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CCE ESSEX RECEIVES \$385,000 USDA GRANT

Seeking to Expand Regional Farm-to-Institution Sales in Three-Year Project

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Lewis, NY– Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Essex County was awarded a \$385,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as part of the Local Food Promotion Program. Funds will be used to expand CCE Essex’s existing Farm to School program into a Farm to Institution program, working with schools, hospitals, senior centers, retirement homes, correctional facilities, colleges and universities, and early child care centers.

One avenue for reaching project goals will be to build upon Adirondack Harvest’s wholesale and local food outreach capabilities, through marketing and promotion, web development, and networking. CCE Essex staff will also collaborate with Adirondack Medical Center, Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), the Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District, Harvest New York, and the Hub on the Hill to accomplish project goals.

Project goals focus on increasing [wholesale production and institutional purchasing](#) in the North Country, diversifying farm income, and creating new market channels to promote increased economic viability.

These funds build on the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Farm to School grant, which started the Farm to School program at CCE in 2018, as well as a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Smart Growth grant, which is funding the growth of the web development and promotion efforts through Adirondack Harvest.

“We see a lot of opportunities to fill gaps in the local food economy,” Carly Summers, Agriculture Resource Educator of CCE Essex said. “Institutional buyers have the potential to source large quantities of local food, while many farms need support in reaching wholesale production levels in order to diversify their income streams or reach new market outlets. At the same time, we will

engage local consumers to help them learn where, why, and how they can access more local food and support the businesses that buy local.”

“Purchasing local food from local farms is just as important in an institutional setting as it is in a restaurant because good food starts with good ingredients,” said Carl Bowen, the Director of Nutritional and Environmental Services at Adirondack Medical Center. “It’s also really important to support our local farms, as they are an integral part of our communities.”

This grant supports two full-time staff, Meghan Dohman, Farm to Institution Educator and Mary Godnick, Digital Editor, as well as other team members in the development of projects that will focus on helping institutional buyers navigate local food purchasing, supporting farms to reach wholesale production levels and obtain certifications, increasing value-added product availability, and developing sustainable marketing avenues.

Meghan Dohman, who is leading the grant effort says, “I’m very excited to have the opportunity to work with more farmers and new institutions to help increase local food purchasing and get more local food into the hands of local residents. Institutions have significant purchasing power and when they switch to buying local products its positive impacts can ripple into the local food system and economy.”

Mary Godnick comes to the project with extensive experience in marketing and communications, most recently with the Adirondack Council and Essex Farm Institute. Godnick says, “Living in the Adirondacks and working in conservation advocacy has given me a deep appreciation of the critical role farms play in Adirondack communities, food systems, open space, and culture.” Godnick underscores that “it’s a really exciting time to be involved in such an important project. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the gaps in our food systems really evident, and we hope to keep people engaged and ready to make an impact.”

About Adirondack Harvest

Adirondack Harvest is a publicly funded program of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Essex County that was formed out of concern for the loss and abandonment of farmland in the Adirondacks in 2001. Adirondack Harvest envisions a picturesque and productive working landscape connecting local farmers to their communities and regional markets.

Adirondack Harvest works to increase opportunities for profitable, sustainable production and sale of high-quality food and agricultural products, and expand consumer choices for locally produced healthy food. Its work covers northeastern New York State in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Warren, St. Lawrence, Lewis, and Jefferson counties. Learn more at adirondackharvest.com.

Find photos and more press materials [here](#).