York dairy purchases and other New York food purchases, positions the District to achieve Governor Cuomo's "30% initiative, as part of his No Student Goes Hungry Program. This, in turn, will qualify the District to receive approximately \$1,000,000 in reimbursement following the 2019-20 school year, to then be reinvested into the food service department.

The majority of the bids were awarded to five New York-based businesses:

- Eden Valley Growers/Western NY Food Hub (Eden), a 60-year old vegetable cooperative that works with 25+ local farmers, who is partnering with Fruit Fresh Up (Depew) to minimally process and deliver to Buffalo's 80+ schools.
- Wardynski's (Buffalo), a family-owned and operated business since 1919, who will be custom making gourmet hotdogs for the District, which include a 100% potato additive made by Buffalo-based company, Botaniline. Use of this all-natural potato ingredient reduces sodium by 25%, total fat by almost 50% and contains more protein and iron per servings than that of comparable all-beef alternatives.
- Headwater Food Hub (Rochester), a certified B-Corp who works collaboratively with a network of regional farmers and food producers to coordinate a "Good Food System" that delivers top-quality, sustainable foods year-round.
- Slate Foods (NYC), who partners with a consortium of farms and processors in various regions through the state to provide schools with New York Grown & Certified beef, free of growth-promoting antibiotics and hormones.
- Empire State Farms (New York Mills), a new food processing venture between two 3rd generation farms in Central NY, who is providing wholesale and institutional markets with access to locally raised meat products.

Local food offered on the lunch tray is hardly a new concept in Buffalo Public Schools; however, what has changed is that it's surpassed just being a featured item only, and is now a staple on the weekly menu. On any given day, locally grown, raised, and minimally processed items can be found on the meal tray, supporting the local economy and providing the 30K+ students with greater access to healthy, local food.

### Buffalo Public Schools Launches NY Thursdays



As an expansion of the District's longstanding farm-to-school program and commitment to providing students healthier local food options, Buffalo Public School's is launching NY Thursdays, a New York

State initiative that promotes the procurement of New York State grown and processed items. Rolling out across the District in the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, every Thursday per month the school lunch tray will include a plethora of New York farm products, to include the monthly harvest of the month item.

Featured New York menu items included at the June 13th soft launch: hotdogs (Slate Foods, Wardynski's and Botaniline), baked beans (Genesee Valley Bean Co.), mixed salad greens (5 Loaves Farm), chips (Marquart Farms), grape juice (Welch's), and milk (Upstate Farms). Also sampled were Issa's flame baked pita chips (Wild Hive Farm), coupled with Greek yogurt (Upstate Farms). Invited guests also included Headwater Food Hub, a new purveyor to the district in the 2019-20 school year.

This exciting initiative results from the Buffalo Food Service Department's award of \$1,113,537 to local farmers and small food producers, finally making it possible to source the center of the plate from NY farmers. Harvest NY has been working alongside Buffalo Public Schools on their Farm to School program since 2014 and we're thrilled to continue our partnership into the next school year and beyond.



*Pictured: On June 13<sup>th</sup>, Buffalo Public Schools launched NY Thursdays at Waterfront Elementary, with the support of Food Service Director, Bridget O'Brien Wood and Principal Terence Jenkins.  
Photo Credit: Cheryl Thayer, CCE Harvest NY*



*Pictured: Corn, a favorite among the student body, is Buffalo's featured Harvest of the Month item for September. Eden Valley Growers, pictured above, will be providing the district with 60K ears of local corn, equating to roughly \$28K in local purchases.  
Photo Credit: Josh Baldo, courtesy of American Farmland Trust*

# DAIRY FOOD PROCESSING & MARKETING

## Strategic Workforce Approaches Symposium

New York State is the number one producer of yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese and cream cheese, and has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of dairy plants in the country. Our state serves the growing cheese industry by manufacturing over 802,331,000 pounds of cheese (2018). A significant economic impact is brought forward by New York's skilled dairy farmers and proximity to major markets. Harvest NY strives to ensure New York has a skilled and knowledgeable workforce in the dairy industry.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> the Harvest NY Dairy Processing Specialists partnered with Cornell Dairy Foods Extension and Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development to host the inaugural Strategic Workforce Approaches Symposium. There, educators, regulators, and industry representatives discussed pressures employers face as they strive to increase employee retention, attract new workers, and educate current employees.

Dr. Richard Stup of Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development spoke to the impact of the record-low unemployment rate, and why employee retention is more critical than ever. He shared several examples of ways dairy plants can develop strong employee relationships to increase retention rates.

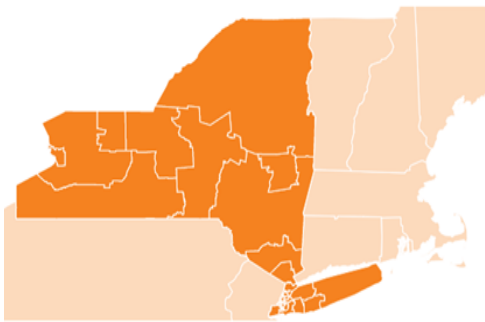
The Manufacturers Alliance of Central New York (MACNY) shared critical information regarding Registered Apprenticeships. Harvest NY and MACNY have worked together to connect Dairy Plants with apprenticeship program information and resources. Apprenticeship

programs can be utilized by plants to help train current employees to propel individuals from general laborers to skilled laborers (such as maintenance mechanics). MACNY can help companies find potential funding sources to keep their costs down, while still allowing them to increase their skilled labor workforce.

Wegmans Supermarkets, Great Lakes Cheese and HP Hood sat on our, "Practical Approaches to Employee Retention" panel. Wegmans shared various employee programs they have utilized over the years to help increase their retention rates and help them maintain their position on the Fortune, "100 Best Companies to Work For" list. Great Lakes Cheese and HP Hood shared different strategies they developed to strengthen their employee retention rates.

The closing piece of the symposium was an excited discussion regarding potential industry changes that can be made to attract and retain top candidates. A working group is being developed to bring together educators and plant hiring personnel to help determine what skills should be focused on to prepare graduating students for employment.

The Harvest NY team is looking forward to assisting the dairy industry and local educators build a stronger dairy workforce for New York State.



DIRECT OUTPUT	\$13,277,560,000
DIRECT JOBS	58,246
DIRECT WAGES	\$2,654,139,100
TOTAL TAXES	\$5,001,041,000

*Pictured: Image and data from International Dairy Foods Association*



*Pictured: Strategic Workforce Approaches Symposium discussion on Dairy Industry Changes.*

## Congratulations and Farewell to Barb Williams

Our Northern New York Dairy Processing Specialist Barb Williams has accepted a new position as Dairy Products Specialist with New York State Ag and Markets. Barb will be conducting inspections for dairy processing plants and farms; pulling and testing samples for compliance with standards of identity and economic fraud. Barb served Harvest NY's northern territory working with large plants as well as artisans. Her efforts have paid off as Barb has supported dairy plants through construction and expansion projects, and workforce development initiatives. We wish Barb the best and look forward to working with her in her new role.



## Growing the Specialty Mushroom Industry in the NYC and Regional Foodshed



Specialty mushrooms are a low-input, high value niche crop, with U.S. consumer demand increasing by 4% annually. Given the flexible scale of production systems, mushrooms have the potential to be incorporated into a diverse range of small and mid-sized farms in urban and rural settings. As a response to this growing demand for both mushrooms and technical production knowledge, Yolanda Gonzalez, Urban Agriculture Specialist from Harvest NY, and the Cornell Small Farms Program, along with partners Farm School NYC, Just Food, and Grow NYC, were awarded two multi-year grants.

The first grant is the USDA NIFA Grant “Expanding Specialty Mushroom Production on Urban and Rural Small Farms,” which will engage growers, service provider organizations, and industry partners to enhance the collective knowledge base and capacity of farmers to grow specialty mushrooms and sell them profitably to local and regional markets within 250 miles of New York City. The second grant is the Northeast SARE Professional Development Program “Spawning a network of northeast mushroom educators serving urban and rural farmer



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Yolanda Gonzalez, [yg88@cornell.edu](mailto:yg88@cornell.edu)

### Project Partners:



audiences,” increasing the educational capacity through a network of Community Mushroom Educators throughout the region.

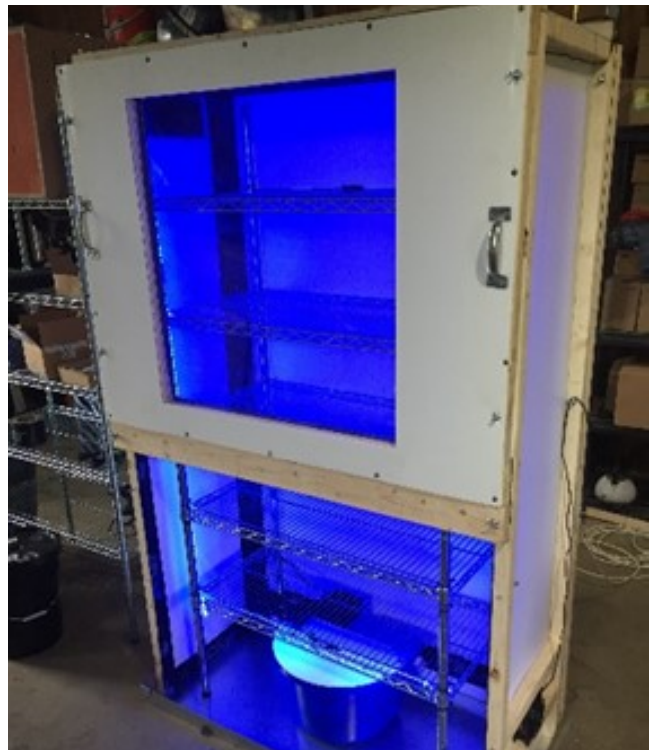
As part of the grants, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Farm School NYC, and Just Food will be hosting a “Learn to Grow Mushrooms” summer workshop series in the following locations:

- July 17th- Isabahlia Farms (Brooklyn) 5:30 - 7:30pm
- Aug. 24th – Red Hook Farms (Brooklyn) 12:00 - 2:00pm
- Sept. 18th- Kelly St. Community Garden (Bronx) 5:30 - 7:30pm.

Both a food and a medicine, mushrooms are easy to grow at home and on gardens and farms, with minimal startup costs and materials that many may already have on hand. In these workshops, we will be teaching New York City residents how to inoculate a shiitake log, grow oysters on straw, and plant wine cap in wood chips. Participants will be able to take materials home with them free of charge. We will emphasize the potential for growing mushrooms as a small enterprise and discuss production systems that are scalable and highly adaptable to a wide range of farms in both rural and urban settings.



*Pictured: The wine cap mushroom, featured as part of the mushroom workshop series this summer*



*Pictured: “Mushroom Growth Chamber” designed by Cornell Small Farms Veteran Program. This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. U.S. Department of Agriculture through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward ENE19-156.*

# URBAN AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

## New Strategies to Connect with Urban Farmers

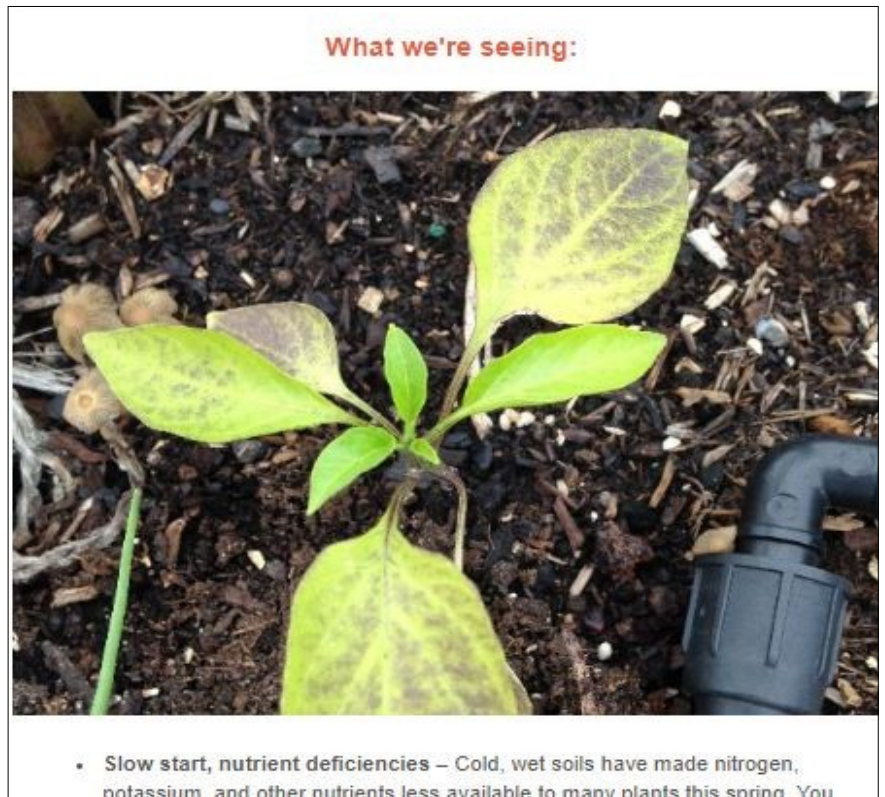
Monthly newsletters are a decades-old staple of many agricultural extension programs across the country. Whether snail-mailed or emailed, the newsletter format has stood the test of time ... for some audiences. Others are more apt to find information through social media; for example, Facebook and Instagram are often used for quick farmer-to-farmer information sharing.

After getting to know their audience of urban farmers in New York City, Harvest NY Urban Agriculture Specialists Sam Anderson and Yolanda Gonzalez are aiming for the best of both worlds. On social media, their efforts focus on Instagram, the platform where most of NYC's urban farmers can be found. The Harvest NY Urban Ag account ([@urbanag.nyc](https://www.instagram.com/urbanag.nyc)) has gained nearly 900 followers in a year and a half, and each post now typically reaches over 400 people. The Urban Agriculture Specialists also envision expanding their use of Instagram as a medium for providing technical assistance, noting that several farmers have posted photos of plant issues and tagged [@urbanag.nyc](https://www.instagram.com/urbanag.nyc) with questions.

This spring, the Harvest NY Urban Agriculture program also launched a regular email update, the [NYC Market Growers Update](#). While it shares certain characteristics of a more traditional “newsletter”—production-oriented resources for farmers, program updates and event listings—the Market Growers Update is not tied to a monthly schedule and takes a more informal tone. The updates lead with a “What We’re Seeing” section with photos and information about timely issues showing up on NYC urban farms. This time of year, that largely means nutrient issues or insect and disease pressure on vegetable crops; for example, an update in June highlighted nitrogen and potassium deficiencies and cabbageworms, and a July update featured crucifer black rot and basil downy mildew. This section has drawn positive farmer feedback and a returning audience; the Market Growers Update averages an open rate of nearly 70%, compared to industry standard open rates of less than 25%. The update features over 100 subscribers drawn intentionally from a targeted audience of NYC's commercial urban farmers.



*Pictured: Harvest NY Urban Agriculture Instagram account (@urbanag.nyc)*



*Pictured: Screenshot from the NYC Market Growers Update*

# AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING

## Second Quarter Program Updates

Harvest NY secured \$19,768 from Northern New York Agriculture Development Program for the New Wholesale Marketing Northern New York project. The research proposal looks at wholesale pricing at the produce auction. The object of the project is to help farmers make informed decisions on approaches to receive a higher average sales price than they are currently receiving for their products. Throughout the 2019 growing season, Harvest NY will be tracking monthly sales and comparing the top five crops of 2018 to 2019 sales including timing of sales, lot size, and average sale prices. The top five crops in 2018 were flowers, tomatoes, mums, pumpkins, and beans.

On May 2nd, the St. Lawrence Valley Produce Auction opened for a second season. The sales for the month of May included hanging baskets, annuals (vegetables and flowers), perennials, asparagus, and rhubarb. For the month of May, the auction had a 62% increase in sales from 2018. In 2018, the St. Lawrence Valley Produce Auction did an estimated sales of \$240,000.

The Northern New York Agriculture Development Program will also support bringing in outside CCE regional specialists, to provide educational training on vegetable and fruit growing practices. During the second quarter, Harvest NY arranged outside CCE regional specialists to provide educational support through farm visits. Farm visits included helping farmers with production issues related to disease, pest, and plant fertility. Additional farm visits and a production field meeting will be held during the third quarter.



Photo Credit: Lindsey Pashow

## Welcome Back Esther!

Our Western New York Berry Specialist Esther Kibbe rejoins us this quarter after welcoming a new family member. Esther operates out of our Erie County office but covers all of Western New York; helping farmers with pest, fertility and cultural management of strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. Esther is conducting research on foliar disease management of strawberries this summer as well as making lots of farm visits. We thank the New York State Berry Growers for their support!



*Pictured: HNY Team Members (from left to right: Sam Anderson, Tim Terry, Lindsey Pashow, Yolanda Gonzalez, Cheryl Thayer, Esther Kibbe, Jud Reid, and Anika Zuber) at a team meeting in Cattaraugus County, NY.*



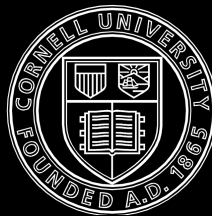
*Photo Credit: RJ Anderson, Cornell Cooperative Extension*

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