



Why a Vibrant Agricultural Community is Essential for Orange County

Agriculture uses a very large land base. There are 658 farms in Orange County, covering 88,030 acres. These farmlands are mostly in private ownership and privately maintained. Food and fiber production contributes \$155.9 million to our local economy with \$100.6 million in gross sales alone.

- ◆ **An abundant supply of locally grown, nutritious and fresh food** is available at 15 community farmers' markets and over 40 farm stands.
- ◆ **Farm families use humane and environmentally sound practices on their farms.**
- ◆ **Farms provide a sense of place and community** as well as magnificent views.
- ◆ **Farms provide environmental diversity.** Farms are home to cropland and pastures, wetlands, rock outcroppings, woods, streams, rivers and ponds where diverse wildlife dwells.
- ◆ **Farming enhances and compliments tourism.** Families enjoy pick-your-own fruits, vegetables and Christmas trees; go on hay rides to pumpkin patches, horseback riding, and visit animals in petting zoos.
- ◆ **Progressive growers continue to expand** by installing more intensive planting systems and by investing in their storage and packing facilities.

Your Role in Support of Local Farming

- ◆ **Learn how agriculture works!** Cornell Cooperative Extension's annual *Open House on the Farm* (in early autumn) provides a wonderful opportunity for families to tour working farms.
- ◆ **Buy local products whenever possible.** Shop at local community farmers' markets and farm stands. Ask your favorite grocery or health food store manager, or restaurateur to provide local products.
- ◆ **Be respectful towards farmers and farmland.** Do not trespass. Ask permission before entering private property. If permission is granted, stay off cropland. Never ride ATV's through cropland or pastures.
- ◆ **Drive safely.** Be patient while driving behind slow moving farm vehicles.
- ◆ **Encourage your local government officials** to support agriculture in our County.
- ◆ **Have questions?** Call Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County for more information and ask for our more in-depth publication *Agriculture in Orange County*.

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This information was compiled by Cornell University Cooperative Extension Orange County Agriculture Educators using statistics from the 2012 Census of Agriculture, New York State Statistics Service and personal knowledge.

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The pressures facing Orange County agriculture are great. Yet agriculture not only held its position but has *grown* in the past few years, remaining the *leading industry* in Orange County.

ORANGE COUNTY, NY
Agriculture

658 FARMS

\$100.6 MILLION GROSS SALES

**88,030 ACRES IN FARMING:
16% OF COUNTY ACRES**

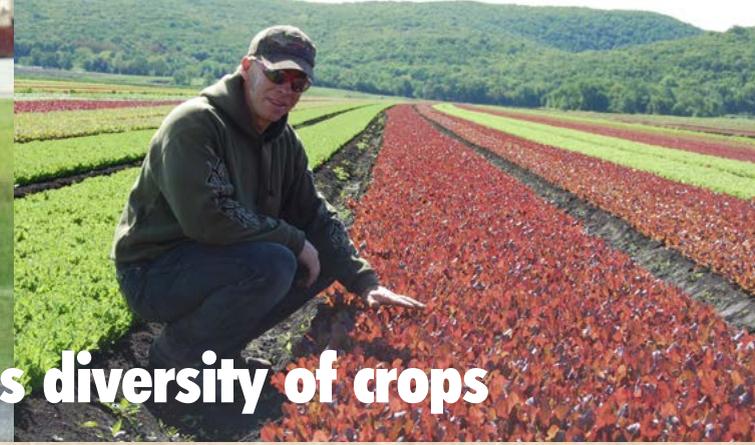
10 TYPES OF BERRIES PRODUCED

12.1 MILLION GALLONS OF MILK PER YEAR

**10,000 ACRES OF VEGETABLES,
RANKING 3RD IN NYS**

3,000 ACRES AVAILABLE FOR SOD PRODUCTION





Orange County's food and agricultural system enjoys a tremendous diversity of crops

Why is Agriculture Important?

- ◆ Agriculture is important because crop and animal production provide a sense of place, community character, wildlife habitat, economic opportunity, recreation, and is a local source of quality food and fiber.
- ◆ Farms supply locally grown, nutritious, fresh food. Community farmers markets are scattered throughout the county as well as more than 40 individual farm stands. An average of 200,000 pounds of produce is donated each year to food pantries, soup kitchens and food banks in Orange County.
- ◆ Farms provide environmental diversity. Farms are home to cropland and pastures, wetlands, rock outcropping, woods, streams, rivers and ponds. Diverse wildlife dwell in these natural environments.
- ◆ Farming enhances and compliments tourism. Families enjoy picking fruits, vegetables and Christmas trees, going on hay rides to pumpkin patches, and petting the animals. Bed and breakfast establishments look to tourist friendly farms to send their guests. The Warwick Apple Fest exemplifies a community celebrating and recognizing their local farming assets.

VARIOUS ORANGE COUNTY AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY FACTS

- ◆ 43 dairy farms with over 3,800 milking cows produce 12.1 million gallons of milk each year.
- ◆ Of the 88,000 acres of crop land in the county, the vast majority of it is used for feeding the dairy cattle so that they can produce fresh milk.
- ◆ The Equine industry ranks 2nd in New York for total number of horses (4,499) and in inventory value (\$7.6 million).
- ◆ Over 60 stables have invested in indoor riding arenas.
- ◆ Orange County boasts over 10,500 acres of parks available to horseback riders.
- ◆ The livestock industry continues to grow with 42 beef herds, 62 goat & sheep herds, 69 poultry flocks, 10 hog facilities, 12 alpaca farms & 38 specialty and exotic species farms.
- ◆ Animal processing industry continues to grow to meet the ever increasing demand for local products.
- ◆ Eighty black dirt farms produce about half the state's onions on approximately 3,300 acres (over 66 million 2-pound bags).
- ◆ Around 20 commercial vegetable farms are on upland soils in the county, including about 10 small certified organic farms.
- ◆ There are 1,116 acres of orchards in Orange County which produce more than 25 different apple cultivars. Cortland, Golden Delicious, McIntosh, Red Delicious, Empire, Gala and Honeycrisp make up the largest acreage.
- ◆ Peaches, pears, plums and cherries have seen some increases in planting due to increasing consumer interest and better grower returns.
- ◆ Vibrant retailing in most sectors, especially for wines and farm-produces spirits is at an all-time high and a great tourism attraction to the county.
- ◆ Orange County is 2nd in NYS in production of nursery, greenhouse and sod with more than 35 commercial greenhouses and over 1,000,000 square feet are under glass or plastic cover.
- ◆ The horticulture service industry has expanded in numbers and in expertise. Over 300 professional businesses offer landscape design, installation, and maintenance services. Some companies have chosen to specialize in order to compete successfully.

Benefits of Agriculture:

- ◆ Farming provides county-wide benefits. The agricultural industry is spread throughout the county with only two towns not having any farms. Farming is concentrated in the middle of the county, bisected by the Wallkill River. Five towns host the 14,000 productive acres of precious "black dirt."
- ◆ Farming is a growing industry. While farm acres have only grown modestly at 9%, there has been a 37% increase in gross sales since the 2007 census.
- ◆ Farms keep property taxes lower. Taxes paid on farmland exceed the cost of providing services.

