

Union Vale, 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.



Abel’s Tree Farm. Photo credit Sean Carroll

Agriculture in Union Vale

The Town of Union Vale has been subject to considerable development pressure throughout the past decade. The Town experienced one of the highest percentages of population growth in Dutchess County in the decade between 1990 and 2000; its 13% rate of population growth between 2000 and 2006 is among the highest in the County. At the same time, Union Vale has become an important ally in the County’s farmland protection initiative, committing municipal funds to two important acquisitions. From 2008 to 2022, Union Vale saw a 13% increase in its Agricultural District Acreage.

The 187.8-acre Abel Tree Farm was protected by a conservation easement in 2007 as the result of a funding partnership among the County, the Town of Union Vale, and the Dutchess Land Conservancy. Union Vale and the Town of Washington have recently committed local funding to the purchase of development rights on the 270-acre Bos Haven Farm, joining Dutchess County to provide a match for a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

In 2007 the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets announced an award to Dutchess County to secure the development rights on 270 acres of Bos Haven Farm in the Towns of Union Vale and Washington, a key operation in an area of critical agricultural resources. The Towns of Union Vale and Washington have committed municipal funding to the acquisition in partnership with the State and Dutchess County.

The Union Vale master plan seeks to protect its agricultural lands by designating agricultural use for some of the areas in the Agricultural Districts. The remaining agricultural parcels are in slope protection, open space or rural categories. Densities permitted here average from 3 to 5 acres.

A Closer Look

Communities in Dutchess County contain a diverse range of farm enterprises, from dairy, livestock and field crops to horses, orchards, and vineyards. Many of the farms produce a variety of goods as well. For example, some dairy farms also produce hay or grains. However, if the majority of the farm’s income is generated from dairy, dairy is considered the enterprise. Farm enterprise types were developed from documentation provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets; they were then aggregated into larger categories for simplification.

Table 1. Farms and Acreage in Union Vale

Number of Farm Parcels	189
Average Size of Ag Parcel	61 acres
Land in Farms	11,167 acres
Total Land in Union Vale	23,891 acres
Percentage of Town in Agricultural Use	47%

Town of Union Vale

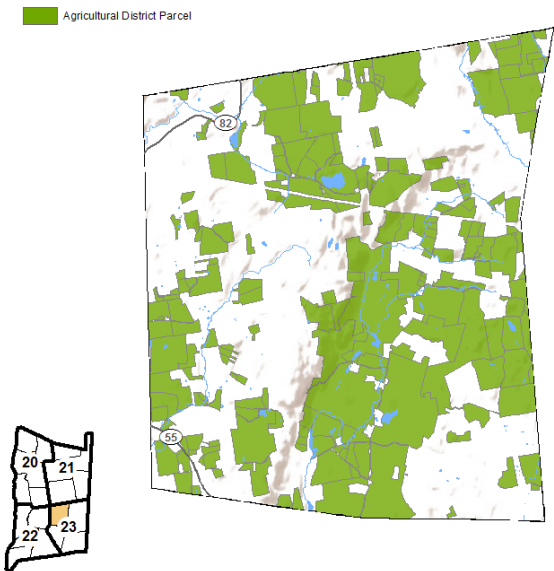


Figure 1. Map of Town of Union Vale in Agricultural District 23

It is important first 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.

Figure 2 illustrates the relative acreage distribution of farm enterprises in the town of Union Vale. The largest segment (by acreage) is *Production Agriculture*, with farm operations on 6,802 acres of property. “*Other*” and *Beef and Livestock* are two other particularly large agricultural segments in Union Vale, consisting of 1,209 and 1,029 acres, respectively.

Most farms in Dutchess County are small farms, grossing less than \$10,000 in annual sales. These farms typically make fewer capital investments. Union Vale is not an exception. There are far more farms with annual capital investments in the ‘Below \$10,000’ category than there are in the other 5 categories combined (see Figure 3).

The high number of farms in Union Vale with less than \$10,000 in annual sales and capital investment may be somewhat skewed by agricultural “buffer” properties, which are typically not in agricultural production and don’t generate sales nor require capital investment.

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,

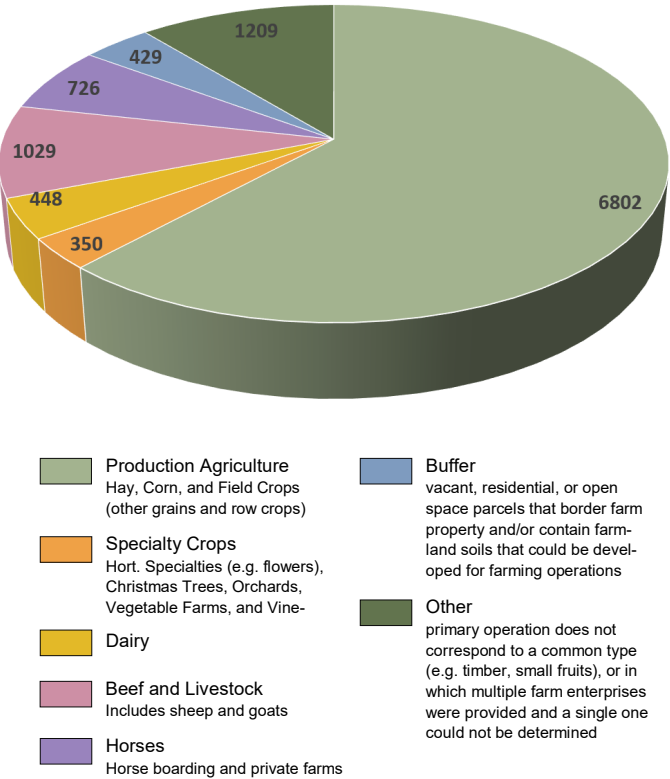


Figure 2. Acreage Distribution and Number of Farms by Enterprise Category

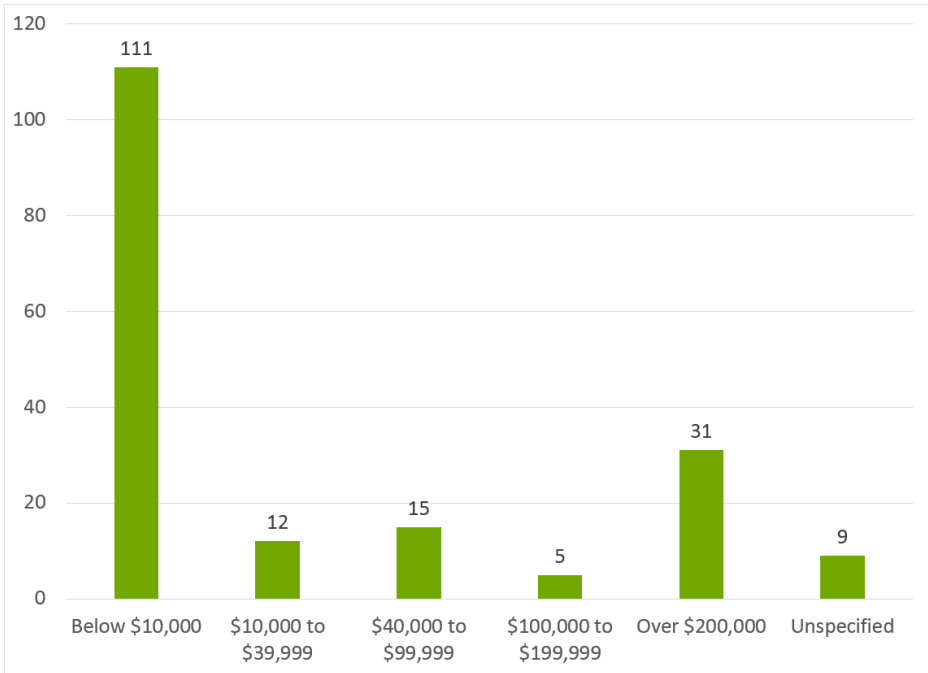


Figure 3. Number of Farms by reported Capital Investment

generate higher gross sales and capital investment. A significant number of Union Vale’s farm parcels (27) had capital investments between \$10,000 and \$100,000, while 36 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.

**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.

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