

Cornell Cooperative Extension | **Oneida County**

Farm Flash



August 2026

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Upcoming Events

NYS Woodsmen's Field Day

August 21-23, Opens Daily at 8:00 am
Rain OR Shine with Plenty of FREE Parking

Logging Competitions: Held daily featuring forestry professionals competing in events like chainsawing, axe throwing, and crosscut sawing.

Exhibits & Machinery: Hundreds of displays showing the latest in logging machinery, forest industry tools, and safety equipment.

Family Activities: Wood craft shows, a parade, fireworks, and wood carving demonstrations.

USDA Designates 20 NY Counties Natural Disaster Areas for Drought and Excessive Heat

This Secretarial natural disaster designation allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend much-needed emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through emergency loans. Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation, or to refinance certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability. Oneida County is considered a Contiguous County. **Deadline to apply is December 21, 2026.** Contact your local USDA Service Center at (315) 736-3316 to learn more

Upcoming Events

Save the Date - Taste of CNY

Saturday, November 7 - 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
North Star Orchards - Westmoreland

Food Sampling - Local Products for Sale -
Children's Activities - Live Music -
Fun for the Whole Family!

Taste of CNY Vendors Wanted

The Taste of Central New York is to highlight foods and crafts that are prepared from locally sourced products, (not all products need to be locally sourced). **The event runs from 10:00AM to 2:00PM on November 7, 2026 at North Star Orchards in Westmoreland, NY.** There is no fee to participate but Committee approval is required upon completion of your registration. Vendors are required to provide free samples of food and/or craft or an interactive experience.

If you are interested in attending as a vendor please scan the QR code or email Alex at ash273@cornell.edu for the registration link.



"Beyond a Wholesome Discipline, Be Gentle with Yourself"

Matt Volz

These words from Max Erhmann's poem *Desiderata* are ones that we don't often hear, especially at this time of the year. We're always hustling to keep up with the weeds, keep up with demands, beat the rain, find more customers, etc. The list of "to-do's" is endless. So, rather than give you advice on what more you should be doing or informing you of some new threat to your crops, calves or cash flow, I encourage you to take a deep breath and "Be Gentle with Yourself."

We shouldn't ignore the first half of those words from *Desiderata* though - "Beyond a wholesome discipline..." Most farmers that I know are disciplined. They work hard and take pride in getting the job done. However, if there were one area where the farmer's usual discipline seems to break down it is with desk work.

As a farmer myself I know how easy it is to put off desk work. During this time of year, there are often reasonable excuses to do so. However, we can always find an excuse to put off things that we don't want to do, and for many of us that is sitting at the desk and looking at our books. If there is one thing I'd urge you to do, it is to build a wholesome discipline around doing so. Don't avoid it. Don't put it off. Make it a routine part of your week, or at least your month. The more you do it, the easier it will get. And being on top of your books will put you in a position to deal more knowledgeably and efficiently with opportunities and challenges as they arise.

Be aware also of why you might be making excuses not to review your farm's financials. Is it because your process is disorganized or cumbersome? Are you worried about what you might see? Or are you just not sure what you should be looking at or what the numbers might be telling you? That's okay. I've been there. Many farmers have been there. The good news is that there are resources available to you. We at CCE Oneida are here to help, and we have several community partners that can also help if necessary. So please reach out to me at mcv54@cornell.edu or (315) 736-3394 ext. 177 if you think we can be of service!

Applications for the Agricultural Resiliency Against Tariffs Program are due Tuesday, August 11, 2026 at 11:59 pm.

If you have been impacted by the rising cost of imported products or the general instability within the export market, you may be eligible to apply and receive relief funds.

From the NYS Governor Kathy Hochul's Website:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-launch-30-million-tariff-relief-program-new-york-agricultural>

"The Governor's tariff relief program will provide direct payments of a minimum of \$1,000 and a maximum of \$25,000 to eligible producers.

Distribution of funds will be determined through two tracks:

Track 1: Cow Dairy Farms

Track 2: Livestock, Livestock Products, Specialty Crops, Aquaculture

Eligible applicants must fill out a general application, provide agricultural sales or milk production data and meet specific criteria, including:

- Applicants must have at least two-thirds of federal gross income in excess of
- \$30,000 derived from agricultural activities, as defined by New York State Tax Law.
- Applicants must produce eligible crops within New York State.
- Eligibility and production data must be certified by a qualified financial professional.
- All applicants must provide a complete substitute W-9 form, necessary for payment.

Dairy farm applicants must sign a records release form, allowing confirmation of milk production data."

Applications can be found at:

<https://agriculture.ny.gov/agricultural-resiliency-against-tariffs-program> or by scanning the QR Code



Dairy Farmers May Participate in the H2-A, but Restrictions Still Apply

Lucas Smith and Richard Stup

On June 17, 2026, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a [press release](#) regarding new guidance that has been issued clarifying the eligibility of U.S. dairy farms to utilize the H-2A visa program to bring in foreign guest workers for temporary or seasonal jobs. The internal guidance, issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), confirms that dairy farms may access H-2A employees for work on the dairy under the same rules as any other employer using the H-2A program.

Importantly, the guidance does not change the requirement that the employment of H-2A employees be of a "temporary or seasonal nature," as defined below:

- Temporary employment is "where the employer's need to fill the position with a temporary worker will, except in extraordinary circumstances, last no longer than one year."
- Seasonal employment is "tied to a certain time of year by an event or pattern, such as a short annual growing cycle or a specific aspect of a longer cycle, and requires labor levels far above those necessary for ongoing operations."

For most dairy farms where caring for livestock and milking cows are consistent, year-round tasks, utilization of H-2A employees has long been extremely limited. This new guidance opens up some opportunities for dairy employers to access H-2A workers when the job is at least partly "temporary or seasonal," even if it includes ongoing tasks such as milking. To be clear, if the job has no "temporary or seasonal" aspect, then it remains ineligible for H-2A. The burden to establish that the work H-2A employees are being sought for is temporary or seasonal is on the filing employer and will be subject to review by New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL), and approval by USCIS and the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). Employers, or their agents, file an application explaining the employer's need for foreign workers and demonstrating that the position(s) they are seeking to fill are temporary or seasonal.

The authorities, USDOL and USCIS, will evaluate the application and can ask for clarification or more information in order to approve or deny it. Employers must think carefully and access appropriate help for the H-2A application process to avoid denials and abuse of the program.

The new guidance opens potential opportunities for dairy farms to selectively utilize H-2A as part of a broader labor strategy. It offers an example of a seasonal dairy herdsman position that entails different seasonal duties in spring/summer as compared to fall/winter even if some tasks like milking are consistent throughout the year. Another example discusses potentially eligible temporary employment situations where an extraordinary situation exists for “a distinct period of temporary need.” Examples of such temporary need might include temporary replacement of a permanent employee to cover an extended absence, or temporary staffing needs during an extraordinary period of farm expansion.

Caution: No Solution Yet for Non-seasonal and Non-temporary Jobs

This new policy guidance clarifies that dairy employers can participate in H-2A for temporary or seasonal jobs. But, it also makes abundantly clear that permanent or lengthy and consecutive jobs are not eligible. In fact, the memorandum explicitly states that: “Absent a showing of extraordinary circumstances demonstrating a one-time need, a petitioner requesting H-2A workers to perform the same dairying position and job duties for a back-to-back lengthy consecutive or near-consecutive period for the same job duties for a dairying position without a meaningful break in employment, so as to indicate an ongoing permanent need, would generally constitute substantial evidence supporting the denial of the H-2A petition...”

Separately, legislation was recently introduced by Representative G.T. Thompson of Pennsylvania that would reform H-2A to eliminate the seasonal requirement and change the definition of temporary to anything less than 350 days in length. This change, if passed into law, would go far beyond the current policy guidance we are discussing here to open H-2A for permanent jobs in the dairy industry, but we’re not there yet.

Oneida County Public Market

Every Saturday from 9:00am to 1:00pm
at Utica's Union Station - 321 Main St, Utica

Seasonal Field Work Not Affected

In recent years, dairy employers in New York and across the country have increasingly turned to H-2A employees to fill seasonal employment roles as machine operators and truck drivers for field work and harvest during the busy spring, summer and fall months. This guidance does not affect the process for obtaining employees for those roles.

Next Steps for Dairy Employers Considering Using H-2A

The H-2A program has strict compliance requirements and involves additional regulatory scrutiny that non-H-2A farm employers typically do not have to deal with. Because of that, many employers choose to use an agent to help them navigate the H-2A process. NYSDOL maintains a non-comprehensive [list of agents](#) that support H-2A employers with their applications. You can also learn more about the H-2A program and the responsibilities of employers by visiting the [USDAs H-2A Visa Program webpage](#) and the [Cornell Ag Workforce Development H-2A Regulations webpage](#).

The H-2A application process includes many steps starting with the State Workforce Agency (SWA), which in New York is the [NYSDOL Foreign Labor Certification Unit](#), followed by USDOL, and then USCIS. It is important to ensure that you are confident in completing every step in the application process as the new guidance indicates an employer's filing history may be considered as part of a case-by-case review of each application by an employer. This means that early misuse of the program or continued errors related to H-2A applications could impact future H-2A program access by an employer.

Additionally, the H-2A program requires employers to pay numerous costs for employees including application fees, transportation costs for employees to and from their home country, providing [free housing that meets program standards](#), and paying at least the applicable [Adverse Effect Wage Rate](#) (AEWR) which may exceed the state minimum wage, in addition to several other obligations employers have.

It is important for dairy employers to get a thorough understanding of H-2A before jumping into the program. For questions, reach out to Cornell Ag Workforce Development, the [NYSDOL Foreign Labor Certification Unit](#), or a qualified agent.

Market Musings: Why Sell at a Farmers Market

JB Riffle

When deciding whether to sell at a farmers' market, vendors ultimately need to know one thing: **Will it help my bottom line?**

The answer is often yes. Selling at a farmers' market can improve a business's profitability in both direct and indirect ways. This month, we're focusing on three direct benefits that can increase revenue. Next month, we'll explore **three indirect benefits** that can help your business grow and become more profitable over time.

Higher Profit Margins Through Direct Sales

One of the biggest advantages of selling at a farmers' market is the opportunity to sell directly to consumers.

When vendors sell to distributors, grocery stores, or restaurants, they are typically making wholesale sales. Wholesale markets can provide consistent demand, but they also require lower prices and smaller profit margins. For many small-scale producers, those margins can make it difficult to generate sufficient income.

For example, a local poultry producer may need to charge \$13.50 per pound for boneless, skinless chicken breasts to cover production costs and earn a profit. A restaurant, however, may be able to purchase similar products from a large distributor for less than \$3.00 per pound. Because large-scale producers benefit from higher production volumes and economies of scale, small farms often cannot compete on wholesale pricing alone.

Direct-to-consumer sales help level the playing field. By selling at a farmers' market, vendors can capture the full retail value of their products, resulting in higher profit margins and greater revenue per unit sold.

Access to a Larger and More Diverse Customer Base

Farmers' markets attract shoppers with a wide variety of interests and motivations. While some customers attend specifically to purchase produce, meat or baked goods, others may come for handmade products, live entertainment, educational activities, or simply to enjoy the community atmosphere.

This creates opportunities that are harder to find through other sales channels.

A farm stand or roadside stand primarily attracts customers who already know they want a specific product. In contrast, a farmers' market exposes vendors to a broader audience, including customers who may not have planned to purchase their product before arriving.

In other words, a shopper who visits the market for fresh vegetables may leave with local honey, baked goods, handcrafted soap, or a bouquet of flowers. This increased exposure can translate into more customers, more sales, and higher overall revenue.

Increased Customer Purchasing Power Through Food Access Programs

Many farmers' markets participate in food access programs that help customers stretch their food budgets, which can lead to increased sales for vendors.

At SNAP-authorized farmers' markets, customers can use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase eligible food items. Many markets also participate in matching incentive programs through organizations such as the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the Field & Fork Network. These programs can provide matching funds up to \$50 when customers spend SNAP benefits at the market.

For example, a customer who uses \$50 in SNAP benefits may receive an additional \$50 in matching funds to spend with participating vendors. This effectively doubles their purchasing power and increases the amount they can spend at the market.

Many farmers' markets participate in food access programs that help customers stretch their food budgets, which can lead to increased sales for vendors.

Another important program is the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). Through FMNP, eligible low-income seniors and WIC participants receive coupon booklets that can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from authorized vendors. These benefits bring additional dollars into the market while helping residents access healthy, locally grown food.

Simply put, food access programs benefit both shoppers and vendors by increasing purchasing power and directing more spending toward local businesses

Looking Ahead

Higher profit margins, access to new customers, and food access incentives are just three of the many reasons farmers' markets can be a valuable sales channel for vendors.

Next month, we'll explore three indirect ways farmers' market participation can strengthen your business and contribute to long-term profitability.

Field Crop Updates

Jeff Miller - OCSWCD

New Hay Seedlings

The last week in July and first week in August are appropriate for planting new hay fields. We usually have good weather for field preparation. Cooler temperatures and intermittent rainfalls occur as we process through fall. These conditions foster the development of the cool season grasses and legumes we plant for hay. Planting the first week of August ensures that seedlings mature enough to survive the first and following frosts and winter weather. Summer seedings are usually more successful in wet fields that can't be planted in the spring due to poor field conditions.

Potato Leaf Hoppers

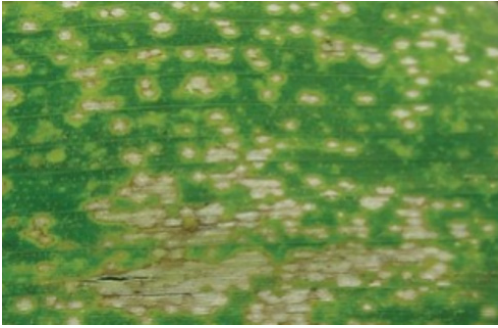
It is important to continue scouting fields for potato leaf hoppers (PLH) in August. They can be at populations that can reduce yield and protein in our good alfalfa fields. They may also weaken our stand prior to winter making them more vulnerable for winter injury.

Corn Scouting

Hopefully you had a chance to scout for corn rootworm at silking. Performing this activity can save a great deal of money when picking corn varieties that will perform well without having CRW traits.

This is prime time for the observation of leaf diseases. Some of the common leaf diseases include: eyespot, northern corn leaf blight, and bacterial leaf streak which I only observed a few times.

Applying a fungicide to mature corn fields may not be economical. Identifying the diseases in your fields can be used to select resistant varieties that may be planted in the future.



Eyespot



Northern Corn Leaf Blight



Tarnspot



Bacterial Leaf Streak

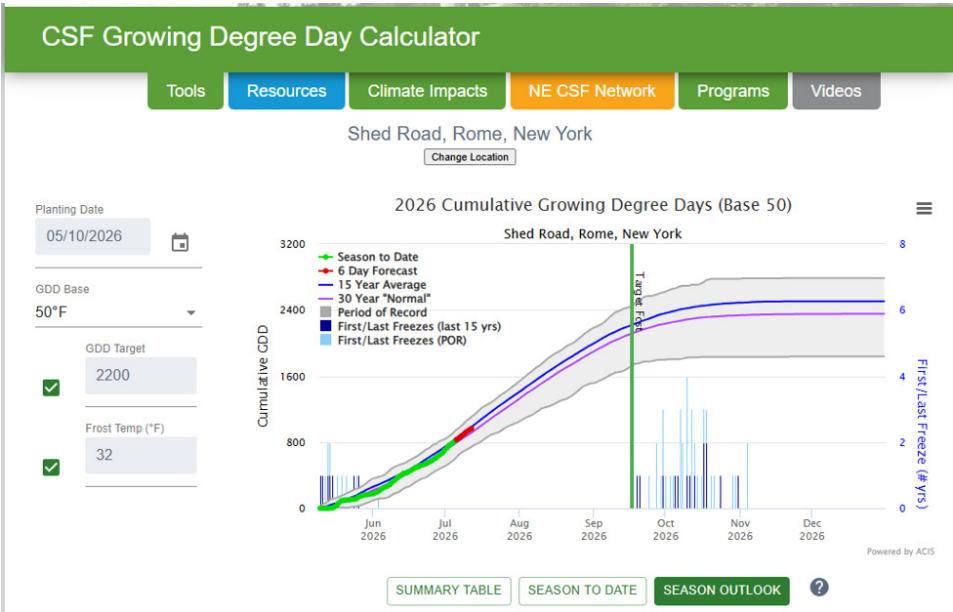


Northern Corn Leaf Spot

Using Climate Smart Farming GDD Calculator

The calculator can be used to plan silage harvest. Just a reminder that you can go to this link <http://climatesmartfarming.org/tools/csf-growing-degree-day-calculator/> and easily scroll on a map to find the location of your corn field.

Enter the date that the corn in the field formed an opened tassel and track GDDs from that day. You can save the location and return to check the accumulation of GDDs from the date of tasseling. Once you get to 800 GDDs you can grab some whole plant samples and check the dry matter level. *I entered July 22nd as the date of tassel for 2026 at this site in Westmoreland and it used the weather data from a 2 mile area around that location and calculated 800 GDDs were accumulated on September 2nd from the July 22nd start date.*



Soybeans

Diseases to Observe

White Mold

- White mold developing on the lower stem of soybeans under humid conditions
- This disease is the most important and devastating to soybean fields
- If you see patches of yellow plants in a field, especially when not associated with drainage. Take the time to investigate and look at the lower stems.
- The soil needs to be moist, canopy closed, and humid conditions to support this disease.



Septoria Brown Spot

- A very common disease that can be found on the lower leaves in most soybean fields in our area. It rarely affect yield.

Frogeye Leaf Spot

- Only see this occasionally in local fields. Affects upper leaves of susceptible varieties. Can impact yield if a great deal of the foliage is infected.





Cercospora Leaf Blight

- Have only seen symptoms on a few leaves in any soybean fields in our area. Infection would have to occur early to have a significant impact on yield.

Soybean Aphids

Economic threshold for soy aphids is 250 aphids per plant, with numbers rising, in soybeans that are beginning flowering to soybeans with seeds that fill the entire pod, and with no real predator population.

Other signs that you have a more severe aphid population: upper leaves appear crinkled, white skins of aphids on upper leaves, and ladybird beetles flying across your path as you walk through the field.

Japanese Beetles and Grasshoppers

Can defoliate soybean but defoliation has to exceed 25% in the vegetative stage or 15% higher in the reproductive stages to impact yield.

Cover Crops

Some of you grow some acreage of corn for silage harvest. Your field only has full plant cover for about 4 months of the year. The rest of the year it can be pounded by rainfall and topsoil can be lost forever. August is a great time to find cover crop seed and prepare for planting. As always timeliness is a key issue. Early planted cover crops have greater impacts on your fields. Method of planting also has a big impact. You can plant bin run oats into these fields at 60-90 lbs per acre, drilled vs broadcast respectively. This provides a rapidly developing cover with roots to hold the soil, some weed control and no need to terminate in the spring.

You could plant winter rye at 60-90 lbs/acre drilled vs broadcast. This provides rapidly developed thick cover that continues to grow into early winter providing weed control, erosion prevention, limited nitrogen conservation and food microbes both into the winter and early spring keeping them active for nutrient turn over for your crops next spring and summer. You will have to terminate the cover. Some growers terminate at 5 inch height, other plant into the live stand and terminate it immediately after plating using glyphosate.



POP-UP MARKET

AT CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF ONEIDA COUNTY

CCE



ONEIDA COUNTY
PUBLIC MARKET



**WEDNESDAY
JULY 29**

**WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 12**

**WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 26**

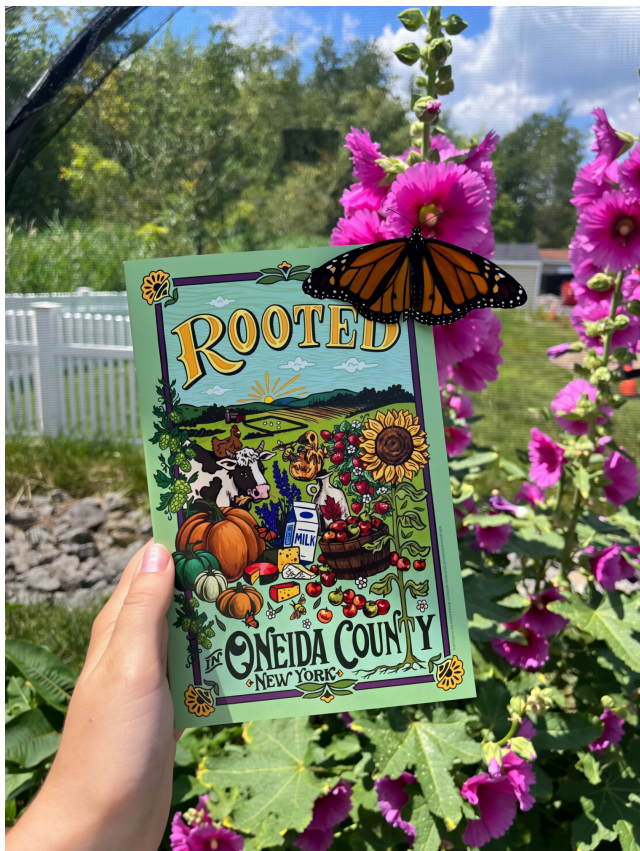
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An online version of Rooted in Oneida County can be found on the CCE Oneida Website by scanning the QR Code. Check it out and stay Loyal to Local this summer!

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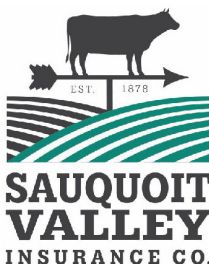
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FRANKLIN
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(607) 829-2600

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