

Niagara County Ag Stats-from 2007 Ag Census

Location

Niagara County is located in the northwest corner of New York, north of Buffalo. It is bordered by Lake Ontario on the north and Ontario, Canada on the west. It contains 341,120 acres of land (Source: USDA-SCS Soil Survey). Roughly 50% of the area is used for farm production. Niagara County is noted for Niagara Falls where the north flowing Niagara River drops nearly 200 feet as it goes over the crest of the Niagara escarpment. The county lies entirely in the Ontario and Huron Lake Plains region. The northern lake plain begins at Lake Ontario, where the elevation is 246 feet above sea level. It extends to the foot of the Niagara escarpment. There the elevation increases sharply to crest of the escarpment, about 600 feet elevation. The Huron Plain part of the county extends from that crest southward into Erie County. It has a high point of 680 feet at Bunker Hill near the southeast corner of the county and a low of 575 feet at the mouth of Tonawanda Creek.

Soils

The soils in the north are dominated by glacial till that was greatly modified by glacial outwash and/or glacial lake sediments. The soils in the south are derived from high carbonate materials deposited by glacial advance across the Niagara dolomite limestone escarpment. However, glacial outwash materials and/or lake-laid sediments alsomodified much of this area. Small areas of wetlands occur throughout the county, the result of massive glacial outwash during the period of glacial recession in Western New York. Several small areas were drained and farmed as organic soils or shallow muckland for many years. Most have been abandoned for agricultural purposes. Additional areas of wetlands are protected in the federal Iroquois Wildlife Refuge and the state Tonawanda Wildlife Area, in the southeast corner of the county. These areas are seasonal feeding and resting sites to many migratory waterfowl, especially Canada geese.

SOIL TYPE	TOTAL ACRES	PERCENT OF LAND AREA
Prime Farmland (drained & undrained)*	171,234	66.2%
Unique Farmland (other than prime)	5,380	2.1%
Additional Acres of Soils of Statewide Importance	81,990	31.7%
Total Acres of Important Soils	258,604	100.0%

*As defined by USDA-NRCS

Growing Season

Frost free days – 143 – 162 days – (Average – Spring, last frost – up to 5 miles from Lake Ontario, April 30th; inland, May 10th; Fall, first frost– October 13th along the Lake to September 30th inland)

Precipitation

Annual precipitation averages 32.6" (30-35" historic range) with growing season precipitation averaging 14.3".

Summary*

Niagara county is blessed with some valuable soil-climate relationships and produces some 50 agricultural products in economic quantities.

PRODUCT	2007 SALES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Dairy products	\$37,118,000	35.8
Fruit	22,459,000	21.8

Grain and dry beans	13,726,000	13.3
Vegetables	13,697,000	13.2
Nursery and greenhouse	7,697,000	7.5
Cattle and calves	4,806,000	4.7
Other products	3,871,000	3.7
TOTAL SALES	\$103,644,000	100.0

***Source: United States Department of Agriculture, New York Agricultural Statistical Service**

(Estimates for 2008: \$118,531,000)

Agricultural Business Resources

Niagara County ranks in the top 25% of the “Best Places to Farm” in the United States. Niagara County and 28 other counties in New York State are considered among the nation’s most fiscally robust agricultural communities in a report produced by Farm Futures magazine in April, 2009.

To develop these rankings of “Best Places to Farm,” Farm Futures magazine analyzed agricultural census data from 1987 to 2007 to calculate countywide financial performance including return on assets, profit margin, asset turnover and average net farm income. 3005 counties were ranked by all four factors with the average determining the final position on the list.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture reported 211 farms in Niagara County had 1865 full- and part-time workers generating a \$16.1 million payroll.

Agricultural Markets

Urban markets

- The northern suburbs of Buffalo, NY overlap into Niagara County with a population base for Erie and Niagara counties of 1,108,476 (2009 estimate; Erie Niagara Enterprise).
- Niagara County population estimate is 212,048 (2009 estimate)

Ground transportation

- I-290, I-190 and I-90 intersect just south of the county in the Town of Amherst. I-190 continues across Niagara Falls to the Lewiston/Queenston, Ontario bridge
- Major state highways north/ south: NYS 78 and 270; east/west: NYS 31 and 104

Current agricultural income

Cash receipts from farm marketing (2007): \$103.644 million aggregate farm income. Estimates for 2008: \$118,531 million

Agricultural community

Approximately 865 farms of all scales – small, large, part time, full time, organic, conventional (so defined by the Census as those with sales of \$1000/year of ag production). About 40% of Niagara County farms earn more than \$10,000 annually (345 farms)

Agriculture Infrastructure

Agriculture suppliers

- Tractor Supply Company (Lockport)
- WH Rhinehart, Inc. (Middleport)
- Agway (Wrights Corners)
- Country Max (North Tonawanda)
- Niagara Frontier Equipment Sales (Wrights Corners)
- Niagara Implement, Inc. (Newfane)
- Maertins Motor Service (North Tonawanda)
- (Note: Because of Niagara County's geographic position, many agricultural suppliers are more central in such places as Batavia or involve traveling sales reps. We will list others if called to our attention)

Crop processing and storage

- Western New York Cherry Coop (Burt)
- Western New York Energy LLC (major purchaser of corn for ethanol production) (Medina)
- Sun Orchard Fruit Company (Burt)
- Buccolo Cold Storage (Burt)
- Niagara Foods, Inc. (Middleport)

Academic and research institutions

Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) (New York's land-grant university)

NYS Agriculture Experiment Station (Geneva, NY): The leading state institution for research and development of solutions in entomology, food science & technology, horticultural science, plant pathology, integrated pest management and plant genetics

Cornell University Agriculture & Food Technology Park (the "Tech Farm"): research and development park, fostering enterprise development for agriculture, food science and bio-based industries

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Niagara County: Dissemination of agricultural research through specialized production teams (dairy, field crops, livestock, small farms, vegetable, tree fruit, grapes, greenhouse and nursery); agricultural economic development; farm business development; pesticide certification; agricultural districts,; etc.

Small Business Development Center NCCC-SBDC) – business plans

Agriculture/land use planning entities

- Niagara County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board (currently chaired by Legislator, Jerry Farnham)
- Niagara County Department of Economic Development
- Niagara County Farm Bureau
- County and Town right-to-farm laws

Agri-tourism and community resources

- Barker Farmers' Market
- Lockport Farmers' Market
- Middleport Farmers Market
- Niagara Falls Farmers' Market
- North Tonawanda Farmers' Market
- Pendleton Farmers' Market
- Niagara County Apple festival (Lockport)
- Numerous Niagara Wine Trail weekend events

Agriculture by the numbers in Niagara County

(USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007; NYS Agricultural Statistics Service)

Grain corn: 2,428,425 bushels (56 #/bushel) from 21,374 acres

Silage corn: 134,779 tons from 9379 acres
 Soybeans: 120,169 bushels (60#/bushel) from 2,534 acres
 Wheat: 120,169 bushels (60 #/bushel) from 2534 acres
 Vegetable farms: 5281 acres on 131 farms
 Orchards: 132 farms
 Apples: 3317 acres on 81 farms
 Apricots: 23 acres on 8 farms
 Sweet cherries: 178 acres on 41 farms
 Tart cherries: 533 acres on 13 farms
 Grapes: 1298 acres on 70 farms
 Nectarines: 6 producers (acreage n/a)
 Peaches: 148 acres on 35 farms
 Pears: 297 acres on 39 farms
 Plums and prunes: 93 acres on 28 farms
 Nut farm: 3 producers (acreage n/a)
 Berries (all): 104 acres on 46 farms (strawberries, blueberries, brambles)
 Nurseries & greenhouses (edible products): ~ 20 acres on 4 farms (not Census source)
 Nurseries and greenhouses (foliage, potted plants, etc.): 32 farms, 39 acres, 1,379, 664 sq. ft. under glass
 Christmas trees: 471 acres on 30 farms; 9534 trees were cut on 17 farms in 2007
 Maple syrup: Census claims 318 gallons were produced on 4 farms in 2007 (may reflect Orleans County overlap)
 Grain storage: 3,629,360 bushels capacity on 125 farms

Annual Value of Sales by Commodity

Grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas	\$13,726,000
Vegetables, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes	\$13,697,000
Fruits, tree nuts and berries	\$22,459,000
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod	\$7,697,000
Cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	\$162,000
Other crops and hay	\$3,010,000
Cattle and calves	\$4,806,000
Milk and other dairy products from cows	\$37,118,000
Sheep, goats and their products	\$96,000

Horses, ponies	\$160,000
Value of equine inventory (2005 Survey)	\$12,320,000
Poultry and eggs	\$486,000
Other animals and other animal products	\$130,000
Value of ag products sold directly for human consumption	\$2,585,000

Top Livestock Inventory Items

Cattle and calves	21,932
Sheep and lambs	1666
Goats	700
Horses and ponies	1718

Top Crop Items (acres)

Forage – hay, grass silage	32,737
Corn for grain	21,374
Corn for silage	9379
All wheat for grain	2534
Soybeans	9,666