

# Madison County's Agricultural Economic Development Program 2008

## OUR MISSION:

To maintain, develop, and promote a viable agricultural economy that benefits Madison County. Our priorities: (1) marketing Madison County's agricultural products and services by creating market opportunities and encouraging value-added enterprises; and, (2) maintaining an appropriate agricultural land base to support a viable agricultural economy in Madison County by assisting existing Madison County farmers and attracting and supporting new farmers.

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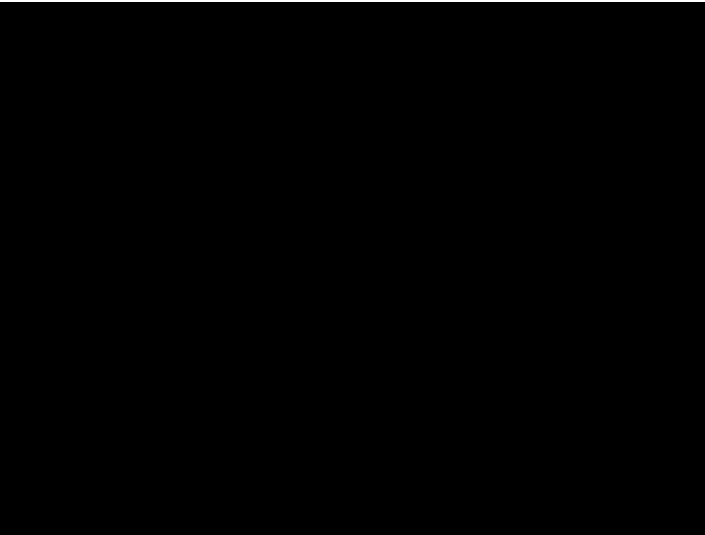
## A Resource for the Farming Community

A strong County farm economy creates local jobs, sustains farm families, provides fresh food and food products, and preserves our community.

Madison County's AED program, a partnership between Madison County's Board of Supervisors and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Madison County, began in September of 2007 and since March of 2008 has secured **\$178,100** in grant funding.

The AED Program provides the following information resources to the agricultural community:

**AED Website** – Up-to-date program information, farm and agri-business directories, grant resources, alternative energy information, farmers' markets directory,



and "Come Farm With Us" Program information on farms for sale in the County. The website receives over **30 hits per day**.

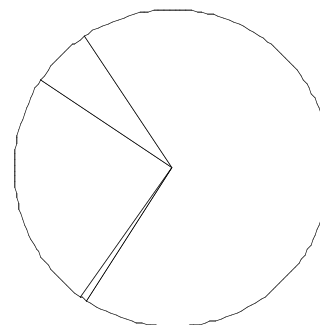
**Email Listserve** – Over **300 members** receive weekly email newsletters of topics pertaining to agriculture and economic

development opportunities, news and events.

**Farm Map** – Directory of direct-to-consumer farm products available for purchase. Maps will be distributed by Madison County Tourism. Over **10,000 maps** printed in 2008.

## 2008 Successful Grants & the AED Budget

Gorman Foundation	\$5,000
Explore NY/MC Tourism	\$10,000
NESARE	\$10,000
CNY Community Foundation	\$20,000
NY Ag&Mkts	\$28,200
USDA Rural Dev	\$99,900



- Madison County
- CCE
- Grants
- Other Income

Livestock Processing  
 Dairy Processing  
 Regional Branding Initiative  
 Distribution/Madison County  
 Website –  
[www.MadisonCountyAgriculture.com](http://www.MadisonCountyAgriculture.com)  
 Agricultural E-Newsletter  
 Veterinarian Survey  
 Come Farm With Us  
 Hops/Heritage Park  
 Local Farm & Agri-Business Guide  
 Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund  
 Buy Local Initiatives  
 Buy Local Week & Open Farm Day  
 Farmers' Markets Promotion

## Dairy Processing Initiatives

Madison County's AED Program received two grants in 2008 for two different dairy processing initiatives. The first grant, \$5,000 awarded by the Gorman Foundation, sent Trish Witchley, the plant Manager at Morrisville Auxiliary Corporation's Agri-Business Center, to the Vermont Institute of Artisan Cheese to receive a certificate in artisan cheesemaking. She will be leading cheesemaking courses in 2009 that will be open to the public. We hope some of the County's farmers might be interested in taking advantage of these courses.

The second grant, \$10,000 from the USDA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NESARE), is to investigate the possibility of developing a locally-branded dairy product that could be processed locally and marketed by the AED Program. A dairy processing subcommittee has been formed and is in the process of investigating the economic viability of potential products.



## Meat Processing Facility

Access to livestock processing services in New York is very limited, and affects the profitability of the dairy and livestock industries. There are no large-scale commercial beef processing plants remaining in the state. When New York's last commercial beef harvesting facility closed, the price per dairy cow dropped \$25 overnight.

Almost all of the 190,000+ dairy cows culled annually in New York are now transported to Pennsylvania to be harvested – resulting in lost revenue to farmers and lost tax dollars to the State. Additionally, there are no certified organic processing services in the State, so that certified organic cattle (beef and dairy) must either be processed out of state or sold without organic certification.

With New York State Legislature funds sourced by Assemblyman Bill Magee, the AED Program hired Food and Livestock Planning, Inc. (FLPI) of Kansas City to conduct a feasibility study and business plan for the creation of a new commercial meat processing plant in Madison County.

FLPI has laid out a plan for a meat-processing business, cooperatively-owned by member farmers. The primary portion of the business would be a commercial beef plant wherein the cooperative would retain ownership of the meat through the entire value-added process, including retail preparation and marketing.

The plant would also have the capacity to custom process for individual beef producers and businesses. An additional business plan was developed for an attached custom plant for processing small stock (lambs, goats, hogs).

An organizing group has been established to form a cooperative, conduct a membership and equity drive, and oversee initial facility planning. The AED Program looks forward to staying involved with this important venture.

## Madison Bounty

Madison Bounty's mission is to support local farmers and producers by creating new markets for locally produced foods, thereby strengthening the local economy and providing healthy food to all citizens in Madison County's region.

Madison County joined Chenango County in this project in June of 2008. Each County has their own manager who coordinates weekly product availability with farmers and producers and uploads product

information onto the website. Madison County's Manager, Sue Parker, was funded through a \$20,000 grant by the Central New York Community Foundation. Consumers (individual households, restaurants, and grocery stores) can go online between Friday at noon and Monday at noon to place an order. Orders are collected from farms on Wednesday morning and distributed to customers' doorsteps on Wednesday or Thursday afternoon. Delivery is free for orders over \$35.



As of December 1, 2008, Madison and Chenango Bounty has grossed over **\$75,000** in total sales, of which over **\$58,000** has been returned to local producers. There are currently **55 participating producers**, and more are inquiring every week.

For more information, please visit the website at: [www.madisonbounty.com](http://www.madisonbounty.com)

## Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund

Through the efforts of the AED Program, USDA Rural Development awarded a **\$99,990 grant** to Madison County to establish an ARLF. The ARLF will assist Madison County farmers and agribusinesses in obtaining small low-interest loans to create or expand value-added and direct-marketing opportunities.

The new ARLF will allow farmers to borrow up to \$10,000. Madison County hopes to increase direct marketing opportunities for farmers, thereby supporting and promoting agriculture. The loans will be limited to farms and agribusinesses with gross incomes of \$1,000,000 or less, and the interest rate is set at one percent below prime.



## Buy Local Week & Open Farm Day

In conjunction with P&C Foods, a Madison County "Buy Local Week" was established to encourage the purchase of locally-produced farm products. The week's culminating event was the County's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual "Open Farm Day", which attracted hundreds of Central NY residents to 12 farms and two farmers' markets throughout

Madison County. Participating farmers prepared an assortment of locally produced and processed goods for visitors to sample.

Visitors' taste buds were certainly satisfied as they sampled a variety of farm products, ranging from Hops mustard and lemonade at Foothill Hops

Farm in Munnsville to tomatoes and Windy Ridge Farm cheese at Canaseraga Farm in Chittenango.

It was a great event, drawing new visitors and consumers to Madison County's farming community.

## Veterinarian Survey

Recognizing the importance of large animal veterinarians to Madison County's agricultural community, the AED Program sent a survey to all of the County's large animal veterinarians to gauge their thoughts on the challenges they faced and whether or not there were enough vets in Madison County and

Central NY.

The veterinarians surveyed remarked long hours, inadequate help, untimely or inadequate payments from clients, and difficulty paying off student loans, as some of the challenges they faced.

The veterinarians provided interesting ideas on ways to retain and

recruit new practitioners to Madison County and Central New York. The AED Program hopes to help by initiating internship opportunities for high school, college, and veterinarian students. By helping to connect students with internships, we hope to help stimulate more interest in large animal vets locating in the Madison County area.

## Regional Branding Initiative

The Mohawk Valley and Leatherstocking Region (MVLAR) is creating a new label through which locally grown and processed agricultural products can be marketed.

New York's Central Harvest will be officially launched in 2009.

The goal of the new brand is to provide a label (complete with UPC/SKU numbers and codes required for supermarket sales) that Central New York producers can use.

MVLAR has already started discussions with some large grocery stores, institutional

suppliers, and regional distributors interested in carrying locally-branded products.

By increasing market access for small- and medium-sized local farms, we hope to facilitate the development of value-added products and ensure that no product leaves the region until it is at its highest economic value.

## Hops Project

There are currently 62 production breweries in NY State. Craft brewed beer accounts for roughly 8.5% of total beer consumption in NY State, up from 3.5% in 2004, and is projected to be 11% by 2011. Because there are only about 14 acres of hops grown commercially in the State of NY, these craft brewers, though desiring NY-grown hops, are forced to buy them from the Pacific NW and Europe.

Madison County's AED Program, in collaboration with the Northeast Hops Alliance (NEHA), the NY Brewers' Association, and

Morrisville State College, are working to revive the hops industry in Central New York. The long-range goal of this project is not to compete with the large hop production regions, such as the Pacific Northwest and central Europe, but to focus on scarce, small-volume, high-quality, place-based production, which microbreweries and brewpubs can afford and on which they can capitalize. By focusing on New York hops, we hope to: (1) rebuild hops as a commercially-viable commodity throughout the State, thereby increasing farmers' growing choices

and profitability; (2) strengthen the already growing market for New York craft beers; and, (3) build an agri-tourism industry that connects hop yards and beer (similar to the way vineyards have been connected to wine, which has resulted in a profound positive economic impact to farmers and rural communities across the wine regions of New York State).

## Coming in 2009

Artisan Cheese Making Courses – offered to the public at Morrisville State College's Agri-Business Center

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Equity Drive for Meat Processing Facility

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Launch of the Regional Branding Initiative – Complete with New Regionally-Branded Dairy Products

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Improved and Expanded "Buy Local Week" and "Open Farm Day"

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New Farmers' Market Promotions and Market Assessments

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Increased Local Food Options for Food-Stamp Recipients



We're on the Web!

[www.MadisonCountyAgriculture.com](http://www.MadisonCountyAgriculture.com)