

## Red Hook, New York

### Dutchess County Agriculture

Dutchess County agriculture comprises over 170,000 of the county's 512,000 total acres (30%). Our farms produce a total of \$44.8 million in goods and are a large part of the county's \$438 million. Agriculture is one of the county's largest industries; its diversity and impact on the local economy is substantial.



Sawkill Farm. Photo credit Sean Carroll

### Agriculture in Red Hook

The Town of Red Hook continues to have a high proportion of Agricultural District acreage and remains one of the County's most productive "critical masses" of farmland. From 2008 to 2016, the Town saw an increase of 13% of this acreage.

The Town's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1993, calls for limited development, conservation rural development, residential, historic hamlet, and waterfront zones on the land within the Agricultural Districts. Strong statements in support of agricultural preservation include: "A fundamental concern of the land use plan is the long-term preservation of agriculture in this area of the town. Continued agricultural use should be encouraged due to its contribution to the town's economy and rural character. To the extent possible, the conversion of productive agricultural lands, particularly those classified as 'prime agricultural soils,' to residential lots and other non-farm purposes should be discouraged" (p.18).

Red Hook was the first Dutchess municipality to adopt a locally-funded Farmland Protection Program, approving a \$3.5 million bond initiative by a better than 4 to 1 margin. Since the program's inception, the Town has completed the acquisition of agricultural easements on the Steiner and Feller Farms, expending \$1,049,672 to protect approximately 368 acres of critical farmland. Development rights on the 234-acre Linden Farm were acquired as a result of a funding partnership between the County and Scenic Hudson. In 2007, the Town committed \$120,000 to pending acquisitions of easements on Mead Orchards and Wil-Hi Farm to protect an additional 98 acres of resources.

Mead Orchards, a 100-acre enterprise in northern Red Hook, was the first Dutchess County recipient of the State's Clean Water/Clean Air Environmental Protection Fund farmland protection program, administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture

and Markets. The County's Open Space and Farmland Protection Matching Grant Program provided the required match. The Mead family immediately purchased 80 acres of neighboring farmland, doubling the size of the operation and securing an important scenic view shed at the northern gateway of Dutchess County.

The Town of Red Hook immediately began implementing the agriculture-related section of the intermunicipal *Open Space Plan* adopted in 2000 by convening an Agricultural Advisory Committee to promote protection of the Town's extraordinary farmland and to encourage local support for its farm industry. In 2001 the committee developed a Farmland Protection Overlay District based on the Town's certified Agricultural District parcels, implementing an existing provision of Red Hook's Zoning Law.

Among other provisions, the amendment discourages any development on productive farmland by providing more flexibility for landowners who may need to develop part of their land.

Table 1. Farms and Acreage in Red Hook

Number of Farm Parcels	264
Average Size of Ag Parcel	34 acres
Land in Farms	8,974 acres
Total Land in Red Hook	25,380 acres
Percentage of Town in Agricultural Use	35%

### Town of Red Hook

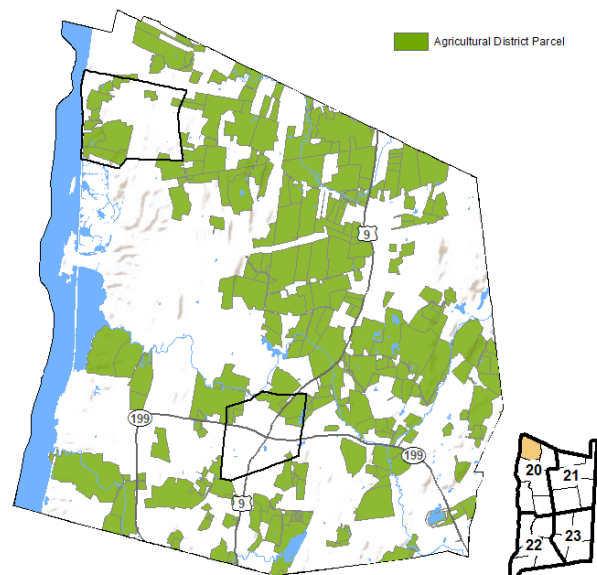


Figure 1. Map of Town and Village of Red Hook and village of Tivoli in Agricultural District 20

Currently the Town is considering a proposal to adopt a Farm Business Overlay District to increase protection of vital farmland from incompatible development, and relocate higher density growth in and around the town and villages of Red Hook and Tivoli.

A Closer Look

Figure 2 illustrates the relative acreage distribution of farm enterprises in the Red Hook. The largest segment (by acreage) is *Production Agriculture*, with farm operations on 2,962 acres of property. *Specialty Crops* and *Beef & Livestock* are two other particularly large agricultural segments in Red Hook.

It is important to note that this data is based on farm parcel data collected, and therefore does not necessarily reflect the number of actual farms. For example, one farm could have one or several parcels. Farm property includes all the property tax parcels owned and/or operated on by a farm operation. Actual cropped or pasture area may be less than the area of the entire farm property.

Most farms in Dutchess County are small farms, grossing less than \$10,000 in annual sales. These farms typically make fewer capital investments. Red Hook is not an exception. There are far more farm parcels with annual capital investments in the 'Below \$10,000' category than there are in any of the other 5 categories (see Figure 3).

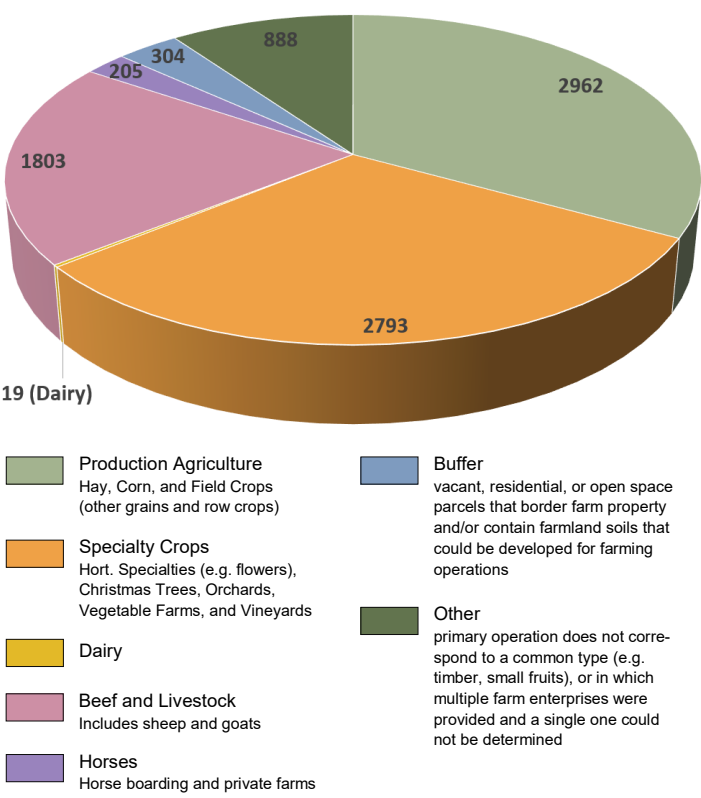


Figure 2. Acreage Distribution by Farm Enterprise Category

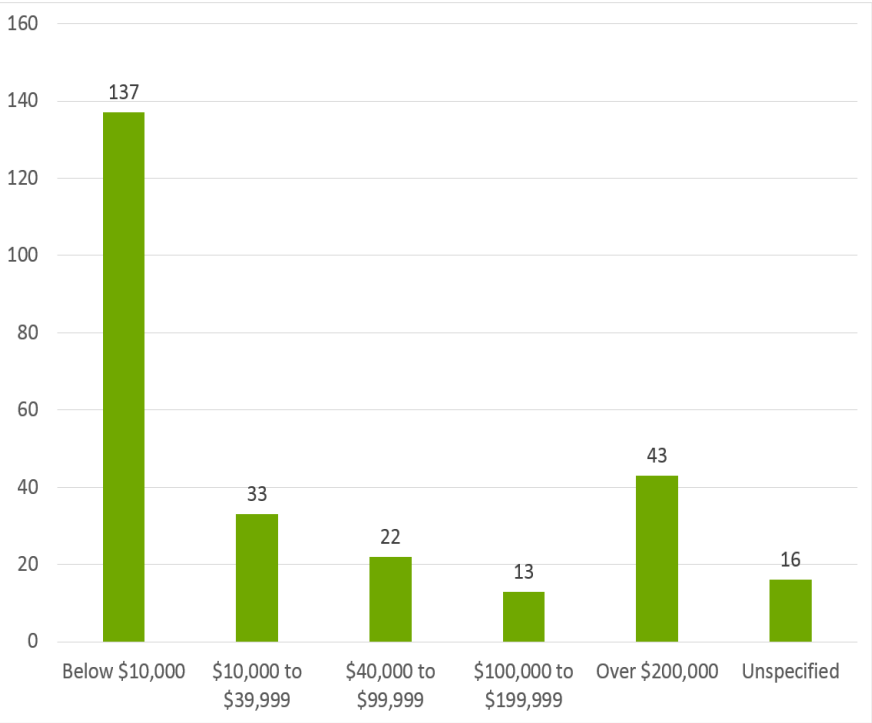


Figure 3. Number of Farms Parcels by reported Capital Investment

Sources:

Agricultural District Recertification Process 2015 for 2016 Recertification. Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County. April 2016. Updated 2022

Census and Demographics. Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development. Retrieved from <http://co.dutchess.ny.us/countygov/departments/planning/plcensus.htm>, June 2015.

CCEDC provides equal program and employment opportunities. The programs provided by this agency are partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.

In terms of the economic benefits for Dutchess County and the region as a whole, small farms generate significant dollars that are then spent on investments (equipment, vet fees, etc.) that fuel the local economy. Larger farm operations, although fewer in number, generate higher gross sales and capital investment. A significant number of Red Hook's farm parcels (55) had capital investments between \$10,000 and \$100,000, while 56 invested \$100,000 or more (Figure 3). These figures are important to consider when looking at the impact of agriculture in the county, as a large portion of these capital investments go back into the local economy.