

# An Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan For Putnam County

## Agricultural Opportunities & Challenges in Putnam County



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Prepared by the  
Putnam County  
Agricultural &  
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**Acronyms Used in Plan**

AEM: Agricultural Environmental Management program.

AFPB: Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board.

AML: Agriculture and Markets Law; refers to state law.

BMP: Best Management Practices.

GIS: Geographic Information System.

LESA: Land Evaluation and Site Assessment.

LDR: Lease of Development Rights.

NRCS: The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service.

PDR: Purchase of Development Rights.

RIMS II: Regional Input-Output Modeling System

SWCD: Soil and Water Conservation District

TDR: Transfer of Development Rights.

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture.

WAC: The Watershed Agricultural Council

WAP: The Watershed Agricultural Program

**Maps Included In Plan:**

Farmland Soils

Farms and Ag Districts

Protected Lands

NYC Water Supply Watershed

LESA Ranking of Farms

# 1. Executive Summary

**A**griculture in Putnam County is a diverse, multimillion dollar industry and a crucial land use that strengthens our local food supply, economic vitality, quality of life, community character, picturesque landscape, environment, and recreational opportunities. Top agricultural and farming activities in the County include equine and livestock operations, greenhouses, nurseries, orchards, maple syrup, hay and corn production. There are 11,309 farmland acres in Putnam County (about 4% of the total land base). Farmland includes, but is not limited to tillable lands (890 acres), forest lands (4024 acres), and pastureland (1,818 acres). The average size of the farm is 52.6 acres, and farms range from 1.25 acre in size to 1,200 acres.

These lands are under intense pressure and at great risk of being converted to non-agricultural development. Thoughtful, decisive action is needed now to preserve the remaining farms and agriculture in Putnam County.

Located in the heart of the scenic Hudson Valley, Putnam County is within commuting distance of New York City. The risks to continuing agriculture in Putnam County are great: compared to other Hudson Valley counties Putnam showed the greatest loss of farmland acres, the highest agricultural production expenses, and smaller net return per farm. Putnam County also has the highest rate of increase in new housing units compared to other Hudson Valley counties. High property values and taxes are one of the major issues facing agriculture in Putnam County.

However, great potential for agriculture still exists. Agriculture has a strong positive economic impact in Putnam County (its multiplier effect is one of the highest in the region). Recent years have shown large increases in the market value of agricultural products, and there are many opportunities for niche marketing, vegetable growing, and agri-tourism activities. Further, there is support for agriculture among the public and the existing certified agricultural district and the Putnam County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board provide a basis for further protection and enhancement of agriculture in the County.

## **Agriculture is Important to Putnam County**

Farm businesses contribute to our local economy. In addition to millions of dollars worth of economic activity and farm related employment, farms pay more in taxes than they demand in local services and thus are wise financial investments for local towns. Farms contribute to a growing tourism industry in the county and offer a variety of recreational activities. Farms are working open spaces and are an alternative to congested non-agricultural development. They enhance the diversity of the Putnam County landscape and create the scenic views that define the distinctiveness and uniqueness of our County. Agriculture holds a major chapter in the history of Putnam County and farms have always played a vital role in the development of the county's economic and cultural fabric. In the New York City Watershed, agriculture is the preferred land use to protect water quality. Further, agricultural lands are crucial non-forested areas essential to life for hundreds of species of plants, mammals, insects, and birds that rely on open space for their primary habitat. And, farms are a local source of fresh, safe food and we have the opportunity to ensure that Putnam County farms supply the local demand for fresh and safe agricultural products.

## **Agricultural and Farmland Protection Efforts**

A variety of New York State laws and programs encourage and protect commercial farming. One major program – the Agricultural Districts Program, authorizes the creation of special districts to preserve farmlands and to protect their owners and operators. Being in an agricultural district benefits farmers several ways: by limiting taxation on farmland; by providing “right-to-farm” protections; by preventing local governments from enacting unreasonable regulations on farm operations; by requiring that the impact on farms be reviewed during the development process, and by limiting eminent domain proceedings. Other programs help reduce property tax burdens. There has been a certified agricultural district in Putnam County since 2003. However, many of the farms in Putnam County are small and do not meet state criteria for inclusion in these programs. Therefore, many county farms have neither protections nor benefits afforded larger farms.

Another state program includes authorization and funding to help counties develop strategic plans for agricultural protection and enhancement that identify and analyze the agricultural value of farmlands, and highlight threats to future agricultural uses, and describe activities, programs, and strategies to keep land in agriculture.

To augment existing local agricultural protection and enhancement efforts, the Putnam County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board initiated a planning process in 2003 to develop an agricultural plan for Putnam County. A consultant was retained in April 2004 to assist the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in developing this plan. Planning activities have centered on: documenting the economic importance, issues, trends, and needs of agriculture; developing a Geographic Information System (mapping) of farms, farmland, and environmental conditions related to agriculture; identifying future opportunities for agriculture; identifying areas suitable for farmland protection and developing a priority ranking system for lands to be protected; articulating a long-term vision for agriculture in the county; developing a series of goals to fulfill that vision; and developing specific strategies to achieve those goals. This plan meets the statutory requirements of New York State law (AML) Article 25-aaa. The planning process included extensive data collection and public input.

### **A Long-Term Vision for Agriculture and Farmland in Putnam County**

A long-range vision for agriculture and farmland was developed from identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing agriculture in Putnam County. The vision expressed in the following statement sets the tone and points the direction for the future—

*Agriculture in Putnam County is working open space understood and appreciated for its intrinsic contribution to Putnam County’s economy, environment, beauty and character, history, recreational opportunities, and our quality of life. Lands remain available for active agricultural activities. Agriculture also plays an important role in providing a local supply of fresh food and produce. Farmers are able to capitalize on new economic opportunities such as agri-tourism, niche or specialty products, and fresh products. Farm management is enhanced to increase profitability and use of best management practices protects natural resources. A positive attitude towards farming galvanizes the agricultural*

*community and its advocates so that they are successful in funding and providing programs to assist farmers to be more productive and profitable.*

## **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Agriculture and Farmland Protection**

The Plan establishes five major goals, and multiple objectives and strategies to fulfill the vision for agriculture and farmland in Putnam County.

### **Goal 1: Economic Opportunities - Preserve agriculture as an important industry in the county and promote further agricultural economic development.**

**Our vision:** The number of farms and greenhouse operations in Putnam County will grow and new niche markets will be developed. The County, through its programs, will encourage the development of agriculture as a goods-producing industry with the potential to generate additional economic activity across all industry sectors. Agri-tourism will become an important component of the county's economy. Agricultural production costs including property taxes will be controlled. More farmers will take advantage of agricultural assessments to reduce their costs. Putnam County will be regionally known as a location for safe, farm-fresh foods and unique, high-quality plants and flowers.

**Our Strategy:** This goal can be accomplished by aggressively integrating agriculture into existing county economic programs and initiatives; by decreasing costs of farming in Putnam County through programs that help farmers share resources, take advantage of the agricultural assessment program and receive expanded tax benefits for agriculture; by increasing agri-tourism and green marketing opportunities in the County, and by promoting farm diversification efforts such as niche marketing, direct marketing and new product development opportunities.

### **Goal 2: Community Support - Increase community support of agriculture and cultivate an enhanced appreciation of agriculture and the many roles it plays in Putnam County.**

**Our Vision:** Local and county government decision-makers and the general public will understand agriculture and the many important roles it plays in the County. These decision-makers will be active partners in preserving and nurturing farming. A positive attitude towards farming by farmers, other business people, and the general public will develop. There will be fewer negative farm/non-farm interactions.

**Our Strategy:** This goal can be accomplished by establishing new agricultural promotion efforts aimed at local decision makers, the general public, and area businesses. These activities could include farm visits and tours, more direct contact between farmers and local officials, developing a widely promoted county identity and logo for agriculture, developing and distributing Putnam County Agricultural Fact Sheets, expanding the educational role of the Tilly Foster Farm, and establishing a "Pride in Farming" program aimed at the farm community.

**Goal 3: Supportive Policies and Programs - Promote regional, county, and local policies and programs that encourage and sustain farming.**

**Our Vision:** The County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board provides key leadership for agricultural education and initiatives in the county. Farmers are actively involved on local planning boards and with area chambers of commerce to advocate more agricultural economic development efforts. Local Planning Boards understand state law requirements related to the agricultural district and are working to effectively administer them. Town planning efforts and zoning are enhanced to be farm-friendly and the county and towns have enacted right to farm laws.

**Our Strategy:** This goal can be accomplished by strengthening the role of the Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board as an advocate for agriculture in the County; by increasing farmer participation in local and county government activities and in local economic development efforts; by working to better integrate agriculture into local planning efforts; and by increasing participation of local towns in comprehensive planning and application of farmland protection strategies. The Plan encourages adoption of right-to-farm laws, use of tools to enhance administration and effectiveness of the Agricultural District program, methods to help minimize impacts of proposed projects on farms, and use of local land use planning tools such as comprehensive planning, farm-friendly zoning, and alternate subdivision layouts to protect farmland and open space.

**Goal 4: Education - Promote policies and programs that enhance farm viability and profitability.**

**Our Vision:** Farmers will have increased access to agricultural information. A farmer's network will have been created and will meet regularly to support county farmers and provide a mechanism for communicating and sharing information. More farmers will have completed farm business plans to help increase their profitability.

**Our Strategy:** This goal can be accomplished by providing more training and educational opportunities for farmers and agri-businesses aimed at enhancing farm profitability.

**Goal 5: Open Space and Natural Resources - Preserve agriculture as working open space and promote farm practices that protect natural resources.**

**Our Vision:** Additional working farmlands will be protected from non-farm development through easement programs. New development will consider and plan for farmland and other open spaces through use of innovative siting techniques such as clustering and conservation subdivision designs. Farms will be buffered from new uses. Putnam County will embrace smart growth techniques designed to maintain open space, farms, rural character, and enhance existing population centers such as hamlets and villages. Local communities will use incentives to accomplish land use goals such as density bonuses.

**Our Strategy:** This goal can be accomplished by seeking funding from various sources to initiate a Purchase or Lease of Development Rights program within the County, and by encouraging use of farmland protection techniques at the local level such as cluster development, use of conservation subdivisions, sliding scale zoning, smart growth

initiatives, buffers, agricultural overlay zones, zoning incentives, or establishing alternative development densities.

### **Putnam County Farms at a Glance**

- There are 215 farms in Putnam County: The Town of Patterson has 27%, Philipstown 20%, Southeast 19%, Kent 18%, Putnam Valley 14%, and Carmel has 2% of the farms in the county. There are a total of 11,309 acres of farmland in Putnam County, representing about 4% of the total land base in the county. Seventy-one or 33% of farms are within the agricultural district representing 4,551 of the 11,308 total farmland acres in the county; 144 (67%) are not in the district. Farm activities in Putnam County include greenhouses, tree nurseries, orchards, maple syrup, hay, corn crops and livestock operations related to poultry, horses, beef, sheep, goats, and hogs. Almost half (92 or 43%) of our farms are horse-related operations.
- Putnam County has 59 farms larger than 10 acres with \$10,000 or more in gross sales. Twenty farms have sales greater than \$1,000. Six farms have gross sales of \$100,000 or more. Eighty-six are classified as “hobby” farms with no sales. (The USDA recognizes a farm as any agricultural operation with gross sales more than \$1,000. New York State recognizes commercial farms as operations that are seven acres in size with gross sales of at least \$10,000 or less than seven acres with \$50,000 in gross sales.)
- The average size of farms in the county is 52.6 acres. The majority (137 or 64%) of Putnam County farms are located in the New York City watershed.
- The Agricultural Census indicates that land and building value per farm in Putnam County declined from \$586,257 to \$477,895 between 1992 and 1997; the average land and building value in the county, nevertheless, is almost twice that of New York State as a whole (\$286,620 in 1997). The value per acre in Putnam County (\$6,682 in 1997) remained stable; the per-acre value of farm property statewide was \$1,284 in 1997.
- Based on the \$2,928,000 value of sales reported by the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the annual sale of agricultural products in Putnam County adds an additional \$4.4 million to the local economy each year generating 42 full-time equivalent jobs with \$1.1 million in earnings. Thus, for every dollar of agricultural production in Putnam County, an additional 51 cents in economic activity is generated in other sectors of the local economy, including services, finance, real estate, and transportation.
- Total cash receipts from farm sales in Putnam County rank 53 or 54 among the 62 counties in New York State. However, data from the Agricultural Census show that net cash returns (agricultural sales minus production expenses) for farms in Putnam County increased by 61% between 1992 to 1997.
- Although for most of the 1990s, the value of agricultural output in Putnam County remained constant at \$2 million, total cash receipts nearly doubled from 1999 to 2000. Much of this growth occurred in nursery and greenhouse businesses, which

increased from \$3.46 million to \$6.58 million. Cash receipts for livestock were about \$88,000.

- The market value of nursery and greenhouse crops in Putnam County increased by more than 100%. The total number of farms in nursery and greenhouse production in Putnam County more than doubled in the five-year period.
- Putnam County ranks 51 in New York State in numbers of horses, but ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in total equine value. The average value per head in Putnam County is \$19,500 compared to \$10,130 statewide. From 1988 to 2000, the value of equine inventory in Putnam County rose by 204%.
- Between 1991 and 2001, farm production expenses increased at a rate of approximately 2.2% annually. The average county production cost of \$43,646 per farm was lower than the statewide average of \$68,906 in 1997. The cost of hired farm labor in Putnam County has increased nearly 12% per year.
- Hired farm labor and property taxes account for more than 50% of the costs associated with agricultural production in Putnam County—compared to 21.2% statewide.

### **Prioritizing Farmlands for Future Protection**

In order to implement this Plan successfully, Putnam County decision-makers will have to take advantage of the many farmland protection techniques available to them. No one tool will work alone. Some of these techniques include purchase of development rights programs (PDR), and land use and economic development techniques applied at the local level. It is important that Putnam County targets these tools to specific farmlands having important characteristics that make them critical to support continuing agriculture. In order to identify those lands, a ranking tool was developed. This tool is called Land Evaluation and Site Assessment, also referred to as LESA. It is a tool to help citizens and officials in Putnam County locate and prioritize those lands that should be protected from conversion to nonagricultural uses. It helps identify farmlands needing protection by taking into account soil quality and other factors that affect ongoing agricultural practices. LESA is an analytical tool - not a regulatory program and its role is to provide a systematic and objective procedure to rate and rank sites in order to help people make decisions on where to target farmland protection programs.

### ***Implementation Steps***

This plan is designed to be implemented over many years. General responsibility and leadership to accomplish this will be with the Putnam County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The County Legislature, the County Executive, and the Soil and Water Conservation District will also have a vital role to play. Other key players include local town governments and their Planning Boards, ZBA's, Building Inspectors, Assessors, and Town Boards; appropriate county offices; local farmers and growers; Cornell Cooperative Extension; the Watershed Agricultural Council and other farm related agencies such as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency; and area land trusts and other non-profit organizations. The plan outlines recommended time frames and key players needed to assist in implementation

of the specific action strategies. The plan should be reviewed and updated every five years.

Residents, elected officials and government agencies can help support Putnam County farmers now and into the future by becoming familiar with this plan and assisting in its implementation.

## 3. Introduction

### 3.a Agriculture in Putnam County

**A**griculture in Putnam County is a diverse, multimillion dollar industry—a crucial land use that strengthens our economic vitality, quality of life, food supply, community character, appealing environment, and recreational and historical opportunities.



Top agricultural and farming activities include upscale horse and livestock operations, greenhouse, nursery, hay production, vegetables, orchards, and maple syrup. Somewhat modest in overall size compared to other nearby counties, 11,309.15 acres in Putnam County are classified as agriculture; almost 6,842 of those are active farmland.

Recent trends are exerting intense pressure and have put agriculture and farms in

Putnam County at great risk of conversion to non-farm residential development. Located in the heart of the scenic Hudson Valley, Putnam County is within commuting distance of New York City. It offers a beautiful, less expensive alternative for urban residents seeking to escape high costs and overcrowding in neighboring Westchester County and Connecticut.

Chapter 4 details the type, status, and economic impact of Putnam County farms.

#### Ten Reasons Why Agriculture is Important to Putnam County

**1. Farms are a multi-million dollar industry in Putnam County.** Farm businesses contribute to our local economy through sales of agricultural products (over 2.5 million dollars in market value and an additional 3.7 million dollars in economic output related to that), and job creation (over 42 jobs plus owner/operators with an added \$1.1 million in earnings). In addition the dollar value of Putnam County's horse industry ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in New York State with a total value of \$21,450,000.00. These agricultural activities contribute to a healthy, diverse local economy.

**2. Farms pay more in local taxes than they demand in local services and, thus, is a wise financial investment for local towns.** Suburban sprawl raises property taxes. More people mean more demand for public services, including schools.

Use of land for active agriculture limits sprawl and the associated needs. Costs of Community Services Studies conducted throughout the Northeast show that residential development consistently demands more in services than it generates in revenue. On average, it costs \$1.23 to provide services for every dollar raised from residential land uses. For every dollar paid by farm, forest, or open land, it costs communities, on average, only \$0.29 for services. Thus, retention of farmland contributes to positive revenue to services ratios. The costs of public education, in particular, drive up the costs of public services resulting from residential development.<sup>1</sup> Higher costs for public services, in turn, generate higher real property taxes. In short, retention of farmland can help to retain lower real property tax burdens.

**3. Farms contribute to growing tourism industry in Putnam County.** Tourists seek picturesque, distinctive, safe areas to visit. Farms and farmlands, therefore, are increasingly important in tourism development. The Putnam County Travel Guide, for example, features the Tilly Foster farm on the cover and uses “Come to Where the Country Begins” as a marketing tag to attract leisure and tourist clientele.

**4. Farms are working open spaces and are an alternative to congested residential development.** There is strong desire and support among Putnam County residents to preserve open space. Protecting forests and wetlands has become a top county-wide priority. Likewise, farms are valuable working, self-sustaining open spaces. Their preservation will reduce the loss of open space and personal freedom to the cramped congestion of concentrated residential subdivisions.

**5. Farms enhance the diversity of landscape and create the scenic views that define Putnam County.** A patchwork of intermixed open and forested lands creates the unique rural settings that resident’s value and want surrounding their homes. Farmlands are a key feature in the texture of this special landscape.

**6. Farms contribute to Putnam County’s distinctive character and cultural history.** Distinctive community character is a powerful advantage and tool for developing a desirable, high quality, economically healthy locale. Active farms are an essential ingredient in the distinctive character of Putnam County. Agriculture is a major chapter in the history of Putnam County. Farms have always played a vital role in the development of the county’s economic and cultural fabric.

**7. Agriculture is preferred watershed land use and protects water quality.** Compared to agriculture, developed land has much more long-term negative impact on water quality and the overall environment. Development brings with it paved areas, septic systems, and roads—all of which negatively impact water quality. Farms, especially those following Best Management Practices, have a much more positive affect on watersheds and water quality.

**8. Farms contribute to biodiversity.** Agricultural lands are crucial non-forested areas essential to life for hundreds of species of plants, mammals, insects, and birds that rely on open space for their primary habitat. The edge between a forested area and any other type of habitat, such as a pasture, has been shown to have the richest diversity

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<sup>1</sup> Very high land values and assessments coupled with development such as seasonal home development that has little demand for school services are a situation when residential development does pay for the services they demand.

of plant and animal life.

**9. Farms are a local source of fresh, safe food.** People increasingly are interested in locally grown fresh food. Putnam County farms supply local demand for fresh agricultural products. Metropolitan farms are both productive and profitable because they have the advantage of a vibrant urban and suburban marketing niche.

**10. Farms offer recreational opportunities.** This role can be expanded through u-pick operations, horse riding, farm tours, farm stands, corn mazes, petting “zoo” and opportunities for children to interact with farm animals, establishment of Bed & Breakfast operations on farms, and hiking, bird watching, and similar rural recreational opportunities.

### 3.b Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans



New York State introduced agricultural districts in 1971. This program allows farmers to voluntarily commit land to special areas that encourage and protect commercial farming. In return, agricultural districts provide farmers with protections and safeguards from outside intrusions (right-to-farm). Landowners may also be eligible for agricultural assessments for farmland (in and outside of agricultural districts).

In 1992, the state adopted the Agricultural Protection Act which strengthened farmers’ right to farm, placed greater scrutiny on state projects that could negatively impact agriculture, and authorized development of county farmland protection plans. Article 25-aaa of this act helps to sustain the farm economy and promotes local initiatives to protect agriculture and farmland in New York State. This section authorized the creation of county Agriculture and Farmland Protection Boards (AFPB), like the Putnam County AFPB formed on July 1, 1997. These boards advise their county legislatures on actions that impact farms located in county agricultural districts.

In 1994, New York State initiated funding for counties developing strategic plans with a focus on education, agricultural development, and land protection. These plans are developed by the AFPB in partnership with local soil and water conservation districts.

State legislation adopted in 1996 provides funding for the purchase and development of farmland by counties with approved plans.

County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Boards are authorized to:

- ✓ Advise their county legislature about agricultural districts
- ✓ Review notice of intent filings
- ✓ Make recommendations about proposed actions involving government acquisition of farmland in agricultural districts
- ✓ Request review of state agency regulations that affect farm operations within an agricultural district
- ✓ Review and endorse applications for New York PDR funding.

AFP Plans identify important county farmland, analyze the agricultural and environmental value of these farmlands, and highlight threats to their agricultural use. They also describe activities, programs, and strategies to keep land in agriculture.

### **3.c The Planning Process in Putnam County**

The formal planning process in Putnam County was initiated in 2003 when the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board requested funding from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop this plan. In April 2004, a planning consultant was retained to assist the AFPB with the plan. Planning activities have centered on the following steps:

- Step 1 Documenting the economic importance, issues, trends, and needs of agriculture.
- Step 2 Developing a Geographic Information System (mapping) of farms, farmland, and environmental conditions related to agriculture, including topography, soils, and slope.
- Step 3 Identifying needs and opportunities for agriculture.
- Step 4 Identifying areas suitable for farmland protection, developing a priority ranking system for them, and analyzing lands and areas to be protected.
- Step 5 Identifying vision for agriculture in the county and developed a series of goals to reach that vision.
- Step 6 Developing specific recommendations and strategies to reach goals and vision.
- Step 7 Developing a full plan document that meets the statutory requirements of New York State law (AML) Article 25-aaa.

The following data gathering and public input activities took place as part of Step 1:

#### Public Input Activities:

- Conducted Farmer/Producer Focus Group
- Conducted personal in-depth interviews with farmers
- Conducted personal in-depth interviews with representatives of the following groups and agencies:
  - Putnam County Planning and Development Office
  - Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District
  - Putnam County Office of Real Property
  - Cornell Cooperative Extension
  - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
  - USDA Farm Service Agency
  - Tilly Foster Farm Staff
  - Green Chimneys Farm
  - Putnam County Horse Council

Putnam County Economic Development Corporation  
Putnam County Tourism Office  
New York City Department of Environmental Protection  
Watershed Agricultural Council, East of Hudson  
Lower Hudson Resource Conservation and Development Council  
NYC DEP Department of Land Acquisition  
Putnam County Land Trust  
Hudson Highlands Land Trust  
Open Space Institute  
Scenic Hudson  
Audubon New York  
Chambers of Commerce in Putnam County (Six)

Collected Data on agriculture and other county resources and characteristics:

US Agricultural Census  
County Business Patterns  
U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis  
US Census  
Collected and organized Geographic Information System (GIS) data:  
Putnam County Real Property Service (RPS, parcel and municipal boundaries, roads, hydrology, utilities easements, aqueducts and special districts.)  
Farms and Agricultural Districts  
Putnam County Division of Planning & Development  
Lands protected as public open space  
Tax parcel boundaries  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)  
DEC regulated wetlands  
Inactive hazardous waste sites  
NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)  
NYC Drinking water supply watersheds  
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)  
NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation  
NYS State Parks  
National Historic Register sites  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Federally regulated wetlands  
US Census Bureau  
Census Tract boundaries  
NYS Office of Cyber Security & Critical Infrastructure Coordination  
Ortho-rectified Aerial photos from 2000  
County, Town and Village boundaries  
Roads  
Water features and streams  
Aqueducts  
Government owned properties

Putnam County Agricultural Environmental Management Program  
Putnam County Office of Real Property  
Putnam County Department of Planning and Development  
Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District

New York Department of Agriculture and Markets

Researched land use regulations and plans as they relate to agriculture in Putnam County towns.

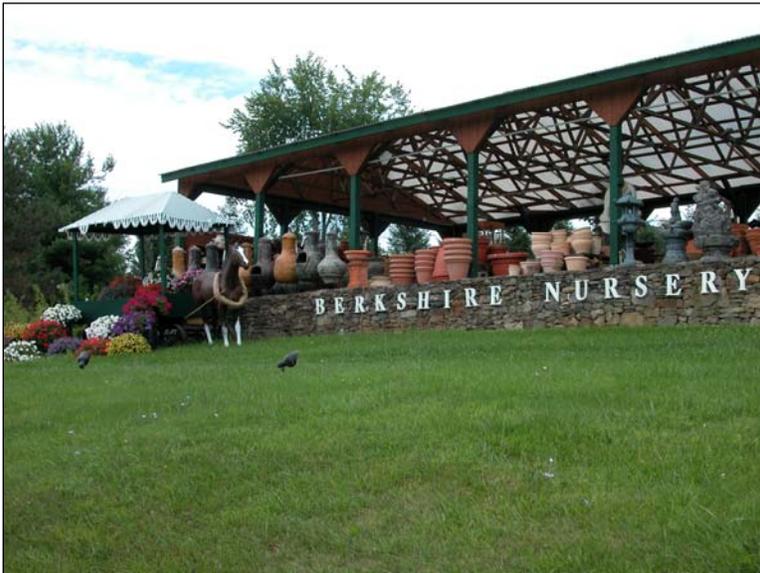
Researched available techniques for the protection of farming and farmland.

Evaluated and analyzed the economic importance of agriculture in Putnam County.

Evaluated growth trends and population changes in the county.

Analysis of data and public input from Step 1 allowed the AFPB to identify needs and opportunities for agriculture, to develop a long-term vision for agriculture in Putnam County, and to set broad goals to help guide the county in implementing this vision. A series of action steps and recommended strategies were then developed to meet specific needs. When a full draft plan was completed and approved by the AFPB, the plan was submitted to the Physical Services Committee of the Putnam County Legislature on July 15, 2004 and a public hearing was held on August 3, 2004.

Prior to the public hearing, each landowner and farmer included in the county Agricultural Environment Management program (AEM) data list received a copy of the executive summary of the plan and a letter of invitation to the hearing. The public can also access the full plan on the county web site. A media campaign was initiated to publicize completion of the draft plan and the public hearing. The AFPB submitted the plan to the County Legislature and it was adopted in August, 2004.



## 4. Putnam County's Farms and Farm Resources

### 4.a. Farms and Farmland in Putnam County

#### *Location of Farms*

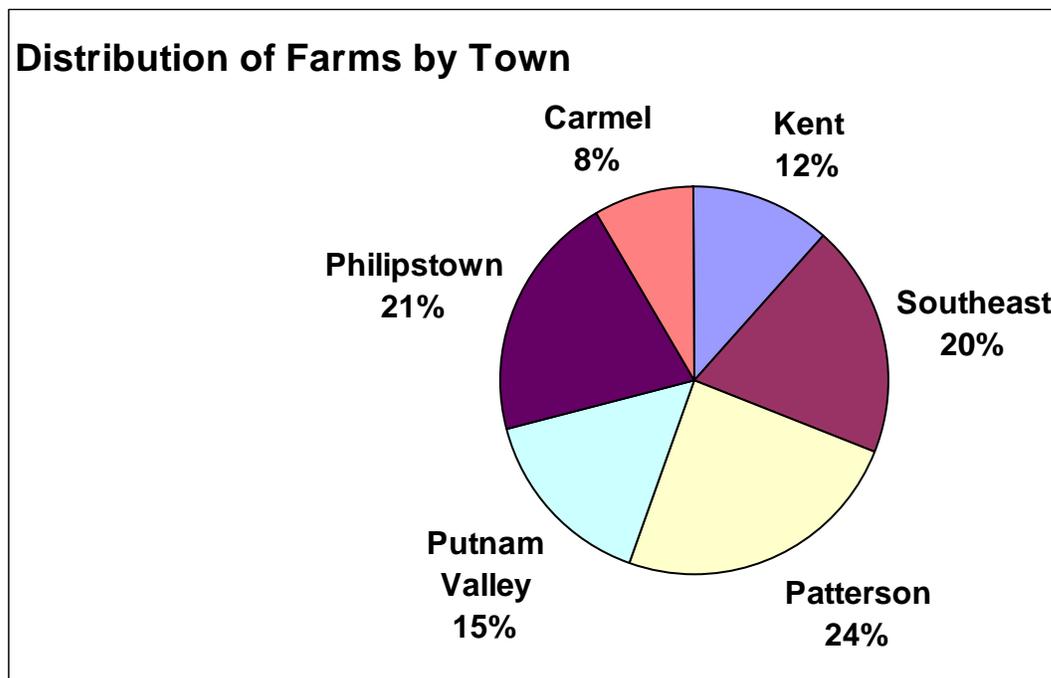
**T**wenty-seven percent of all farmland in Putnam County can be found in the town of Patterson. Philipstown has 20% and Southeast has 19% of farmland in the county. The Town of Kent has slightly more farm acres than Putnam Valley (18% compared to 14% respectively). Carmel has both the fewest farm operations and farmland acres in the county. The number of farms in each of these towns follows the same trend: More farms are located in Patterson, followed by Philipstown, Southeast, Kent, Putnam Valley, and Carmel.

Table 1. Acres and Percent of Farmland in Putnam County

Town	Total Farmland Acres and Percent of Total Farmland Acres	
Patterson	27%	3047.55
Philipstown	20%	2259.68
Southeast	19%	2164.35
Kent	18%	2009.19
Putnam Valley	14%	1562.88
Carmel	2%	265.5
County Total	100%	11,309.15

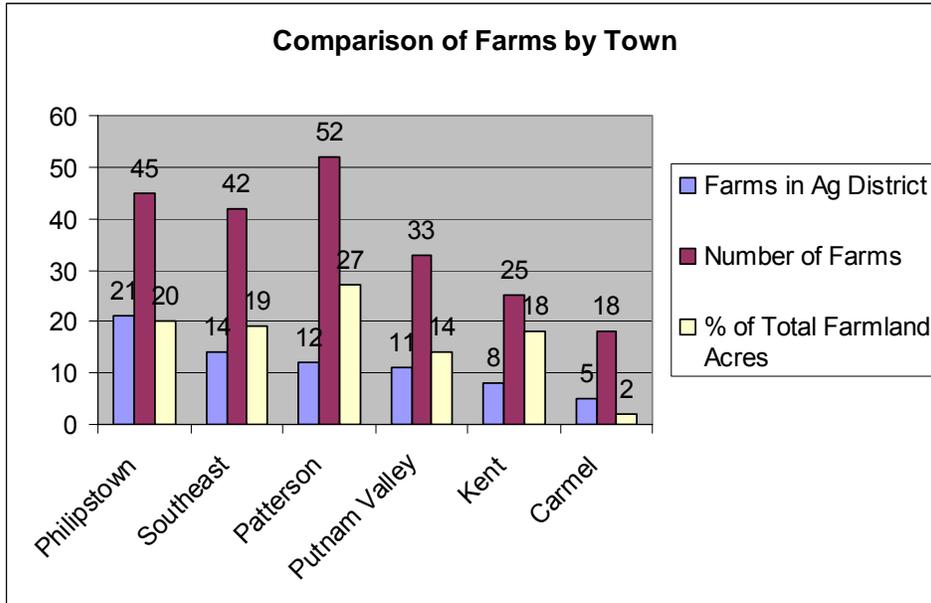
Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Figure 1. Distribution of Farms in Putnam County by Town



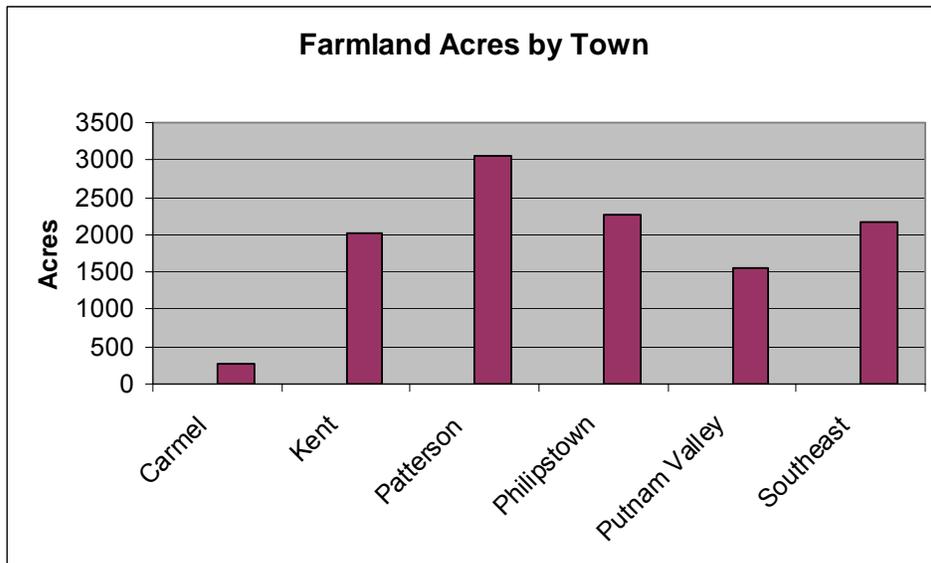
Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Figure 2. Comparison of Farms in Putnam County by Town



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Figure 3. Farmland Acres in Putnam County by Town

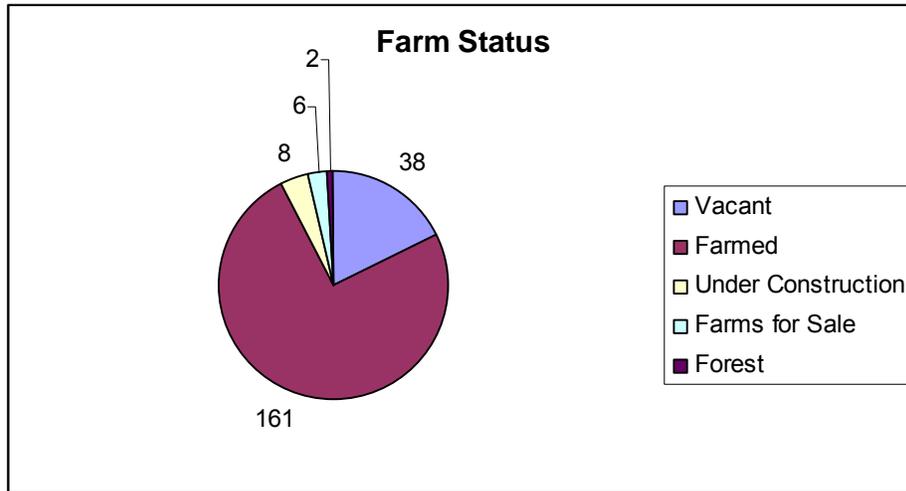


Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

## Type of Farm Activities

The AEM data identifies 215 farms in Putnam County. Of these, 161 are actively farmed, 38 are classified as vacant, six are for sale, eight are under construction, and two are forested. The chart below illustrates this range of farming types in the county.

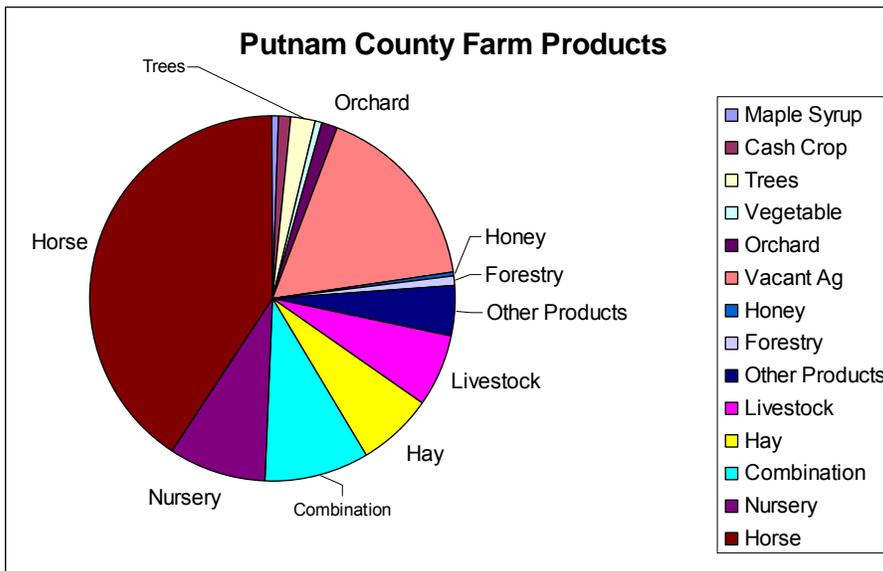
Figure 4: Farm Status



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Farming activities include horse, sheep, other livestock, maple syrup, hay, and cash crops such as corn. Almost half of the farms included in the AEM database are horse related operations (92 farms, or 42%). Twenty-one farms have a combination of agricultural activities, and 19 are nursery/greenhouse farms. Other common agricultural activities in Putnam County include hay and livestock.

Figure 5: Putnam County Farm Products



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

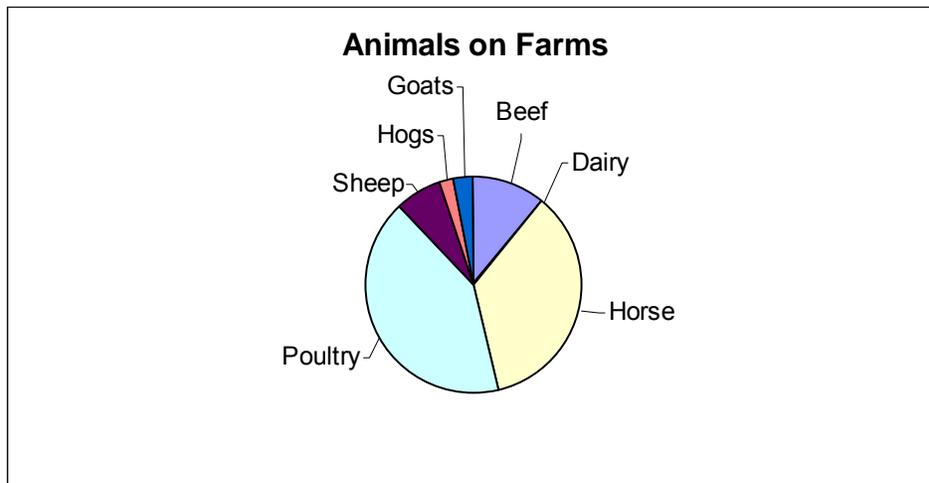
Table 2: Number and Percent of Farms by Type of Operation

Type of Operation	Number of Farms
Horse	92(42.79%)
Combination	21(9.77%)
Hay	15(6.98%)
Nursery	19(8.84%)
Livestock	14(6.51%)
Vacant Ag	38(17.67%)
Forestry	2(0.93%)
Trees	5(2.33%)
Orchard	3(1.40%)
Honey	1 (0.47)
Vegetables	1(0.47%)
Maple syrup	1(0.47%)
Cash crop	3(1.40%)

Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Putnam County has a variety of animals being raised: poultry are the most numerous (1,122 individual animals) followed by horses, beef, sheep, goats, and hogs (for actual numbers of animals, refer to Table 3, below.)

Figure 6: Animals on Putnam County Farms



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

**Table 3: Type and Number of Animals**

Type of Animal	Number of Animals
Poultry	1,122
Horse	937
Beef	297
Sheep	190
Goats	74
Hogs	61
Dairy	1
Total	2,682

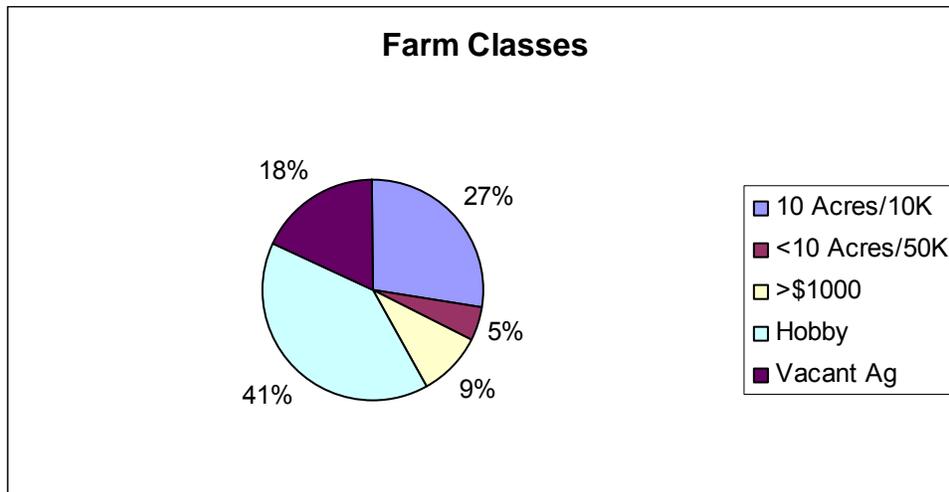
**Table 4: Number of Farms by Farm Class**

Type of Ag by Farm Class	Number of Farms
10 acres in size or \$10,000 gross sales	59
Less than 10 acres in size or \$50,000 gross sales	11
Farms >\$1,000	20
Hobby	86
Vacant Ag <sup>2</sup>	39

Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Farms are also classified according to recognized state and federal definitions of agricultural activities. The USDA recognizes a farm as any agricultural operation that has more than \$1,000 in gross sales. New York State recognizes farms as operations that are 7 acres in size with \$10,000 in gross sales. There are 59 farms classified as larger than 10 acres having \$10,000 or more in gross sales<sup>3</sup>. Twenty farms have sales greater than \$1,000.00. There are however, more farms classified as “hobby” farms, having no sales (41%). (See Chapter 4, Section 4.b for a more detailed discussion on the agricultural economic conditions in the county.)

**Figure 7: Farm Class by Income**



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

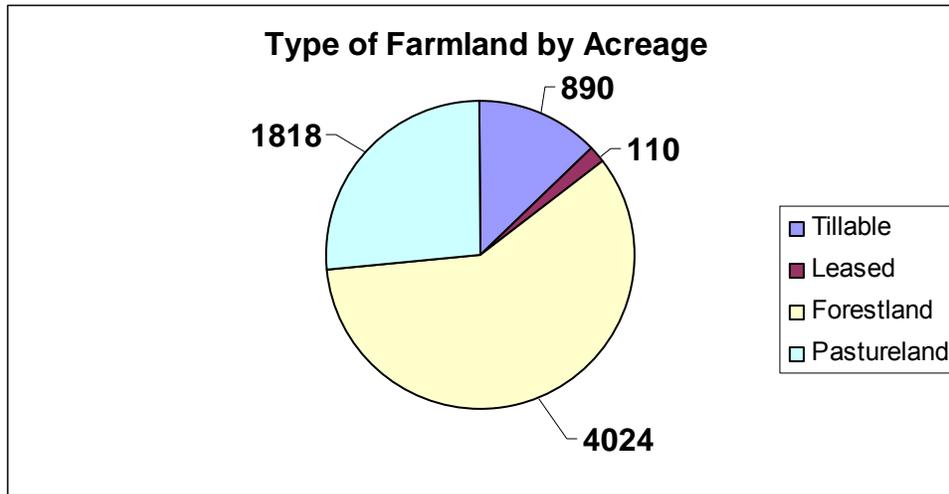
<sup>2</sup> Vacant farms are lands considered totally vacant but still listed as agriculture.

<sup>3</sup> New York State has more recently changed the definition to reduce the acreage requirement from 10 acres to seven acres.

### **Farmland Acreage**

According to the AEM Data, there are 11,309.15 total farmland acres in Putnam County, which includes, but is not limited to 890 tillable acres, 110 leased acres, 4024 forested acres, and 1,818 pastured acres included in these farms. This represents about 4% of the total land base in the county. The average size of the farm is 52.6 acres, and farms range from 1.25 acre in size to 1,200 acres.

Figure 8: Type of Farmland by Acreage\*

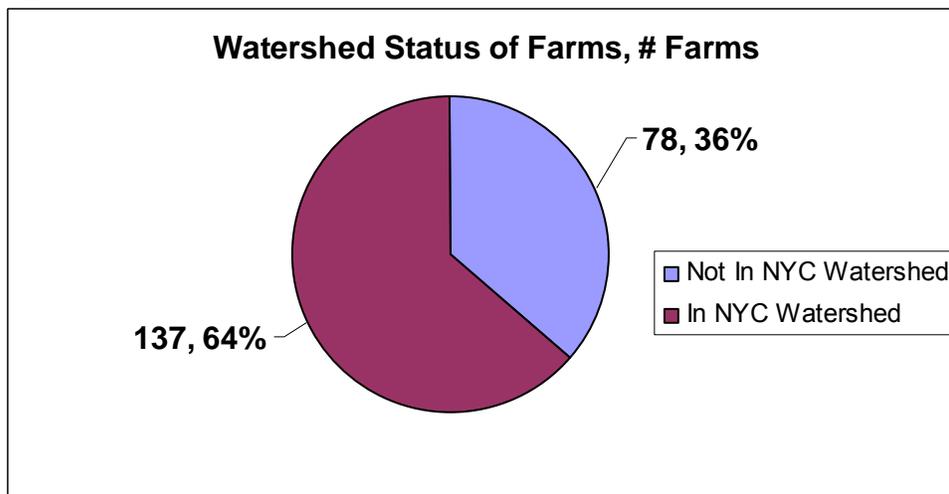


Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

\* This chart does not include other acreage classified as farmland such as land with farm structures, farm woodlots, etc.

Seventy-eight or 36% of farms are located outside of the New York City Watershed but the majority are located in the watershed (137 farms or 64%).

Figure 9: Watershed Status of Farms



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

## Farmland Trends

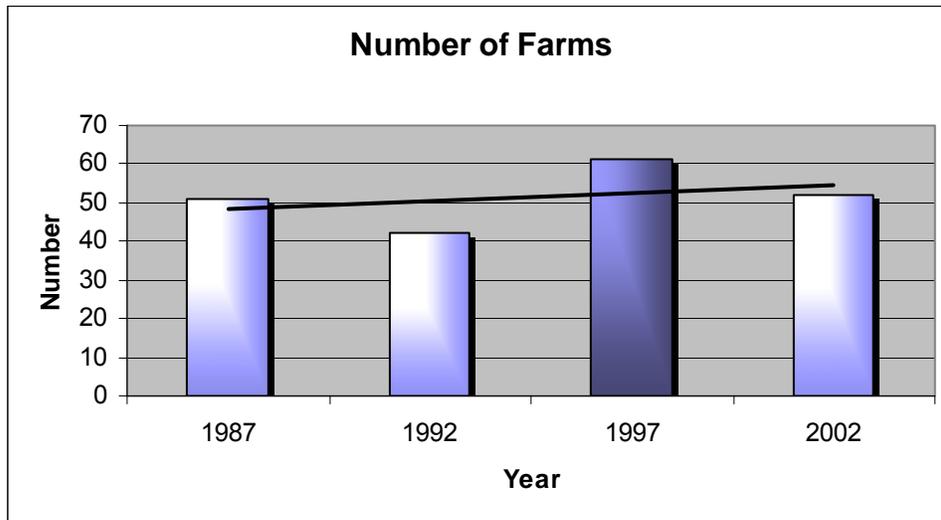
The following charts and tables show trends in Putnam County farmland between 1987 and 2002. This data is derived from the United States Census of Agriculture and details statistics on farms that have greater than \$1,000.00 in gross sales.

Table 5: 1987 to 2002 Comparison of Census of Agriculture Data for Putnam County

	1987	(%) 1987	1992	(%) 1992	1997	(%) 1997	2002	(%) 2002	% change 1997 to 2002
Farms, #	51		42		61		52		-14.8
Land in Farms	6,059	4.09	3,803	2.57	4,035	2.72	6,720	4.5	66.5
Avg. Size of Farm, acres	119		91		66		129		95.5
Average land/bldgs value per acre	\$2,848		\$6,475		\$6,956		9,515		36.8
# Farms 1 to 9 acres in size	8	15.69	4	9.52	13	21.31	6	11.5	-54
# Farms 10 to 49 acres in size	17	33.33	18	42.86	21	34.43	26	50	23.8
# Farms 50 to 179 acres in size	19	37.25	14	33.33	22	36.07	12	23.1	-45.5
# Farms 180 to 499 acres in size	6	11.76	5	11.90	5	8.20	5	9.6	0
# Farms 500 to 999 acres in size	0	0.00	1	2.38	0	0.00	0	0	0
# Farms >1000 acres in size	1	1.96	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	5.8	0
Total Cropland Acres	1,710	28.22	1,807	47.52	1,748	43.32	1,780	26.5	1.8

Source: United States Census of Agriculture, 1987, 1992, 2002

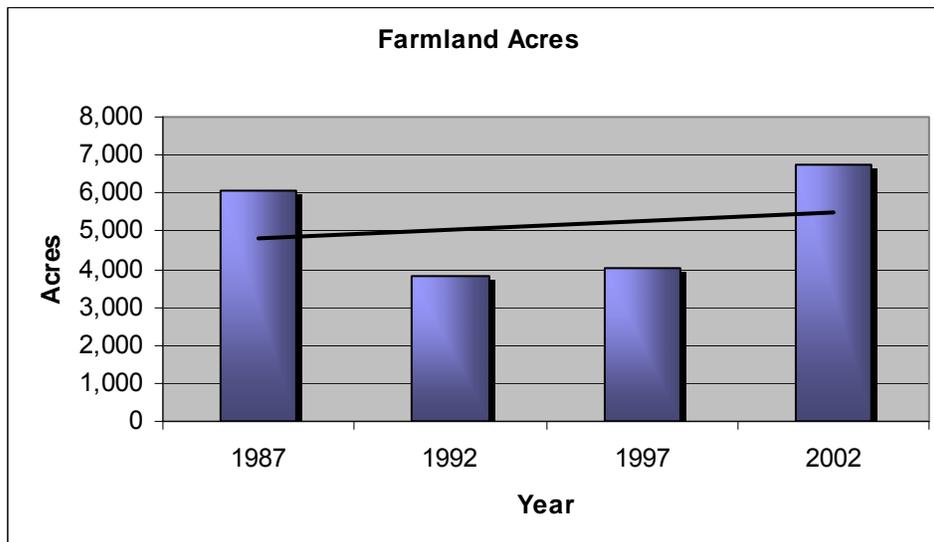
Figure 10. Number of Farms and Trends 1987 to 2002



Source: United States Census of Agriculture 1987, 1992, 2002

The number of farms identified through the Census of Agriculture (farms grossing >\$1,000.00 in sales) has remained virtually unchanged since 1987, although there have been year-to-year fluctuations. Between those years, the number of farms decreased in 1992, increased in 1997, and returned to the 1987 level in 2002. In light of the overall reductions in farms and farmlands seen throughout New York State, a stable number of farms is more of a positive trend and shows that the number of farms is relatively stable, if not increasing somewhat.

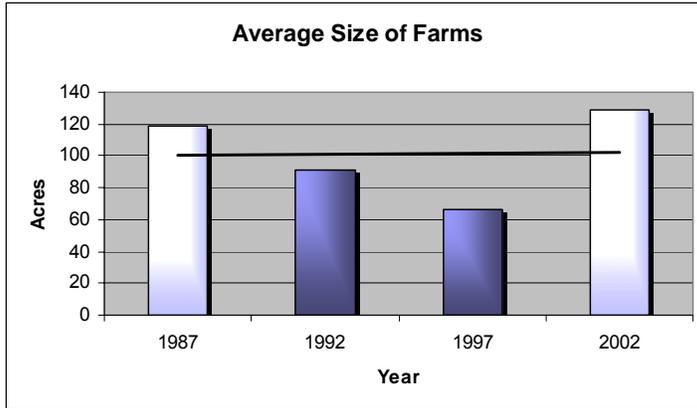
Figure 11. Farmland Acres and Trends 1987 to 2002



Source: United States Census of Agriculture 1987, 1992, 2002

Contrary to the stable number of farms, the number of farmland acres in the County between 1987 and 2002 has increased. In 1987 there were 6,059 acres in farm production; in 2002 there were 6,720 (data for those farms with >\$1,000.00 in gross sales.)

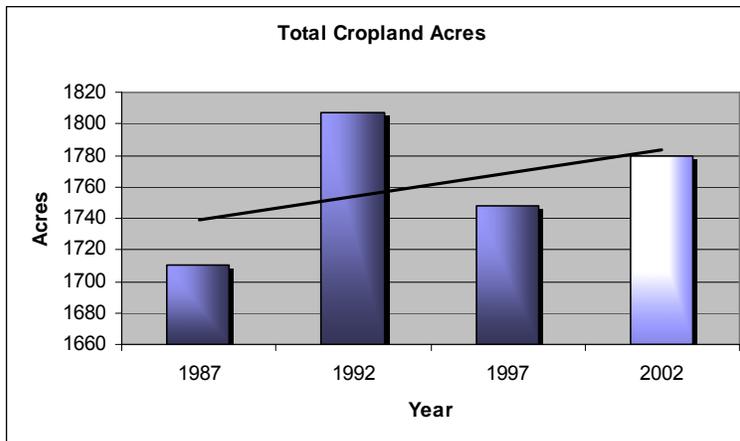
Figure 12. Average Size of Farms and Trends 1987 to 2002



Source: United States Census of Agriculture, 1987, 1992, 2002

Like other trends, the average size of farms in Putnam County has been variable over the years. The overall trend is relatively stable, although there have been decreases in farm size from 1987 to 1997. Recently for farms earning \$1,000.00 in gross sales, there has been an increase in the average size of farms. In 1987, average farm size was 119 acres. In 2002, it was 129 acres.

Figure 13. Total Cropland Acres and Trends 1987 to 2002



Source: United States Census of Agriculture, 1987, 1992, 2002

Overall, the trend shows a slight increase in the number of cropland acres since 1987. Similar to other variables, the amount of cropland acres varies from year to year. In 1987 there were 1,710 acres and in 2002 there were 1,780.

## Summary

- Out of the 215 farms in Putnam County, 27% percent are located in the Town of Patterson, Philipstown has 20%, Southeast has 19%, Kent has 18%, Putnam Valley has 14%, and Carmel has 2% of the farms in the county. There are a total of 11,309 acres of farmland in Putnam County. This represents about 4% of Putnam's total land base.
- 161 farms are active, 38 are classified as vacant, six are for sale, eight are under construction, and two are forested.
- A variety of farming activities exist including horse, sheep and other livestock operations, greenhouse and tree nurseries, orchards, maple syrup, hay, and corn cash crops. However, almost half of the farms are horse-related operations (92 or 43%).
- The county has 59 farms larger than 10 acres and that gross \$10,000 or more in sales, 20 with sales greater than \$1,000, and six that have gross sales of \$100,000 or more. Eighty-six additional farms are classified as "hobby" farms.
- According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, the number of farms has varied somewhat over the past two decades, but was similar in 2002 and 1987. The number of reported farmland acres, and acres planted as cropland has increased between 1987 and 2002.
- The average size of farms in the county is 52.6 acres. The majority (137 or 64%) of Putnam County farms are located in the New York City watershed.
- The land and building value per farm in Putnam County declined from \$586,257 to \$477,895 between 1992 and 1997; the average land and building value in the county, however, is almost twice that of New York State as a whole (\$286,620 in 1997). The value per acre in Putnam County, \$6,682 in 1997, remained stable; the per-acre value of farm property statewide, however, was only \$1,284 in 1997. Seventy-one (33%) of Putnam's farms are located within an agricultural district; 144 (67%) are not. Farms within the agricultural district represent 4,551 of the 11,309 total farmland acres in the county.

## 4.b Economic Trends and Impacts of Agriculture in Putnam County

### *Farm Value*

Table 6 below examines the value of sales for farms in Putnam County in 1992 and 2002. As the table indicates, there is considerable diversity with regard to sales figures. Based on 2002 data from the Census of Agriculture, 43% of the farms in the County have gross sales of less than \$2,500. Interestingly, this proportion has not changed since 1992. Twenty farms, or 38% of the total, have sales of between \$2,500 and \$25,000. The proportion has increased only slightly from 35% in 1992. Overall, there has been little change in the distribution of farms by the value of sales in Putnam County over the last ten years.

It is important to note that although four out of five farms in Putnam County had sales of less than \$25,000 in 2002, most sales of agricultural products come from a relatively limited number of farms. For example, while fewer than 8% of the farms earned \$100,000 or more, these four operations accounted for an estimated 40-45% of the total sales activity. Conversely, the 17 farms with less than \$1,000 in sales accounted for 33% of all farms, but less than 1% of total sales.

Table 6. Farms by Value of Sales, 1992 and 2002

<b>Farm Size</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Less than \$1,000	13	17	30.8%
\$1,000 - \$2,499	5	5	0.0%
\$2,500 - \$4,999	5	4	-20.0%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	1	8	700.0%
\$10,000 - \$24,999	9	8	-11.1%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	3	3	0.0%
\$50,000 or more	6	7	16.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>23.8%</b>

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1992 and 2002.

Turning to the value of fixed assets, the Agricultural Census indicates that the land and building value per farm in Putnam County increased from \$586,257 to approximately \$1,185,971 between 1992 and 2002. *The average market value is, in fact, now the highest in the state* – exceeding that of neighboring Westchester (\$1,087,369 in 2002) and nearly three times the average market value of farms in New York State as a whole (\$345,504). This is probably due to the region’s high property values rather than to any specific factors related to agriculture in Putnam County.

The value per acre also increased, from \$6,475 to \$9,515, over the ten-year period. The per-acre value of farm property statewide was only \$1,708 in 2002. Nassau, Suffolk, Richmond, Rockland, and Westchester were the only counties with higher acreage values than Putnam.

Table 7. Average Farm Property and Equipment Values, 1992 and 2002

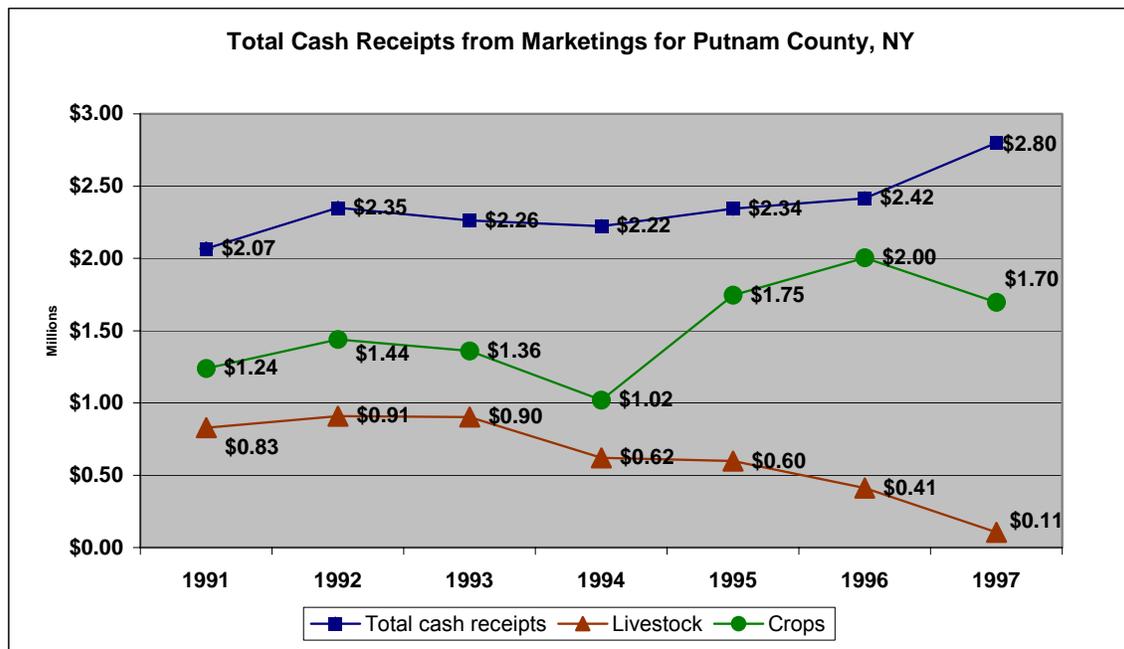
Average Farm Property and Equipment Values, Putnam County			
	1992	2002	% Change
Average land and building value per farm	\$586,257	\$1,185,971	102.3%
Average value per acre	\$6,475	\$9,515	46.9%
Average machinery and equipment value per farm	\$31,361	\$56,224	79.3%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1992 and 2002.

Average machinery and equipment values increased in Putnam County between 1992 and 2002. In contrast to the value of land, the value of machinery and equipment is considerably less than the statewide average of \$96,252, based on 2002 data.

### Agricultural Output

Figure 14, below shows the trends in the total cash receipts from farm marketings for Putnam County from 1991 through 1997 based on data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. ("Farm marketings" refers to the value of gross revenues received from the marketing of agricultural commodities, both livestock and crops, during a given calendar year.)<sup>4</sup>



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1991 to 1997.

<sup>4</sup> The BEA data is provided here to better illustrate changes over time in agricultural sales in Putnam County. It should be noted, however, that there are some differences in the way the BEA and the Census of Agriculture measure county farm income and expenses. According to the BEA, the most significant difference is with regard to capital consumption (depreciation). BEA includes in its estimates of production expenses the capital consumption of machinery, vehicles, land, and buildings. The Census does not attempt to measure any capital consumption.

During the 1991-1997 period, Putnam County's agricultural output value hovered around the \$2 million mark, with a slight increase to \$2.8 million in 1997. There was a dramatic change, however, with regard to the proportion of the agricultural output attributable to livestock versus crops. In 1991, livestock accounted for approximately 40% of the total cash recipients for farm marketings; by 1997, that percentage had declined to less than 4%, as cash receipts for livestock decreased from \$412,000 to \$105,000.

The table below shows the value of sales for leading agricultural commodities in Putnam County. The market value of nursery and greenhouse crops increased by 135%, and in fact, is entirely responsible for the growth in the value of all agricultural commodities between 1992 and 2002. Data was undisclosed for all other commodity groups in 1992; by subtracting out the sales of nursery and greenhouse crops, however, it is apparent that the combined sales of other products declined significantly, from \$1,086,000 in 1992 to \$452,000 in 2002. The average sales per farm increased only marginally.

Table 8. Leading Commodities by Value of Sales, 1992 and 2002

Leading Commodities by Value of Sales, Putnam County			
Commodity	1992	2002	% Change
Nursery and greenhouse crops	\$840,000	\$1,974,000	135.0%
Livestock, poultry, and their products	ND	\$84,000	ND
Other: fruits, nuts, berries, melons, hay, silage	ND	\$368,000	ND
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,926,000</b>	<b>\$2,426,000</b>	<b>26.0%</b>
Average per farm	\$45,859	\$46,653	1.7%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1992 and 2002.

As shown below, ten of the twelve nursery and greenhouse operations reported in the 2002 Census of Agriculture are in floriculture: bedding and garden plants, foliage, potted flowering plants, and cut flowers. The total number of farms in nursery and greenhouse production in Putnam County increased by more than 70% over the ten-year period. According to the USDA, the greenhouse industry is New York State's second largest sector of agriculture, second only to dairy products.<sup>5</sup>

Table 9: Nursery and Greenhouse Production, Putnam County			
	1992	2002	% Change
Total number of farms	7	12	71.4%
Floriculture crops only	6	10	66.7%
Bedding/garden plants only	4	6	50.0%
Total SF under glass or other protection	62,640	55,388	-11.6%
Bedding/garden plants only	28,700	32,400	12.9%
Total acreage in production (open air)	ND	57	ND

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1992 and 2002.

According to a recent report on agricultural economic development in the Hudson Valley, nursery and greenhouse production has increased "almost across the board" in the region. The report notes that the greenhouse industry "is one of the few agricultural

<sup>5</sup> Wen-fei L. Uva. *An Analysis of the Economic Dimensions of the New York State Greenhouse Industry*. Department of Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics, Cornell University. September 1999.

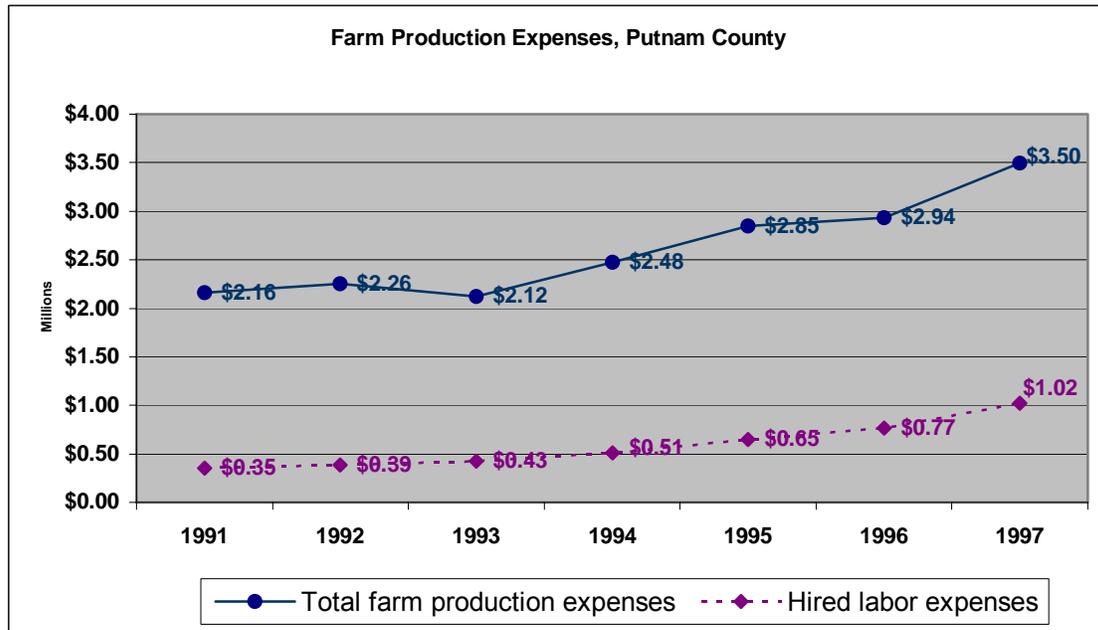
sectors that consistently demonstrate compatibility with urban/suburban uses and benefits from direct access to major metropolitan markets.”<sup>6</sup>

The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets provides a current listing of certified nurseries and greenhouses that are licensed by the department on its website. There are seven such establishments in Putnam County, including one nursery, one greenhouse, and five combined nurseries and greenhouses, offering a range of products. According to the Putnam County Soil & Water Conservation District, nurseries and greenhouses fill a range of market niches: some grow stock used for landscaping, others wholesale their products to garden centers and other retail stores, and still others sell plants and flowers directly on site or via mail order. At least one establishment, Stonecrop Gardens, allows visitors to tour its gardens for a fee.

### Farm Costs and Returns

The figure below shows the annual change in farm production expenses between 1991 and 1997 based on data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. These expenses include the purchase of feed, livestock, seed, fertilizer, and petroleum products as well as hired farm labor expenses.

Figure 15. Farm Production Expenses, 1991 to 1997



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1991 to 1997.

Between 1991 and 1997, farm production expenses increased at a rate of roughly 10% annually. Hired labor expenses increased nearly 32% per year, from \$354,000 in 1991

<sup>6</sup> ACDS, LLC. *Agricultural Economic Development for the Hudson Valley: Technical Report and Recommendations*. 2004.

to \$1,022,000 in 1997. As a result, the cost of hired labor as a percent of production expenses increased substantially, from 16% to 29%.

As shown in the table below, production expenses of farm operations in the County have increased in several areas. The largest increase in farm costs between 1992 and 2002 was in property taxes, which increased by more than 275% (compared with a 15% increase at the state level). The cost of labor also increased dramatically. The exception was the more than 65% decline in expenditures for agricultural chemicals. Despite increases in most aspects of production, the average production expenses per farm of \$69,186 in Putnam County were lower than the statewide average of \$75,081 in 2002.

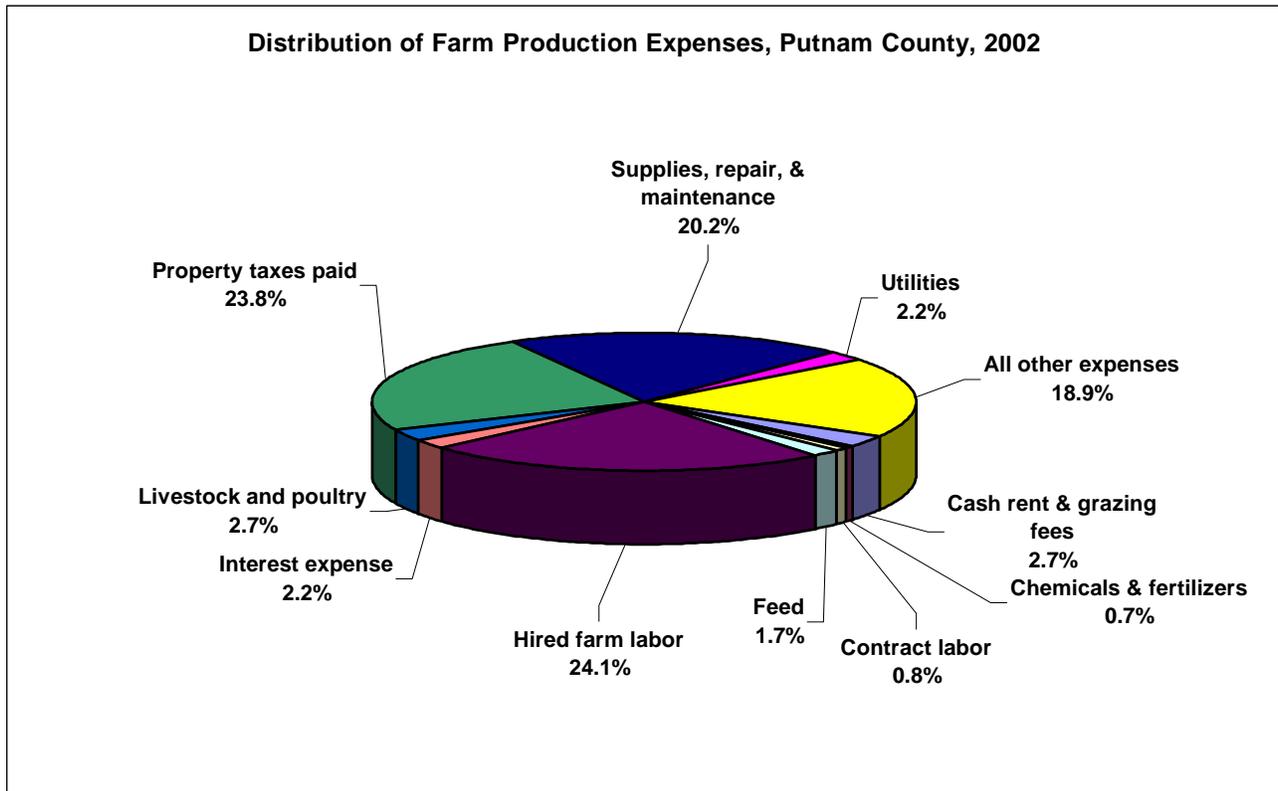
<b>Table 10: Farm Production Expenses, Putnam County</b>			
<b>Selected Categories</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Agricultural chemicals	\$34,000	\$12,000	-64.7%
Contract labor	\$9,000	\$29,000	222.2%
Hired farm labor	\$369,000	\$885,000	139.8%
Interest expense	\$46,000	\$80,000	73.9%
Property taxes paid	\$232,000	\$872,000	275.9%
<b>Total farm production expenses (all categories)</b>	<b>\$1,409,000</b>	<b>\$3,667,000</b>	<b>160.3%</b>
Average production expenses per farm	\$33,548	\$69,186	106.2%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1992 and 2002.

Data from the Agricultural Census further indicate a growing number of farm workers in Putnam County. In 2002, there were 186 such workers reported, compared with 75 in 1992. Approximately one-third of these laborers work 150 days or more per year. The total payroll for hired farm labor, \$885,000 in 2002, has increased from \$369,000 ten years earlier.

The distribution of farm production expenses for Putnam County farms is shown in the chart below. Because crops accounts for the majority of the agricultural output, the purchase of feed, livestock and poultry comprise a relatively limited proportion of farm production expenses. At the same time, approximately 49% of the expenses associated with agricultural production in the County – compared to just 23% of farm production expenses statewide – are for labor and property taxes. Property taxes, in fact, increased from a mere 16% of total production expenses in 1992.

Figure 16. Distribution of Farm Expenses, 2002 (Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2002.)



### ***Farm Profitability***

Data from the Agricultural Census show that the net income (agricultural sales minus production expenses) of farms in Putnam County was a negative \$933,000 in 2002. Only one out of four farming operations, compared to 40% of those statewide, is making a profit. This is in part due to the many hobby farms in Putnam County. As noted above, property taxes may be a factor influencing farm profitability, as they comprise fully 24% of production expenses in Putnam County, compared to 6% of those statewide.

Table 11. Net Cash Farm Income, 1992 and 2002

Net Cash Farm Income, Putnam County			
	1992	2002	% Change
Net cash farm income of operations	\$517,000	-\$933,000	-280.5%
Average per farm	\$12,315	-\$17,607	-243.0%
Farms with net gains	33.3%	25.0%	-24.9%
Farms with net losses	66.7%	75.0%	12.4%
Gross farm-related income before taxes & expenses	\$25,000	\$267,000	968.0%
Average gross farm-related income per farm	\$4,231	\$22,208	424.9%

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1992 and 2002.

## ***Agriculture-Related Industry***

According to the Census of Agriculture, Putnam County farms spent approximately \$3.7 million on production expenses, including \$741,000 on supplies, repair and maintenance, \$64,000 in feed, and \$25,000 on agricultural chemicals and commercial fertilizers in 2002. Some of these supply inputs are purchased within the County, while others require farmers to travel to other areas to purchase goods and services.

Industry sectors linked (or potentially linked) to agriculture in Putnam County include agricultural production support services, food manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail nurseries and garden centers, fruit and vegetable markets, and veterinary services. Due to the small number of establishments, however, much of the data on employment and payroll in these sectors is undisclosed to maintain confidentiality.

Crop consultants who provide fertilizer and pesticide services and assistance with environmental management plans account for most of the agriculture production support available. Veterinary services appear to be the largest industry classification related to agriculture, but anecdotal evidence indicates a lack of large animal veterinarians in Putnam County. There are no feed companies, retailers of farm supplies, or farm machinery and equipment repair shops in the County. It has become more and more difficult each year for farmers to access these services. Typically, agricultural producers must go to Columbia or Orange County for supplies and services.

Table 12. Agriculture-Related Industry Sectors, 2001

<b>Agricultural-Related Industry Sectors, Putnam County, 2001</b>			
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Firms</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Payroll</b>
Agriculture production support	4	range: 0-19	ND
Food manufacturing (incl. comm'l & retail bakeries)	4	range: 0-19	ND
Wholesale trade - farm supplies	2	range: 0-19	ND
Wholesale trade - fresh fruits & vegetables	5	18	\$564,000
Wholesale trade - farm product raw material	2	range: 0-19	ND
Wholesale trade - flowers and nursery stock	1	range: 0-19	ND
Retail nurseries and garden centers	9	47	\$1,349,000
Retail fruit and vegetable markets	3	15	\$130,000
Veterinary services	11	120	\$2,844,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *County Business Patterns, 2001*.

## ***Equine***

Regional economists note that the equine industry is not included in most federal statistics on agriculture, due to conflicting definitions of farm and farmland. Because they often generate revenue from the provision of services (e.g., riding, training, and boarding) rather than from the sales of agricultural commodities, many equine operations are not counted in the Census of Agriculture, which defines a farm as a place producing farm commodities with a market value of \$1,000 or more per year.

The New York Equine Survey was prepared by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets in 2000 to update data collected through a similar 1988 survey and provide updated information to help measure the contribution of horses to the state's economy. The report indicated that there were an estimated 168,000 equine of all types in New York State in 2000, down 8% from 182,000 in 1988.

Table 13. Equine Inventory and Value, 1988 and 2000

Equine Inventory and Value, Putnam County		
	1988	2000
Head	1,200	1,100
County Rank in 2000		51
Total Value	\$7,060,000	\$21,450,000
County Rank in 2000		14
Average Value Per Head	\$5,883	\$19,500

Source: New York Equine Survey, 2000.

As part of the survey, operators of places with equine in the state in 2000 were asked which type of activity best described their operation. Of the 4,700 equine operations in the Southeast district – a region comprising Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess,

Greene Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester Counties – 2,400 (51%) described their operation as non-commercial/non-farm. Commercial boarding and training operations were second, with 1,000 places. Third most common were farms on which the major activity was deriving income from crops or livestock (800). There were 400 commercial breeding operations in the Southeast region in 2000.

Horse farms in Southeast New York have an average value of land and improvements of \$8,700 per acre versus an average of \$6,682 per acre for all Putnam County farms.

In terms of its relative place among counties in the state, Putnam County ranks 51<sup>st</sup> in New York State in its overall horse inventory, but ranks 14<sup>th</sup> for total equine value. The average value per head is \$19,500, compared to \$10,130 for the state overall.

Between 1988 and 2000, the horse inventory in Southeast New York and Putnam County declined by 29% and 8%, respectively. The value of equine inventory in Southeast New York and Putnam County rose by 78% and 204%, respectively.

The rate of growth in the value of the equine inventory in Putnam County was most similar to Dutchess County. The average value per head in 2000 was \$18,000 in Dutchess, \$8,800 in Orange, and \$34,600 in Westchester Counties.

### ***Economic Impact of Putnam County Agriculture***

The economic impact of agriculture in a county or region can be evaluated by applying an economic multiplier to the value of agricultural commodity sales. The concept of a multiplier refers to the fact that each dollar generated by a specific industry is subsequently re-circulated throughout the local economy.

The economic impact of agriculture in Putnam County was calculated using a set of RIMS II multipliers obtained from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of

Economic Analysis<sup>7</sup>. These multipliers factor in the initial or direct impact of agriculture, as well as the indirect and induced effects on the County. While multipliers were readily available for a number of subcategories within the agriculture sector, this analysis used a set of multipliers that reflected agriculture as a single industry, due to the limited availability of disaggregated data for Putnam County.

Based on the \$2,426,000 value of sales reported by the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the annual sale of agricultural products in Putnam County generates a total of 35 full time employment jobs with \$932,797 in earnings and adds approximately \$3.7 million in output to the local economy each year. These figures are illustrated in the table below.

Table 14. Annual Economic Impact of Agriculture, 2002

	<b>Output</b>	<b>Earnings</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Multipliers for Agriculture	1.5112	0.3845	14.3
2002 Sales	\$2,426,000		
<b>Total Impact</b>	<b>\$3,666,171</b>	<b>\$932,797</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2002

Thus, for every dollar of agricultural production in Putnam County, *an additional \$0.51 of economic activity is generated through indirect and induced effects in all sectors of the local economy.*

As the following table indicates, economic multipliers vary by agricultural sector. Fruits, vegetables, and greenhouse products have higher employment multipliers because production tends to be more labor-intensive.

Table 15. Selected Economic Multipliers, 2002

<b>Selected Economic Multipliers for Agriculture, Putnam County</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Earnings</b>	<b>Employment</b>
Dairy Farm Products	1.5862	0.2345	10.4
Poultry & Eggs	1.5852	0.2676	10.5
Fruits	1.5649	0.3393	17.4
Vegetables	1.6479	0.3213	15.2
Greenhouse Products	1.3871	0.3008	13.2
Landscape and Horticultural Services	1.5685	0.4898	23.1

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The economic contributions of agriculture in Putnam County can be compared with those of other industry sectors. Output multipliers for several aggregated sectors of the Putnam County economy are shown in rank order in the table below. These multipliers allow for an estimate of the total generated effects associated with a \$1 change in production. The data show that output multipliers for agriculture compare well with those associated with changes in non-farm sectors; agriculture ranks seventh out of the 28 industries for which RIMS II multipliers are available.

<sup>7</sup> RIMS II stands for Regional Input-Output Modeling System, the framework on which the regional multipliers are based.

Using earnings or employment as a measurement results in an even stronger outcome: the aggregate earnings multiplier for agriculture ranks second, while for employment, the agricultural industry ranks third.

The next table depicts how farming in Putnam County affects individual industry sectors with regard to output, employee earnings, and job creation. While the majority of the economic impact accrues to agriculture, there are also considerable impacts on services, finance and real estate, and transportation, among others<sup>8</sup>.

The economic impact is probably understated because it is based on the statistics from the Census of Agriculture, and does not take into account Putnam County's equine industry, which generates income through boarding, training, and so on. Putnam County ranks 14<sup>th</sup> for equine inventory value in New York State, as previously noted.

Table 16. Selected Economic Multipliers by Sector, 2002

Selected Economic Multipliers by Sector, Putnam County			
Category	Output	Earnings	Employment
Insurance	1.6313	0.4152	8.2
Communications	1.5715	0.1748	3.1
Miscellaneous Services	1.5339	0.3119	11.4
Transportation	1.5247	0.2893	8.5
Personal Services	1.5228	0.3152	16.0
Hotels, Amusement & Recreation	1.5167	0.2348	7.6
Agriculture	1.5112	0.3845	14.3
Rubber, Plastics, & Leather Mfg	1.5051	0.1209	3.0
Business Services	1.4991	0.3390	7.1
Retail Trade	1.4557	0.2776	11.5
Electronic Equipment	1.4416	0.1478	3.1
Eating & Drinking Places	1.4385	0.2721	14.9
Health Services	1.4380	0.2416	6.3
Chemical Mfg	1.4304	0.1832	2.9
Construction	1.4229	0.2228	6.0
Wholesale Trade	1.4164	0.2451	5.2
Industrial Machinery & Equipment	1.4117	0.2409	4.5
Depository & Nondepository Institutions	1.4047	0.2412	3.3
Printing & Publishing	1.3820	0.1422	2.9
Instruments & Related Mfg	1.3608	0.1636	3.2
Stone, Clay, and Glass Products	1.3544	0.1701	3.7
Fabricated Metal Products	1.3511	0.2163	5.6
Misc. Mfg	1.3489	0.1180	3.3
Lumber, Wood, & Furniture Mfg	1.3277	0.0788	2.2
Primary Metal Manufacturing	1.3205	0.1408	3.2
Electric, Gas, & Sanitary Services	1.2826	0.1116	2.0
Transportation Equipment Mfg	1.2336	0.0381	0.9
Real Estate	1.2147	0.0631	1.9

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

<sup>8</sup> The multipliers in the table measure the impact of a change in agricultural output, earnings, and employment on each industry aggregation. The total represents the impact of a change *in agriculture* across all industries. These multipliers should not be confused with the total multipliers for output, earnings, and employment by industry, which are provided in the previous table.

Table 17. Economic Impact of Agriculture by Industry, 2002 Summary

Economic Impact of Agriculture by Industry, Putnam County						
Industry	Multiplier			Annual Impact*		
	Output	Earnings	Employment	Output	Earnings	Employment
Farm Products / Agricultural, Forestry, and Fishing Services	1.1109	0.3238	12.5411	\$2,695,043	\$785,539	30
Mining	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	\$0	\$0	0
Construction	0.0176	0.0027	0.0700	\$42,698	\$6,550	0
Manufacturing - Durable Goods	0.0044	0.0005	0.0102	\$10,674	\$1,213	0
Manufacturing - Nondurable Goods	0.0130	0.0012	0.0185	\$31,538	\$2,911	0
Transportation & Public Utilities	0.0545	0.0064	0.1401	\$132,217	\$15,526	0
Wholesale Trade	0.0517	0.0092	0.1766	\$125,424	\$22,319	0
Retail Trade	0.0415	0.0088	0.3992	\$100,679	\$21,349	1
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	0.1017	0.0072	0.1334	\$246,724	\$17,467	0
Services	0.1159	0.0245	0.7959	\$281,173	\$59,437	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.5112</b>	<b>0.3845</b>	<b>14.3000</b>	<b>\$3,666,171</b>	<b>\$932,797</b>	<b>35</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis and Camoin Associates.

\* - Based on 2002 value of sales of \$2,426,000

## Summary

- Nurseries and greenhouses represent the largest segment of Putnam County's agricultural economy and account for approximately 81% of its agricultural output, based on data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture. From 1992 to 2002, growth in the local farm economy was confined to nursery and greenhouse crops, as sales in all other commodity groups declined.
- Like Westchester County, where high land costs have prevented the growth of traditional crops and livestock products, Putnam County's agriculture industry has been affected by rising property taxes and labor costs. Taxes and labor comprise nearly half of the production expenses of farm operations in Putnam. As a result, farm profitability has declined substantially in recent years. Despite overall increases in gross farm-related income, only one of four farms in the County is profitable.
- A limited number of farms with relatively high sales provide most of Putnam County's agricultural economic activity. In 2002, the largest 20% of the farms accounted for approximately 57% of the County's agricultural output.
- Although there are fewer horses in Putnam County today, their average value has increased dramatically. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the equine operations are small and involved in recreational or pleasure riding. By providing services such as boarding and riding lessons and contributing to the bucolic character of the area, equine operations enhance the quality of life in Putnam County. The potential exists for the local horse industry to become a more significant part of regional tourism and recreational activities.
- Putnam County's agricultural economy produced \$2,426,000 in output value in 2002, which generated a total of \$3,667,000 in economic activity across all sectors of the local economy. Because agriculture is a relatively labor-intensive industry, the impact on employment is particularly significant.

#### **4.c Agricultural Districts, Tax Reduction and Exemption Programs**

In 1971, the New York State Legislature passed the Agricultural Districts Law to help keep land throughout New York State in active agricultural production. In Putnam County, an agricultural district was created in 2003, and was set up according to this state law (AML Section 25-aa). The agricultural district program is designed to help farmers and agricultural landowners by:

Limiting taxation of farmland within an agricultural district for certain municipal services such as sewer, water, lighting, non-farm drainage, solid waste and landfill operations;

Providing “right-to-farm” protections. When requested, the Department of Agriculture and Markets can decide whether land uses are agricultural or if farm practices are “sound agricultural practices.” This can help defend farmers in disputes or nuisance lawsuits;

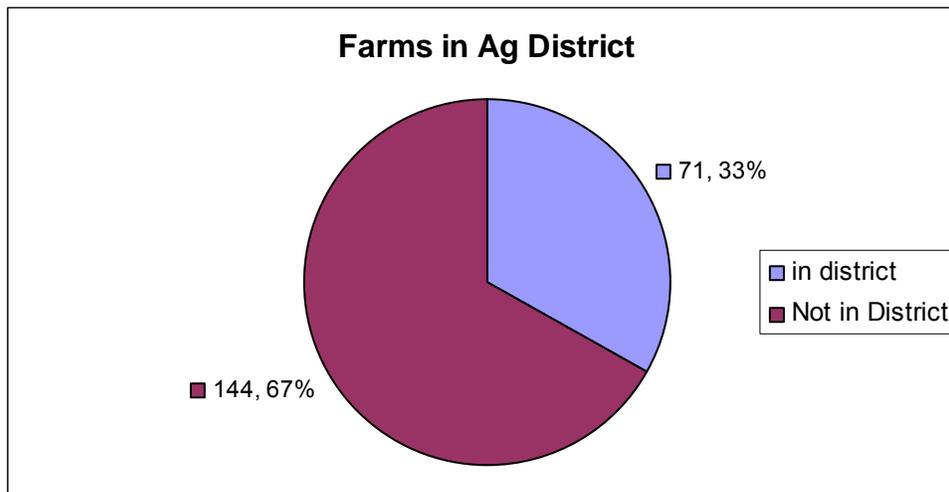
Preventing local governments from enacting laws that unreasonably regulate farm operations in agricultural districts;

Requiring that agricultural impact statements, notice of intent filings and real estate disclosure notices are carried out by local municipalities for all new development and public projects in, or within 500 feet of an agricultural district.

Places limits on eminent domain.

In Putnam County, 71 (33%) of identified farms (AEM data) are located within an agricultural district; 144 (67%) are not in one. Farms located within the agricultural district represent 4,551.33 out of the 11,309.15 total farmland acres in the county.

Figure 17. Farms in Agricultural Districts, 2004



## **Agricultural Assessments**

Tax relief for eligible farmers, in the form of agricultural assessment is also provided for in AML 25-AA. An agricultural assessment provides “use-value” assessment that allows land to be taxed for its agricultural value, rather than its non-farm market value. The difference between the market value of agricultural production land and the agricultural assessment is not subject to real property taxation (exempted).

Any owner of land used for agricultural production may qualify if the land meets the requirements below or if it is rented to an eligible farm operation. Farms within and outside the agricultural district can take advantage of this assessment. The State Legislature has amended AML 25-aa and the new eligibility requirements for an agricultural assessment are now:

- ✓ Land must be a minimum of seven acres and farmed by a single operation.
- ✓ Land must have been used in the preceding two years for crop production, commercial boarding of horses, or livestock production. Recent legislation also states “that a newly established farm operation is eligible to receive an agricultural assessment in the first year of operation if it has an annual gross sales value of \$10,000 or more.”
- ✓ Farm operations must gross an average of \$10,000 or more in sales per year.
- ✓ Land of less than seven acres may also qualify if the operation has an average gross sales value of \$50,000 or more per year.

Support land, land set aside in federal conservation programs, or farm woodland (up to 50 acres per eligible tax parcel) may qualify for the agricultural assessment program. Non-farmers who rent land to eligible farmers can also receive tax relief if the rented land satisfies the basic requirements above. If rented land does not satisfy the gross sales requirement, but does satisfy all the others, above, it may still be eligible if it is farmed, and has a written, five-year rental agreement.

AML 25-aa is quite specific in its rules on setting agricultural assessments. Assessed values are based on the types of organic and minerals soils present on the parcel. The Department of Agriculture and Markets has set up a land classification system and the State Board of Equalization and Assessment is required to annually calculate an agricultural assessment. Landowners must file for this assessment annually. If land placed under an agricultural assessment is later converted to a non-farm use, it is subject to conversion fees equaling five times the taxes saved in the last year in which the land benefited from an agricultural assessment, plus interest of six percent per year compounded annually for each year in which an agricultural assessment was granted, not exceeding five years.

## **Agricultural Exemptions**

There are a variety of other tax relief programs available to farm owners. In addition to the agricultural assessment program outlined above, farms may also be eligible to receive one or more tax exemptions as follows:

- ✓ **Farm Building Exemptions:** New York Real Property Law exempts farm buildings or structures from property taxes. This includes new or reconstructed agricultural buildings such as barns, farm worker housing, silos, bulk tanks, manure facilities, temporary greenhouses, and grain storage facilities.
- ✓ **Farmers' School Tax Credit:** Eligible farmers can obtain an income tax credit for school district property taxes. The credit is fully funded by the state, is not a real property tax exemption and does not diminish local school district revenue.
- ✓ **Forest Land Exemption:** Section 480-a of the New York Real Property Tax Law allows eligible owners of forest land to receive reductions in tax assessment when they have 50 or more acres of contiguous forestland that is committed to forest crop production and if there is a qualified forest management plan approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.
- ✓ **Replanted or Expanded Orchards and Vineyards:** This is a partial exemption that applies to newly replanted or expanded orchard and vineyard land. Land eligible for agricultural assessment and used only for the replanting or expansion of orchards or vineyards is exempt from taxation for up to four successive years. Eligible land cannot exceed 20% of the total acreage. In June, 2004, the New York State Senate passed legislation to give tax breaks to start-up farm operations that plant long-term orchard or vineyard crops. If this becomes law, start-up farmers would receive the same tax benefits as existing farmers.
- ✓ **Sales Tax Exemption:** Tax law exempts certain items used in farm production from state and local sales and use taxes.

#### ***4. d Major Programs and Services Available to Putnam County Farms***

##### **Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District**

Putnam County SWCD provides technical assistance and programs to residents, landowners, and units of government on conservation, use and development of soil, water and related resources. The District is a resource management agency coordinating and implementing resource and environmental programs at the local level in cooperation with federal, state, and county agencies. One of the state programs that the District has been implementing in Putnam County since 1999 is the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program.

AEM is a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps farmers operate environmentally sound and economically viable businesses. The New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee and the Department of Agriculture and Markets provide leadership for AEM at the state level. The AEM program coordinates agricultural and environmental conservation agencies and programs to provide a one-stop shopping for services. Farmers use AEM to address water quality concerns originating from agricultural activities by assessing environmental concerns on the farm, documenting current stewardship, developing environmental farm plans, implementing environmentally sound practices to address identified concerns, and complying with

state and federal environmental regulations. AEM is locally led and coordinated, is customized farm by farm, provides a confidential method of planning and assessment, and reduces a farmer's liability.

AEM has a five-tiered approach. Farmers work with staff from the Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District to develop and implement farm plans. The five tiers of the program are:

Tier 1: A short questionnaire identifies current farm activities, future plans and potential environmental concerns.

Tier 2: AEM worksheets document current environmental stewardship while identifying and prioritizing environmental concerns.

Tier 3: A plan is developed to provide solutions to water quality concerns identified in Tiers 1 and 2. The plan is designed with the farm's mission, goals and objectives in mind.

Tier 4: Farms work with agricultural agencies and consultants to assist farms with implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Tier 5: Ongoing evaluations ensure that AEM helps protect both the environment and the viability of the farm business.

Started in 1999, the Putnam County AEM database includes 215 farms in Putnam County. Of that, 155 have participated in Tier 1 activities (72%) and 60 have not. As of June 2004, 101, or 47% of participating farms have completed Tier 2 activities (54 or 25% have not). Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District has funding to implement Tiers 1, 2 and 5.

### **Watershed Agricultural Council**

The Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC) is a collaborative effort designed to administer the voluntary, incentive-based Watershed Agricultural Program and is funded by New York City's Department of Environmental Protection. (See also Chapter 7 for a full discussion on WAC programs.) WAC's new initiative within the New York City Watershed (East of Hudson) was initiated in 2000 and provides a variety of programs designed to improve water quality and farm viability on farms east of the Hudson River. Its goal is to preserve farms and help them be well-managed to accomplish watershed protection goals. Refer to the NYC Water Supply Watershed map for watershed and farm locations in Putnam County.

The Watershed Agricultural Program (WAP) was developed jointly by New York City and the farm community in order to avoid the need for regulatory controls on agricultural operations in the watershed. The WAP also conducts scientific research evaluating the effectiveness of various agricultural management practices used in the watershed. The program uses voluntary farmer participation in the development of whole farm plans. Whole farm plans identify best management practices (BMP's) to be used on the farm in order to protect water quality while maintaining farming as a preferred land use in the watershed. The Watershed Agricultural Council manages the program, and builds

partnerships between watershed farmers, watershed agribusinesses, New York City, and State, Federal, and County agencies.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service delivers technical assistance to help land owners and others conserve soil, water and other natural resources. They partner with the local Soil and Water Conservation District and their programs include EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program), Forestry Incentives Program, soil survey information, Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and Agricultural Management Assistance. NRCS programs are primarily water quality related.

NRCS has a very limited presence in Putnam County and therefore there is a very small percentage of Putnam County farms that participate in NRCS programs. There are no private landowners in the Wetland Reserve Program, although the county-owned Fred Dill Wildlife Sanctuary property has been submitted for inclusion. Within the past five years, NRCS has worked with one barnyard improvement project, and several stream corridor management projects in the county. There is no county NRCS office: NRCS staff located in Dutchess County serve Putnam County. Since many farms in Putnam County are small in size, they are at a disadvantage and do not often meet the federal requirements. Also, Putnam County is not competitive in Federal programs due to the high cost of land with limited funds available.

### **USDA Farm Service Agency**

The role of the USDA Farm Service Agency is to preserve and promote agriculture by stabilizing farm income, helping farmers conserve land and water resources, providing credit to new or disadvantaged farmers and helping farm operations recover from the effects of disaster. Some of their programs include farm loans, disaster assistance, price supports, and the direct and counter-cyclical program (an insurance program for corn and grain crops). The Farm Service Agency also offers "NAP" – a disaster program to cover non-grain crops such as hay, vegetables, and nursery and greenhouse plants that are not otherwise insurable. As with NRCS initiatives, participation in Farm Service Agency programs from Putnam County farmers is small. There are several farmers that participate in the direct and counter-cyclical program, and several in NAP.

### **Cornell Cooperative Extension**

Putnam County Cornell Cooperative Extension currently works closely with homeowners, gardeners, landscapers and nurserymen. There is no local staff to provide livestock, field crop or other agricultural technical assistance services. Extension has a limited ability to provide assistance to commercial agricultural operations.

### **Lower Hudson- Long Island Resource Conservation and Development Council**

The RC & D Council sponsors several agriculturally related programs in Putnam County and throughout the region. They sponsor and provide technical assistance for the farmers market in Cold Springs and using USDA funding, they also assisted in

development of the Patriot Garden in Cold Springs. Some of their other initiatives include sponsoring a conference oriented towards creating local food networks, developing a “fresh off the barge” farmers market focusing on the Hudson River, and working on a regional branding and buy local program.

#### **4.e Soils and Environmental Conditions**

Soils are critical to profitable farming. Some soils have more capability of producing quality crops than others. Soils have been classified into several categories by NRCS according to their physical and chemical characteristics. Prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance are identified for Putnam County and included on the map (See Chapter 13 for maps). Both prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance can be found throughout Putnam County, but are concentrated in the towns of Carmel and Southeast. Analysis of county soil maps indicates that there is good overlap between location of existing farms and location of prime or important soils. There are no unique soils or locally important soils identified for the County.

##### **Prime Farmland**

Prime Farmland is land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. Prime Farmland has specific water, soil temperature, acid, water table, sodium content, flooding, and permeability characteristics that make it ideal for crops. According to the NRCS, prime farmland soils are “land that is best suited to the production of row, forage and fiber crops. Due to inherent natural characteristics such as level topography, good drainage, adequate moisture supply, favorable soil depth and favorable soil texture, this land consistently produces the most food and fiber with the least fertilizer, labor and energy requirements.” Prime soils tend to be resistant to erosion and runoff.

##### **Farmland of Statewide Importance**

Farmland of Statewide Importance is land other than Prime Farmland which also has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. Lands of statewide importance are defined by NRCS as “land of particular state importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. Generally these farmlands include those that are nearly prime and that produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to modern farming practices. If conditions are favorable, some may produce yields as high as prime farmland.”

##### **Unique Farmland**

Unique Farmland is land which does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, which has been used for the production of specific high economic value crops at some time. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality

and/or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods.

### **Farmland of Local Importance**

Farmland of Local Importance is either currently producing crops, has the capability of production, or is used for the production of confined livestock. Farmland of Local Importance is land other than Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland. This land may be important to the local economy due to its productivity or value. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use. This land includes soils which qualify for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but generally are not cultivated or irrigated.

### **Water Resources**

Wetlands are a significant water feature found throughout Putnam County. Many farmed parcels both in an out of the agricultural district are adjacent to or include State and Federal wetlands, and areas having very wet soils, especially in Patterson and Southeast.

Environmental conditions including wetlands, wet soils, streams, and frequently flooded areas results in many natural limitations throughout the County. The Natural Limitations map shows that many farmed parcels are on lands considered to have very limited absorption field ratings, according to soil survey data.



## 5. Housing, Demographic and Development Trends in Putnam County

### County Trends

Comparing neighboring Westchester, Dutchess and Columbia counties, Putnam County has the highest rate of population increase and the highest rate of increase in the number of housing units. Between 1990 and 2000, Putnam County's population grew 14% while the number of housing units increased by 9.8%. Westchester's population grew 5.5%, Dutchess County grew by 8% and Columbia grew by less than one percent.

Dutchess County's increase in housing units was higher than their overall population increase and this is an indicator that growth in that county is less dense per unit and more sprawling as compared with Putnam County. Similarly, Columbia County's increase in housing units far outpaced the actual population increase. In Putnam County, there was almost a 10% increase in housing units correlated with a 14% increase in population.

### Town Trends

As shown in Table 18 and Figure 18 below, change in housing units and population, the Town of Patterson had the highest level of growth between 1990 and 2000 as compared to other Putnam County towns. Patterson's population grew over 30% with a correlated 18% increase in housing units. Putnam Valley, Southeast and Carmel all showed double-digit growth levels in both population, and all except Putnam Valley showed similar increases in number of housing units.

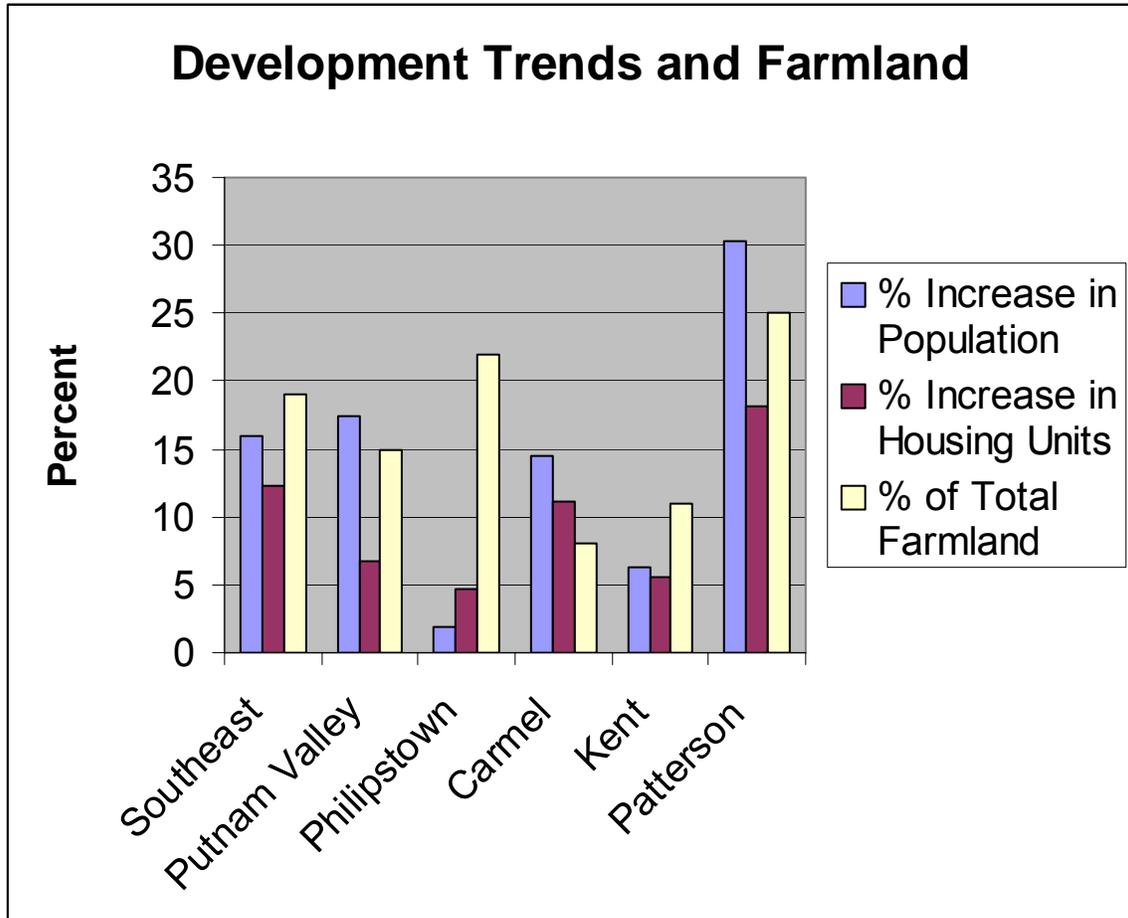
Table 18. Comparison of Population and Housing Trends, 1990 to 2000

Municipality	1990 Population	2000 Population	Percent Change in Population	1990 Housing Units	2000 Housing Units	Percent Change in Housing Units
Patterson	8,689	11,306	30.3	3,172	3,746	18.1
Putnam Valley	9,094	10,686	17.5	3,986	4,253	6.7
Southeast	14,927	17,316	16	5,709	6,412	12.3
Carmel	28,816	33,006	14.5	10,152	11,283	11.1
Kent	13,183	14,009	6.3	5,074	5,353	5.6
Philipstown	9,242	9,422	1.9	3,805	3,983	4.7
Putnam County	83,941	95,745	14%	31,898	35,030	9.8%
Dutchess County	259,462	280,150	8.0	97,632	106,103	8.7
Westchester County	874,866	923,459	5.5	336,727	349,445	3.8
Columbia County	62,982	63,094	0.2	29,139	30,207	3.7

Source: United States Census of Population 1990 and 2000

The Town of Patterson has not only the highest population growth, but also the most farmland. This may indicate that farmland in that town is at a higher risk for conversion to non-farm uses. Philipstown has the second largest amount of farmland in the county but also showed the lowest growth rate. Philipstown did exhibit an increase in the number of housing units and that increase outpaced their population growth; this may indicate a more “sprawling” growth pattern taking place in that community. Carmel and Kent have the lowest amount of active farmland and the lowest growth rates in the county.

Figure 18. Population and Housing Increases Compared to Location of Farmland



Source: Putnam County SWCD AEM Data as of June 2004

Many of the farms in Southeast and Patterson are in locations not exhibiting as great a change in population or housing as other areas. Several farms in Putnam Valley as well as the northwest corner of Southeast are located in high growth areas and it would be expected that farms in these towns would be experiencing more development pressure to convert to non-farm uses.

## 6. Regulatory Framework in Putnam County and its Relation to Agriculture

New York State delegates the authority to legislate with regard to the public health, safety, and welfare, and the physical environment to municipalities under the Municipal Home Rule Law. Specific authority to adopt comprehensive plans, zoning laws, subdivision, and site plan regulations is granted to municipalities under the Town, Village, and General City Law. How these tools are used has considerable influence on local character, development patterns, and the viability of agriculture in these towns and villages.

The town comprehensive/master plans and zoning regulations within Putnam County were analyzed as to how “farm friendly” they are by asking a few simple questions of them:

- Does the town’s comprehensive plan have a section specifically dealing with agriculture?
- Are agricultural uses allowed in a variety of zoning districts?
- Are the regulations flexible in order to accommodate the variety of different needs of different agricultural uses?
- Are innovative subdivision designs allowed or encouraged in order to promote agriculture and preserve open spaces?
- Are various planning tools outlined that can help promote agriculture?
- Is farmland considered a natural resource worthy of protection?
- Does the town have an adopted Right to Farm Law?

Of the six towns in Putnam County, only Patterson was found to have an adopted Right to Farm Law. Their zoning regulations also had the most comprehensive set of definitions describing various types of farms. Farms types were defined as hobby, small, large, or equestrian centers. They are allowed in various zoning districts depending on type of farm with specific restrictions outlined in the regulations.

All towns allowed some agricultural uses in more than one zoning district. Philipstown allows farms in every district. Boarding stables are allowed everywhere but require a special use permit. Carmel allows only nurseries, and fruit and vegetable farms in the residential, commercial and conservation districts. No farm animals are allowed in any zones including horses, and farm stands are limited to 400 square feet.

All of the master plans reviewed had either a specific section on natural resources or mentioned concerns about environmental degradation caused by strong development pressures. None of them made any connection with agriculture’s role in preserving environmental quality. The Town of Kent’s comprehensive plan did not mention farm or agriculture anywhere, and did not show any agricultural uses on the land use maps or in the land use tables. The Town of Southeast comprehensive plan identifies farms as providing scenic vistas and contributing to community character. There is a recommendation to allow horse farms in a new Rural Commercial zone located along the principal entrances to the town.

Philipstown's comprehensive plan identifies protecting farmland as a way to preserve open space and rural character in two of its appendices, but fails to mention it in its Natural Resource/Open Space workgroup report. Putnam Valley's Master Plan suggests allowing 15 acre or larger agricultural uses in their Preservation Development zone, which consists primarily of government and Not-For-Profit owned public open space.

Carmel outlines cluster subdivisions in its comprehensive plan, and Putnam Valley describe conservation subdivision in some detail. However there is no relationship made with the potential for farmland preservation in either case. The Town of Southeast offers density bonuses for subdivisions that preserve prime agricultural land in its 1968 zoning law. However this is currently being updated and a draft copy is not available at this time.

Overall, most of the town's zoning laws were vague in their treatment and definition of farms and agricultural activities. Most local zoning laws included farms in residential districts. As such, residential standards for setbacks, road frontages, fences, etc. would be required. Local zoning laws are not overly flexible or farm friendly because there are few standards specifically for farms, farm operations and farm buildings and vague definitions.



# 7. New York City Watershed and its Relation to Agriculture

## The New York City Department of Environmental Protection

In January 1997, Governor Pataki, New York City Mayor Giuliani, the EPA Regional Administrator, and dozens of state county town and village officials signed the NYC Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA was a comprehensive effort to protect the quality of the water supply produced by the watershed of the City of New York while supporting the economic and social strengths of the communities in the watershed. The MOA includes a set of programs to be implemented in watershed communities. These programs include acquisition of land and easements, implementation of new regulations affecting activities in the watershed, and dozens of watershed protection and partnership programs. The following is a summary description of watershed programs available to area farmers:

The Watershed Land Acquisition Program is a key element in the City's long-term strategy to preserve environmentally sensitive lands in its upstate watersheds. Land acquisition is a key element in the City's ability to obtain filtration avoidance. New York City has committed to soliciting at least 355,050 acres of land over a ten-year period. The goal of the Program is to acquire from willing seller's fee title to or conservation easements on, property that will have the greatest impact on future water quality. The land is to be bought at fair market value prices and property taxes will be paid by the City. Property will not be acquired by eminent domain. As part of the Watershed Land Acquisition Program, the City will consult with Towns and Villages prior to the purchase of any property within its borders. The consultation ensures that the City considers the Town's or Village's interests and that the terms of the land acquisition program are complied with. The land acquisition program must provide reasonable opportunities for growth in and around existing population centers while preserving environmentally sensitive, undeveloped areas. The watershed towns and villages may exempt certain areas from solicitation under the Land Acquisition Program.

## Watershed Agricultural Council Programs

### Whole Farm Planning

Whole Farm Planning is a voluntary program that uses a holistic approach to farm management. It is used to identify and prioritize the protection of environmental factors that can affect water quality while maintaining the economic vitality of the farm business. Potential risks to the water supply are identified and careful structural planning is used to reduce or avoid the movement of agricultural runoff into streams. As part of the Whole Farm Plan, Best Management Practices (BMPs) are selected to reduce specific pollutants identified. A Planning and Implementation Team visits the farm to identify and assess potential sources of pollutants, review technical and financial options with the farmer and draft a Whole Farm Plan. Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District nominates the farms to WAC using the AEM program and provides technical review of each Plan and the full Watershed Agricultural Council reviews and approves each Plan. After signing a contract, the farmer implements the Plan with assistance from

the team. Currently in Putnam County, this is only occurring in the priority sub-basins of Boyds, Croton Falls, and West Branch.

### **Farm Best Management Practices**

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are conservation practices meant to prevent or reduce the amount of pollution generated by non point sources in order to protect and enhance water quality. Many BMPs used in the New York City watershed are standard practices established by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Watershed Agricultural Council also develops and implements innovative BMPs based on scientific research and field experience.

### **Forest Management Planning**

To encourage voluntary stewardship of private forest land, the Watershed Forestry Program offers cost-sharing to landowners with parcels of ten acres and above located within the watershed boundaries and currently have no written plan. The Watershed Forestry Program can recommend forestry professionals who have been trained in safety and water quality issues. Funding is available to help offset the cost of their services.

## 8. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Key Issues Facing Agriculture

An important step in the planning process included identification of key issues facing agriculture in the county. Information used to identify issues included:

- ✓ Discussions with the Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
- ✓ Interviews with county farmers
- ✓ Interviews with county agencies and staff
- ✓ Interviews with area land trusts, organizations, and interest groups
- ✓ Analysis of trends such as land development, agricultural economic conditions, and changes in farm land, farm type and farm size.

Throughout the process of collecting data and conducting interviews, a variety of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to agriculture were also identified. These elements, indicated below, form the basis for the vision, goals, and strategies of this plan. Agricultural strengths are those elements that Putnam County will want to maintain and preserve. Agricultural weaknesses are those elements that the county will want to enhance. Agricultural Opportunities are those elements that the county will want to take advantage of, and agricultural threats are those elements that need to be eliminated before they become severe problems that would prevent the county from reaching its agricultural goals.

Table 19. Summary of Agricultural Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in Putnam County

<b>Agricultural Strengths (resources or capabilities that help agriculture be successful)</b>	<b>Agricultural Weaknesses (internal deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder agriculture from being successful)</b>
Market value of agricultural products has shown large increases (much higher than state-wide averages).	
Average per farm market value of sales is increasing.	The average size of farms is getting smaller.
Cropland is still available and acreage appears to be stable.	Farm expenses are increasing.
Number of farms has increased slightly.	Real property values and taxes are a major impediment.
There is general support on the part of the public for agriculture and the agricultural district program.	There is a general lack of information about farming and for farmers: farmers lack technical information and all levels of local governments lack necessary information to effectively administer the Ag District requirements and assessments.
The sport horse/equine competition industry is strong.	There are some user conflicts on preserved lands (hikers vs. horse trails, for example)
The County's purchase of Tilly Foster farm has preserved important lands.	Lack of leadership for and mechanisms to promoting and market county agricultural products in effective way.

The Hudson River is an asset to the county and to agriculture.	Minimal success in tapping into state and federal funds to assist agriculture in the county.
There are strong Soil and Water Conservation District programs to support agriculture.	Manure storage and removal is costly and difficult.
The R C & D program is interested in regional agricultural programs that can benefit Putnam County.	NYC DEP lands do not allow horse riding.
The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board	Although the Visitor's bureau gives attention to some aspects of agriculture in the County, it is not comprehensive and does not give attention to the agricultural horse trails and horse related recreational opportunities in county.
Increased participation in AEM and BMP programs	Difficulty finding resources such as repairing farm equipment, maintaining fields/pastures, lime application, maintaining horse trails.
Watershed Agricultural Council does offer some assistance to farms located in the NYC Watershed.	Some trail-user conflicts and some want to ban horses from trails. Also, there is a lack of room for parking horse trailers in parking areas for multi-use trails.
County Tourism Office includes local agricultural opportunities in printed materials.	Many farms are not part of the agricultural district program and not all eligible farms take advantage of tax relief programs.
Access to services for horse owners is still available.	Federal programs have minimum acreage requirements that are not often feasible to meet in the farm environment of Putnam County. Further, high land values limit our competitiveness for federal programs.
<b>Agricultural Opportunities (External or outside factors that can affect agriculture in a positive way)</b>	<b>Agricultural Threats (External or outside factors that can affect agriculture in a negative way)</b>
Smaller parcels of land can be used for profitable niche farming.	Minimal amounts of land remain for agriculture.
Growing demand for nursery and greenhouse products.	There is high development pressure.
There is a desire by many to control development.	Non-farm and farm interactions causing friction and difficulties for farmers.
Agriculture is the preferred land use for the New York City Watershed.	Huge land values, assessments and taxes are major impediment to viable agriculture.
Could be an expansion of use of AEM and BMP programs.	Strict zoning laws are not farm friendly.
Positive conditions for expanded vegetable growing exist.	Building codes are not farm friendly.
Opportunities for vineyards.	Lack of assistance and technical support makes it difficult for farmers to succeed.
There are many opportunities for using enhanced education of all parties to help agriculture be more profitable and viable.	There is a lack of farm infrastructure to support existing farms.

Agri-tourism.	Lack of farmer networks and lobbying is a threat.
There could be expanded utilization of Watershed Agricultural Council programs to enhance farm viability.	Negative attitudes by some towards farming.
Tilly Foster Farm could have enhanced role in education of public, recreation, and other areas.	Lack of inclusion of agriculture as an industry to be included in the economic development strategy at the county level.
The Hudson River could be enhanced as a transportation mode for agricultural products.	Losing existing horse trails to development.
Putnam County has, and is close to a huge market.	Farm use is limited on publicly and not-for profit owned lands.
There are opportunities for more fresh markets and community supported agricultural operations.	Lack of long-range land use planning aimed at including agriculture as a desired land use.
A buy local campaign centered on food supply and security could be taken advantage of.	Older farmers and lack of another generation desiring to farm puts existing farms and farmlands at risk.
Putnam County has a growing tourism industry. Growing interest in outdoor activities, antiques, restaurants, leaf-peeping.	There is little outreach and marketing of agriculture to the public. There are no facilities or activities that allow public access to farms.
Can build on horse-related recreational activities.	

## 9. Vision for Agriculture's Future

The following statement expresses the long-term vision for agriculture in Putnam County:

Agriculture in Putnam County is understood and appreciated as working open space and for its intrinsic contribution to Putnam County's economy, environment, beauty and character, history, recreational opportunities, and our quality of life. Lands remain available for active agricultural activities. Agriculture also plays an important role in providing a local supply of fresh food and produce. Farmers are able to capitalize on new economic opportunities such as agri-tourism, niche or specialty products, and fresh products. Farm management is enhanced to increase profitability and use of best management practices protects natural resources. A positive attitude towards farming galvanizes the agricultural community and its advocates so that they are successful in funding and providing programs to assist farmers to be more productive and profitable.



## 10. Goals, Objectives and Strategies

The following goals and objectives are established to help Putnam County meet its long-term agricultural vision:

**Goal 1: Economic Opportunities - Preserve agriculture as an important industry in the county and promote further agricultural economic development.**

Objective 1: Integrate agriculture into county economic programs and initiatives.

Objective 2: Decrease costs of farming in Putnam County

Objective 3: Increase agri-tourism opportunities in the County.

Objective 4: Promote farm diversification efforts.

Objective 5: Increase direct marketing and new product development opportunities.

**Goal 2: Community Support - Increase community support of agriculture and cultivate an enhanced appreciation of agriculture and the many roles it plays in Putnam County.**

Objective 1: Establish new agricultural promotion efforts aimed at local decision makers.

Objective 2: Establish new promotion efforts aimed at the general public and area businesses.

Objective 3: Establish a "Pride in Farming" program aimed at the farm community.

**Goal 3: Supportive Policies and Programs - Promote regional, county, and local policies and programs that encourage and sustain farming.**

Objective 1: Increase farmer participation in government activities and in local economic development efforts.

Objective 2: The Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should strengthen their role as an advocate for agriculture in the County, begin immediate implementation of the recommendations in this plan, and ensure that the plan remains updated and relevant to county agriculture.

Objective 3: Integrate agriculture into local planning efforts, and increase participation of local towns in comprehensive planning and application of farmland protection strategies.

**Goal 4: Education - Promote policies and programs that enhance farm viability and profitability.**

Objective 1: Increase training opportunities for farmers and agri-businesses aimed at enhancing profitability.

**Goal 5: Open Space and Natural Resources - Preserve agriculture as working open space and promote farm practices that protect natural resources.**

Objective 1: Seek funding to initiate a Purchase or Lease of Development Rights program.

Objective 2: Implement farmland protection techniques at the local level.

## Goal 1: Economic Opportunities

### Preserve agriculture as an important industry in the county and promote further agricultural economic development.

**Issue:** Although agriculture employs nearly 200 farm workers and generates more than \$2.4 million in annual sales in Putnam County, there is little recognition by many people of its economic contribution. Many farms are small in both size and in market sales; however, taken together, farms have a positive impact on the economy. Small farms have the potential to be more profitable if costs could be controlled. Putnam County's location in the lower Hudson Valley provides opportunities for direct marketing, niche farming, value-added products, and agricultural tourism.

**Benchmarks:** The number of farms and greenhouse operations in Putnam County will grow and new niche markets will be developed. The County, through its programs, will encourage the development of agriculture as a goods-producing industry with the potential to generate additional economic activity across all industry sectors. Agri-tourism will become an important component of the county economy. Production costs including property taxes will be controlled. More farmers will take advantage of agricultural assessments to reduce their costs. Putnam County will be regionally known as a location for safe, farm-fresh foods and unique, high-quality plants and flowers.

#### **Objective 1: Integrate agriculture into county economic programs and initiatives.**

##### **Strategies**

- 1) Work with the Putnam County Economic Development Corporation to increase awareness of and support for local agriculture and enhance their understanding of the contribution of agriculture to the County economy. The AFPB should develop an outreach program to county economic development advocates and staff. Communicate Putnam's agricultural vision and the economic development goals established in this plan to all economic development groups and agencies in the County and region. Each of these agencies should have a clear understanding of the agricultural policies of Putnam County.
- 2) Ensure that economic development programs of the Economic Development Corporation are not at cross-purposes with agriculture and farmland protection efforts.
- 3) Work with the Putnam County Economic Development Corporation to include agriculturally based businesses as a part of their county-wide economic development program. The County should work to establish agriculture as an industry on equal footing with other types of manufacturing, production or recreational business efforts and use similar funding and tax abatement programs to encourage these economic development activities.
- 4) The County could also provide programs such as the following:

- Establish a revolving loan fund for small businesses and allow agricultural businesses to tap into these dollars. This fund can provide financing for farm start-ups, barn and facility expansions, equipment purchases, diversification projects, agri-tourism efforts, food processing or other value-added projects. In order to enhance success, this program should tie eligibility for funding to a requirement that a business plan be developed by the applicant.

- Consider development of a “circuit rider” program in conjunction with the Cornell Cooperative Extension and neighboring counties to provide one-on-one technical assistance to farm operators regarding diversification projects, marketing, agri-tourism efforts, etc.

- Work with local banks to seek ways to use the Community Reinvestment Act to provide funding for farm reinvestment.

5) The AFPB, along with the Economic Development Corporation and the County Planning and Development Office should explore feasibility of, and consider participating in the Cornell Cooperative Extension program AIDER (Agricultural Industry Development Enhancement and Retention) program. This program helps local communities integrate agriculture into comprehensive economic development strategies. The AIDER process should build upon information, vision, goals, and strategies already identified in this plan.

## **Objective 2: Decrease costs of farming in Putnam County**

### **Strategies**

1) Given the reduction of farm services and related businesses available to local farmers, work cooperatively to establish programs to help farmers share resources and equipment, and to take advantage of the buying power of multiple farms. Purchasing cooperatives can provide less costly goods and services. Cooperatives could be arranged through a formal and highly organized structure, or done informally. Cooperatives have the most success, however, when they are narrowly focused.

- The USDA Rural Development Agency can assist in cooperative start-up. Provide mechanisms and technical assistance to help farmers form, and administer, new purchasing cooperatives.

- Cooperatives can also be formed for growers. Growers who sell wholesale can increase access to markets with high-volume retailers (supermarkets, for example) through a cooperative. Grower cooperatives can offer locally grown food that could be marketed in a very beneficial way.

2) Strengthen participation in the Ag District Program. Participation in this program should be supported since Agricultural Districts can protect farms from nuisance lawsuits, eminent domain takings, and regulations that interfere with farming and thus increase costs of doing business. The AFPB should work on an annual basis to include all eligible farms in the agricultural district and target efforts to reach those landowners and educate them about the benefits of being in an ag district.

3) Strengthen participation in the agricultural assessment program. Increase the number of farmers participating in the current ag assessment program and work to provide accurate information, methods, and techniques to both landowners and local assessors on the program requirements. Farmers indicate that issues related to taxes and assessments are critical ones to address.

- It should be a priority of the County to provide for continuing education for local assessors on agricultural assessments and exemptions either directly with local towns and members of the Board of Assessment Review. Additionally, the County should enhance assessor's compliance with mandated training requirements (which include agricultural property valuation.)

- The County should routinely monitor assessors' performance related to agricultural assessments in order to ensure that there are consistent and proper assessment procedures used throughout the County.

- For farm taxpayers who are considering challenging their tax assessments, the AFPB should initiate a support program to provide direct assistance to them in evaluation of whether their farm assets have been correctly assessed.

- The County, together with SWCD, should provide mechanisms to educate local farmers and farmland owners about other tax abatement programs including the following: the farm building exemption portion of the Real Property Tax Law; Section 483; NYS Farmers School Tax Credit (STAR); NYS Historic Barn Credit Program; and the NYS Barn Rehabilitation Cost Share Program.

- The County should develop a short, concise brochure containing a directory of tax incentives and benefits for farmers and farmland owners to help in promoting participation in these beneficial programs.

- Assessors should keep agricultural use values on all agricultural land owned or rented until that land has been converted to non-farm use. When land is taken out of agricultural production, local assessors should aggressively enforce the required tax abatement roll-backs (penalties for farmland conversion to non-farm use.)

4) Develop new, local tax initiatives to complement existing tax programs. Many farmers are not eligible for current ag assessments and exemptions on real property taxes because they are not meeting the \$10,000 income eligibility requirements.

- Consider expanding county tax benefits for agriculture and agriculturally related businesses, including nurseries and greenhouses. These activities are currently not eligible for ag assessments, and expanding benefits to them will serve as further incentives for farm reinvestment and diversification. Municipalities can offer tax benefits in addition to the New York State required ag assessment program.

- Farmers listed the tax burden as one of their most important issues. Work with local towns to develop additional town tax exemptions and incentives for landowners of agricultural land or when agricultural land is protected. Eligibility for these programs should be more inclusive than exists under the state ag

assessment program and should include smaller farms and farms that gross less than \$10,000. It is recommended that the dollar limit be lowered to \$5,000.

5) Inform local assessors about New York State 480-A, a law which reduces taxes on woodland parcels over 50 acres in size and that are committed to continuing forest uses and management. Participation in this program would encourage the maintenance of woodlands for timber purposes along with other forest values such as maple syrup production, and would serve to reduce costs for owning this type of land. Work to inform landowners and residents about this program.

6) Encourage increased participation in programs that reduce the cost of farming inputs such as integrated pest management, organic farming, and pasture-based grazing management. Grass-based systems are of particular value to actively pursue in Putnam County as they can take advantage of the many smaller farms and those located on poorer soils.

### **Objective 3: Increase agri-tourism opportunities in the County.**

#### **Strategies**

1) The County Tourism Office, along with support from the AFPB, should develop and promote agri-tourism opportunities. In general, the most effective agri-tourism strategies offer something for visitors to see, do, and buy. Traditional agri-tourism opportunities include:

- Farm tours
- Horse Shows
- Farm stands
- Corn mazes
- Petting “zoo” and opportunities for children to interact with farm animals
- Establishment of Bed & Breakfast operations on farms
- Hayrides
- U-Picks and Community Supported Agricultural operations (CSA’s)
- Town and Country Tour (similar to Dutchess County)



2) The County Tourism Office should work directly with local nursery and greenhouse producers to develop and promote agri-tourism opportunities specifically related to the “green industry.” These activities allow small producers to increase their markets and enhance their profitability while attracting large numbers of visitors to the County. Potential strategies include:

- Interactive demonstrations and working farm experiences (agri-vacations)
- Gardening classes

Garden tours and open houses that link multiple producers  
Greenhouse tours for school groups to increase their understanding of the industry  
Special events such as Spring Flower Shows

3) Putnam County agriculture should aggressively take advantage of its location in the Hudson Valley and its proximity to urban areas. Market agri-tourism opportunities to tour bus lines, travel agents, and the “I Love NY” program.

4) All agri-tourism activities should be listed in the county tourism directory and mapped. They should also be linked with existing tourism activities in the county.

5) Agri-tourism activities should include diverse activities and include agricultural connections to cultural heritage and historic activities and recreation. Develop a four-season agri-tourism industry. To this end, the County tourism office should prepare a tourism plan that has agri-tourism as a component of a comprehensive effort to promote tourism.

6) Promote area farms and farm fresh produce. Create a directory and map of area farms that have agri-tourism opportunities, direct marketing operations such as “U-Pick,” and retail sales of products such as maple syrup and other homegrown products. This idea can be expanded to develop an “agricultural byway” similar to the scenic byway program. A map showing routes linking various farms in the county together via scenic routes can be developed as a way to involve the general public in being aware of and viewing area farms.

7) Promote the County’s equine industry by publicizing trail systems on county and state lands that allow horses and including information on horse farms that offer riding lessons in County tourism materials. Horseback riding should also be included in the list of recreational activities (e.g., hiking, biking) that can be pursued in Putnam County.

#### **Objective 4: Promote farm diversification efforts.**

##### **Strategies**

1) Farmers should take advantage of expanding their agricultural businesses to diversify and cater to niche markets. Putnam County has excellent opportunities for niche farming. Niche markets usually pay premium prices for products. Putnam County is in an excellent location to take advantage of urban markets and tourists as well as to cater to local residents desiring fresh food and outdoor recreational opportunities. There are many opportunities to expand agriculture in the county by promoting development of small, niche farms.

2) Support and encourage area farmers to seek assistance in diversification efforts from the New York State Food Venture Center (Cornell University), the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship, and the Community Food and Agriculture Program (See Chapter 13.)

3) Farms containing woodlands can take better advantage of them, and attain increased value from them, by using them for outdoor recreation. Educate farmers about, and encourage use of non-consumptive leases (recreational leases, for example) to provide additional income to landowners that are maintaining open space. Farmers should employ woodland management Best Management Practices, consider applying for the 480-a tax assessment program, and participate in the Watershed Agricultural Council's forestry related programs within the New York City Watershed.

4) Promote alternative agricultural operations such as organic farming and vegetables. The County along with the SWCD should consider providing training, incentives, and on-going support for such operations.

**Objective 5: Increase direct marketing and new product development opportunities.**

**Strategies**

1) Initiate a direct marketing program to sell Putnam County produce to local residents and restaurants. Take advantage of a green labeling system and at the same time promote a "grown locally" theme. A program could be based on the successful restaurant supported agricultural marketing system developed by the Watershed Agricultural Council, West of Hudson. Grower cooperatives can help make this activity more successful. Work cooperatively with the NYS Direct Marketing Association for assistance in this endeavor. Encourage development of new community supported agriculture (CSA's).

2) Initiate a farmer to retailer linkage program similar to that offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension in Columbia County. This is a program that seeks to create direct marketing links between producers and metropolitan area retailers.

3) Marketing efforts should participate in and take advantage of green labeling and Pride of New York programs.

## Goal 2: Community Support

Increase community support of agriculture and cultivate an enhanced appreciation of agriculture and the many roles it plays in Putnam County.

**Issue:** Lack of understanding on the part of local decision makers and residents about farm practices and the role of agriculture in their communities contribute to farmland loss. It also contributes to the development of negative attitudes in the farm community. Negative feelings about agriculture prevent innovation and “can-do” attitudes – both of which are needed in order to move towards more profitability and long-term success in farming.

**Benchmark:** Local and county government decision-makers and the general public will understand agriculture and the many important roles it plays in the County. These decision-makers will be active partners in preserving and nurturing farming. A positive attitude towards farming by farmers, other business people, and the general public will develop. There will be fewer negative farm/non-farm interactions.

**Objective 1: Establish new agricultural promotion efforts aimed at local decision makers.**

### Strategies

1) Establish a series of annual or bi-annual farm visits for local officials from the county and town governments. Farm visits should be aimed at helping local officials understand the farmers’ needs and the benefits of agriculture to their communities. These tours should highlight different locations in the county and different types of farms.

2) Consider initiating a program where town supervisors are invited to attend an AFPB meeting at least once a year to discuss the agricultural district program and other agriculture-related topics that would be of concern in that municipality. The AFPB should consider personally discussing the plan and its recommendations with town supervisors so that they understand the need for farm and farmland protection and the role local governments can have in the process.

3) The AFPB should ensure widespread distribution of this plan to newly elected officials in towns. Printed copies of the plan should be available at county and local government offices. Each town board and town planning board should also receive a copy. The plan should also be made available on CD-ROM as well as on a web site. An executive summary, including a map showing farms with descriptive text illustrating the breadth of farming activities taking place in the county should be widely distributed as well.

4) Consider initiating a “Farmer-Municipal Official Advisor Program. Seek to have a farmer from each town take on a role as an advisor to that town to advocate and educate

local officials on agricultural districts, assessments, policies, etc. This person should communicate regularly with the AFPB and ag-support services that exist in the county. These town “advisors” should become very familiar with state and local laws, programs, and policies related to agriculture in order to be effective in their educational efforts.

## **Objective 2: Establish new promotion efforts aimed at the general public and area businesses.**

### **Strategies**

1) Establish a countywide farm tour to allow the public access to local farms. Like the tours for local officials, these farm tours should highlight different locations in the county and different types of farms. They should be designed to foster a greater appreciation of farmers, the work involved in farming, and to promote county agricultural products and the role agriculture plays in the community.

2) Work with area schools to provide agricultural education. The goal of the program should be to promote agriculture and its role in the community.

- ◆ Cornell Cooperative Extension should initiate an in-school program such as “Ag in the Classroom” to provide education on farms and food production.
- ◆ Contact New York State Farm Bureau regarding their “Red Barn” education program that can be placed in school libraries and classrooms.
- ◆ Form an agricultural speaker’s bureau and make these people available for talks at local schools, libraries, clubs (such as girl and boy scouts), etc.

3) Develop and actively promote a county identity and logo for agriculture. This logo should be placed on all promotion and educational materials distributed by county agencies, farm groups, and area farmers. Develop this logo as signs that could be placed at area farms. Involve the community in design of this logo by sponsoring a logo contest.

4) Develop a “We Support Putnam Farming” sign and work towards placement of these signs at area farms, businesses that support county farms, and at municipal borders.

5) Seek funding for and develop a series of public service announcements for television, radio and printed news media. These advertisements should promote specific ag-related events and markets, as well as promote the farm community and its role in the county. The AFPB should develop regular press releases to general circulation newspapers, and specific newsletter articles about agriculture in the county. It is important to keep agriculture relevant and visible. Press releases can highlight this plan and the specific recommendations made in it while future progress reports can be used to update the community on plan implementation. In addition, these press releases can feature specific farms, agricultural activities, or agri-tourism events in Putnam County.

6) Written materials such as an executive summary of this plan, Putnam County Agricultural Fact Sheets, and special topic brochures should be made available to the public and local officials throughout the county. Some special topic brochures could concentrate on options to preserve farmland, use of conservation easements, location of

u-pick operations, etc. Alternatively, CD-ROM's can be distributed inexpensively with the same information on it. CD-ROM's have the advantage of being able to have much more detailed information and maps included. A map showing farms with descriptive text illustrating the breadth of farming activities taking place in the county should be developed and widely distributed as well.

7) Continue to support Tilly Foster Farm and further develop it so that it can fill an important educational role in the county. Tilly Foster is an opportunity to be a "model" farm to educate the general public on agriculture and its role in Putnam County.

### **Objective 3: Establish a "Pride in Farming" program aimed at the farm community.**

#### **Strategies**

1) Initiate a county-wide "farm of distinction" program. This should differ from other such programs in that it should not concentrate on the aesthetic appeal of a farm. Specific criteria for eligibility for this program could include participation in conservation programs, use of innovative technologies, efforts to diversify farm operations, farmer involvement in continuing education of the public, and other activities that illustrate efforts of the farm to remain viable and profitable.

2) Initiate a separate farm beautification program. This county-wide effort should recognize farms for efforts made in land and building beautification, historic renovation of farm buildings, and on-going upkeep of the premises.



## Goal 3: Supportive Policies and Programs

Promote regional, county, and local policies and programs that encourage and sustain farming.

**Issue:** The general consensus among those surveyed for this plan is that neither the county nor individual towns have supportive policies and programs in place to encourage and sustain local farming activities. Farmers identified this as a significant issue to be addressed.

**Benchmark:** Farmers are involved on local planning boards in at least four of the towns in Putnam County. Farmers are actively involved in area chambers of commerce and are advocating more agricultural economic development efforts. The AFPB provides key leadership for agricultural education and initiatives in the county. Local Planning Boards understand state law requirements related to the agricultural district and are working to effectively administer them. Town planning efforts and zoning are enhanced to be farm-friendly and the county and towns have adopted right to farm laws.

**Objective 1: Increase farmer participation in government activities and in local economic development efforts.**

### Strategies

- 1) Encourage town governments in the County to involve local farmers as members on planning boards. Section 271.11 of New York State Town Law authorizes a town to appoint one or more agricultural members to the planning board. This section is applicable to those towns having a New York agricultural district within its boundaries.
- 2) The AFPB should provide each town planning board with a copy of this plan and a large format map showing which parcels are included in the agricultural district.
- 3) The County should ensure that representatives of the farm community are involved in local economic development agencies, and county planning efforts. Involve members of the agricultural community in county-wide economic development efforts coordinated through the County Economic Development Corporation and the County Planning and Development Office. (See also Goal 1 and its recommendations starting on Page 55.)
- 4) Farmers should become involved in local chambers of commerce. Agricultural operations are businesses and farmers should join their area chambers as members and become involved in advocating farms as small businesses. Farmers should be represented on the planning and economic development committees of their local chamber of commerce. Farmers need to act as aggressive advocates for agriculture.
- 5) Consider forming a Putnam County Farm Bureau so that farmers can begin to communicate and advocate programs within Putnam County. Currently, farmers wishing to join Farm Bureau do so in Dutchess or other counties.

**Objective 2: The Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should strengthen their role as an advocate for agriculture in the County, begin immediate implementation of the recommendations in this plan, and ensure that the plan remains updated and relevant to county agriculture.**

### **Strategies**

The County AFPB is authorized under New York State law to advise the county legislative body about agricultural districts; review notice of intent filings; make recommendations about proposed acquisition of farmland in agricultural districts; prepare and update county agricultural and farmland protection plans; request review of state agency regulations that affect farm operations within an agricultural district; and review and endorse applications for funding for purchase of development rights. In addition to these statutory roles, the AFPB should:

1) Review and update this plan every five years.



2) Provide leadership and act as advocates for agriculture to implement this plan.

3) Work cooperatively with the Soil and Water Conservation District and other organizations such as New York State Agriculture and Markets and USDA NRCS to fund and implement programs identified in this plan.

4) Routinely communicate with agency and organization staff with responsibilities related to

agriculture including the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Watershed Agriculture Council, Lower Hudson –Long Island Resource Conservation and Development Council, Tilly Foster Farm, etc.

5) Coordinate and sponsor regular trainings for assessors and town officials. Some counties have hired, on a part-time basis, teachers to offer these programs.

6) Initiate a program to annually communicate with landowners within the agricultural district to generate and maintain data on properties and agricultural operations.

7) Set up a local dispute resolution committee to minimize farmer/non-farmer conflicts that may arise.

### **Objective 3: Integrate agriculture into local planning efforts, and increase participation of local towns in comprehensive planning and application of farmland protection strategies.**

#### **Strategies**

1) Provide information to and training of local planning and town boards to enhance project reviews and evaluation of impacts on agriculture. Both boards should have training and information on New York State requirements related to agricultural districts. Specifically, local governments should understand the following legal requirements:

- ◆Municipalities are required by New York State law to consider the impact of their laws and proposed projects on farms in agricultural districts. There are several requirements in the Agricultural Districts Law (Agriculture and Markets, Article 25-AA) that ask municipalities to carefully consider farm operations within local agriculture districts when making any land use decisions.

- ◆Section 305-a of the law requires local planning and land use decision making to recognize the policy and goals of the agricultural districts law and to avoid unreasonable restrictions or regulations on farm operations within agricultural districts. For example, municipal governments should not instigate or assist intense residential development in farming areas by installing unnecessary utilities or infrastructure that are more typical of suburban areas.

- ◆Local governments may not enact laws that restrict the ability of a farm to conduct normal agricultural operations. Section 305 (2) of the Agricultural District Law states that:

“No local government shall exercise any of its powers to enact local laws or ordinances within an agricultural district in a manner which would unreasonably restrict or regulate farm structures or farming practices in contravention of the purposes of the act unless such restrictions or regulations bear a direct relationship to the public health or safety.”

- ◆Section 305 (4) states that local governments must analyze the effect of proposed public projects on agriculture and to avoid or minimize adverse farm impacts before public dollars are spent or land is acquired for projects.

- ◆One of the most important features for the coordination of local planning and agriculture is the agricultural data statement (ADS). The ADS requires input from owners of farmland, and evaluation and consideration of a proposal’s possible impacts on agriculture before a local board makes a land use or planning decision. The ADS is prepared by the applicant and once completed, submitted to the board responsible for reviewing a development application (whether it be the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, or Town Board.) That board is also responsible for copying the ADS and sending them to the affected landowners listed on the ADS. When an application also requires county review the ADS would also be sent to the Putnam County Planning and Development office. These requirements are spelled out in NYS Town Law 283-a.

The ADS is required when a municipality receives applications for special use permits, site plan approvals, use variances or subdivision approvals requiring municipal review and endorsement if they occur within or on a property within five hundred feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district. In these cases, the reviewing board must evaluate the statement and review the possible impacts of the proposed project on the functioning of farm operations.

The Agricultural Data Statement must include:

- ◆Name and address of the applicant
- ◆Description of the proposed project and its location
- ◆Names and addresses of landowners within the district who have farms and are located within 500 feet of the boundary of the proposed project property
- ◆Map showing the project's site relative to the farm operations identified in the agricultural data statement

The municipality (usually the town clerk) must notify the owners of land identified in the agricultural data statement to allow farmland owners to comment on the effect of any proposed change on their farm operation. In addition, the municipality's review board is required to evaluate the possible impacts of the proposed project in a way that is consistent with the Agricultural Districts Law.

- ◆The State Environmental Quality Review Act also requires a "hard look" at projects and their potential impacts on agricultural districts. SEQRA may be used to further investigate these impacts and/or request mitigation to (or deny) project proposals.

- ◆Sellers of land, buyers of land, and real estate agents must be made aware of the disclosure requirements of AML Article 25-AA, Section 310. It states, "When any purchase and sale contract is presented for the sale, purchase, or exchange of real property located partially or wholly within an agricultural district, the prospective grantor shall present to the prospective grantee a disclosure notice which states the following: It is the policy of this state and this community to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products, and also for its natural and ecological value. This disclosure notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies partially or wholly within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust and odors. Prospective residents are also informed that the location of property within an agricultural district may impact the ability to access water and/or sewer services for such property under certain circumstances. Such disclosure notice shall be signed by the prospective grantor and grantee prior to the sale, purchase or exchange of such real property. Receipt of such disclosure notice shall be recorded on a property transfer report form prescribed by the state board of real property services as provided for in section three hundred thirty-three of the real property law. " Seek to develop more county involvement in the disclosure notice requirements. Research and emulate the Cattaraugus County disclosure notice program. (Available for review in the Putnam County Planning Department)

2) A suggested review process that planning boards can use to enhance their evaluation of projects and their impact on agriculture could include the following steps<sup>9</sup>:

- ◆ A map of the municipality's agricultural districts should be well displayed within the town office where land use applications are submitted. This will help both applicant and reviewing officer to determine the location of the parcel in question.
- ◆ The local reviewing board should determine existing farming conditions to ensure the proposed land uses does not conflict with these farming activities.
- ◆ The board should ensure that the proposal complies with the municipality's comprehensive plan and zoning documents. Further, the proposal must be in accordance with any local laws regarding land development (such as set backs, minimum lot size, etc).



- ◆ As mentioned earlier, SEQR review is an effective method of seeking mitigation of conflicts or negative impacts due to a proposal. Some questions that planning boards should ask to determine if a project will negatively impact farms include:

- ◆ What potential conflicts between the existing farm and the new use

will be created? How will these conflicts be prevented?

- ◆ Will the new use negatively impact a farmer's ability to use existing right-of-ways or farm roads needed to access fields?
- ◆ Will the new use affect land values and rental rates for agriculture?
- ◆ If new public roads are to be built, will they accommodate agricultural equipment and traffic?
- ◆ Will this new use spur additional non-farm development in the future?

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<sup>9</sup> Source: *Agricultural and Farmland Protection for New York, American Farmland Trust). Processing an Agricultural Data Statement (pursuant to Section 305-a of the Agriculture and Markets Law), Department of Agriculture and Markets. Interview with Ron Meade and Bob Somers, Agricultural Districts Program, Division of Agricultural Protection and Development Services, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (July 2002).*

- ◆ Is the landowner familiar with nearby agricultural practices that will be used and how will they be educated about them?
- ◆ Will the new use remove significant amount of land from being available for farming?
- ◆ The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) may assist local reviewing boards in project evaluation. There is no set role or guideline for Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board in this process. Under the law's procedural considerations it only states "the County AFPB may assist local review boards in review process."
- ◆ According to Town Law 283-a, and Village Law 7-741, notice must be given to the county about proposals requiring the Agricultural Data Statement (ADS). The Putnam County Planning and Development office is responsible for reviewing the ADS.
- ◆ A copy of the completed Agricultural Data Statement and action by the local reviewing board should be submitted to the AFPB for its records.

3) A Web site should be developed and maintained for purposes of promoting agricultural development and farmland protection efforts in Putnam County. The web site should include not only the maps and information contained in this plan, but also information about buying and selling farmland, a forum for farmers and the general public to interact with each other, advertisement of agri-tourism events, and links to the farm service agencies and agri-businesses that support farming in the County.

4) Increase understanding of local town and planning boards on the range of farmland protection techniques that are available for their use. Local governments have an important role to play in enhancing agriculture and protecting important farmlands in the county. Planning, zoning, and other land use practices are important farmland protection tools as follows:

- Comprehensive Planning. Local governments should develop comprehensive plans or update existing ones that integrate support of agriculture into local municipal goals and policies and enhance their commitment to agriculture. Similarly, local open space planning efforts should include agriculture as important working open space to be considered and protected.
- Local regulations should be reviewed and evaluated for their level of "farm-friendliness". Local regulations include some provisions that make farming more difficult and expensive. Because farms play important and positive roles in Putnam County as this plan has discussed, local governments should initiate planning efforts to amend local laws so that they do not include provisions that impede normal agricultural activities.
- There are a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory land use tools that can be applied to protect agriculture as working open space. See page 73 for full details on these techniques.

5) Putnam County and each local municipality should consider passing a right-to-farm law (See Model Right-to-Farm Law in the Appendix.) A Right-to-Farm Law is basically a locally adopted law that protects farmers from nuisance complaints related to standard farming practices. Right to farm laws not only discourage neighbors from suing farmers, but they also document the importance of farming in that community and put non-farm rural residents on notice that accepted agricultural practices are reasonable activities to expect in that area. Further, these laws send an important positive message to farm families that their operations are valued and accepted by the community.

When dispute resolution sections are included in right to farm laws, communities will have an additional means for resolving conflicts. It should be a goal that problems are discussed and solved at the local level.

New York has two types of right to farm laws. One applies to farms in agricultural districts and protects them from unreasonable local regulation. This law does not protect farmers from negligent operation or if the nuisance was pre-existing. The second NY law applies to agricultural activities on farms and includes private nuisance protection. New York also allows farmers to be awarded legal fees if it is found that a nuisance complaint was frivolous.

Right to farm laws should contain specific language to be legally sustainable. They should also contain clear definitions of sound agricultural practices, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and solid statements of intent and purpose.

While these laws do not directly protect farmland from being abandoned or converted to other uses, they should be considered an important component of the overall farmland protection strategy. Appendix 13.b includes a model right to farm law.



## Goal 4: Education

Promote policies and programs that enhance farm viability and profitability.

**Issues:** Farmers have indicated that they have difficulty finding information on techniques, programs, funding, management practices, etc. Putnam County no longer has the support infrastructure for farmers. Farmers have access to Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA NRCS, USDA Farm Service Agency and Farm Bureau in Dutchess County and Cornell Cooperative Extension no longer has a county agricultural agent. There is a need to share information among farmers. In order to meet the goals of this plan and to be profitable, farmers need to have better access to educational opportunities.

**Benchmarks:** Farmers will have increased access to agricultural information. A farmer's network will have been created and will meet regularly to support county farmers and provide a mechanism for communicating and sharing information. More farmers will have completed farm business plans to help increase their profitability.

**Objective 1: Increase training opportunities for farmers and agribusinesses aimed at enhancing profitability.**

### Strategies

- 1) Increase coordination and regular communication among farm support agencies serving Putnam County. Consider establishing regular meetings between farm support agencies. These meetings should be designed so that all staff members become familiar with each other's programs. Additionally, the agenda should include ways to coordinate programs, enhance participation, and increase communication with the farm and non-farm community.
- 2) Develop a printed directory that outlines the functions and programs available from each agency serving agriculture in the county. This directory should include program descriptions and contact information. Much of the information supplied in Chapter 13 can be used in this directory. When complete, the directory should be widely disseminated to farmers and farmland owners.
- 3) Consider developing a printed directory of funding opportunities and financial assistance programs for farmers.
- 4) Facilitate formation of a farmer-to-farmer network group. Farmers could benefit from having a forum to discuss issues, techniques, and ideas with one another.
- 5) Facilitate formation of a farmer-mentoring program. A farmer-mentoring program could link farmers together to share expertise.

6) Increase farmer participation in farm business planning activities. Preparing a business plan allows farmers to increase their profitability by examining a variety of strategies and improve performance. Increased efforts need to be made to expand farmer participation in financial management and planning programs for their farms. Farmers who focus on using profitability measures (such as benchmarking, trend analysis, and accrual net farm income) tend to be more profitable than those who do not use these methods. Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Watershed Agricultural Council and other agencies to identify mechanisms to provide farm business planning services to Putnam County farmers.



## Goal 5: Open Space and Natural Resources

### Preserve agriculture as working open space and promote farm practices that protect natural resources.

**Issues:** Preservation of open space and rural character is very important to residents of Putnam County. A great deal of open space has already been protected through parks, not-for-profits, and New York City. While this is important to meet other objectives, some have expressed concern that land is being taken out of the control of farmers and local landowners. There has not been emphasis on preservation of working open space: farmlands. There does not seem to be a high level of recognition of the value farms play in Putnam County, including open space, the environment, and community character.

**Benchmarks:** Additional working farmlands will be preserved from development through easement programs. New development will consider and plan for farmland and other open spaces through use of innovative siting techniques such as clustering and conservation subdivision designs. Farms will be buffered from new uses. Putnam County will embrace smart growth techniques designed to maintain open space, farms, rural character, and enhance existing population centers such as hamlets and villages. Local communities will use incentives to accomplish land use goals such as density bonuses.

#### **Objective 1: Seek funding to initiate a Purchase or Lease of Development Rights program.**

##### **Strategies**

1) Develop a program to purchase or lease development rights from willing landowners on lands identified in this plan as being the most valuable farmland in Putnam County to protect. The map entitled “Ranking of Farms Using LESA Criteria” should be used to initially identify those farm parcels that most closely meet the state and federal criteria for funding. On this map, parcels receiving the highest score are of higher priority to protect.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) – Development rights of a property can be legally split from other property rights and held so that development is limited or prevented. Development rights are usually permanently sold or donated, but leased or temporary programs are becoming more common. When the development rights on a property are sold, donated or leased, a deed restriction (called a conservation easement) is placed on the property. The deed restriction is a written document that details the specific limits placed on that property and is called a conservation easement. The restrictions contained in the easement stay with the land no matter who the owner is. Land with a conservation easement remains privately owned and managed. It also remains on the local tax rolls, but should be assessed as if it were land with no further development potential. Although the land remains in private ownership, the easement is “held” by either a government entity or a qualified non-profit organization. A conservation easement is always voluntary and is specific to a particular parcel

of land. The price of an easement is determined by calculating the difference between the fair market value of the property (determined by a real estate appraiser) and its restricted value.



PDR is a key provision in the farmland protection toolbox. While lands with conservation easements on them are protected from development, selling an easement allows farmers to receive a percentage of the cash equity of their land and still maintain control over their farming operations. Many farmers use funds from a PDR program to enhance their operations, buy more land, or retire debt. Retiring farmers

can create a retirement fund by selling their development rights and still have viable property to pass along to the next generation.

The advantages of a PDR program are many. PDR can protect farmland while keeping it in private ownership and on the tax rolls. Farmers can capitalize on their land and receive a financially competitive alternative to development. PDR programs help keep the land affordable to be bought and sold as farmland. It can be implemented by state or local governments, or by private organizations. The major disadvantage is that PDR's are expensive and there are limited funds for land purchases in areas without intensive subdivision activity.

Funding for PDR programs comes from a variety of sources. Currently there are more farmers who wish to participate than there are funds available. The New York State program requires applicants to contribute a local match and thus county or municipal funds are also required. The 2002 Farm Bill contains funds for PDR as well. Funds can also come from local and national land trusts and private individuals. Local communities can finance a PDR program through use of bonds, general tax revenues, and use of real estate transfer taxes.

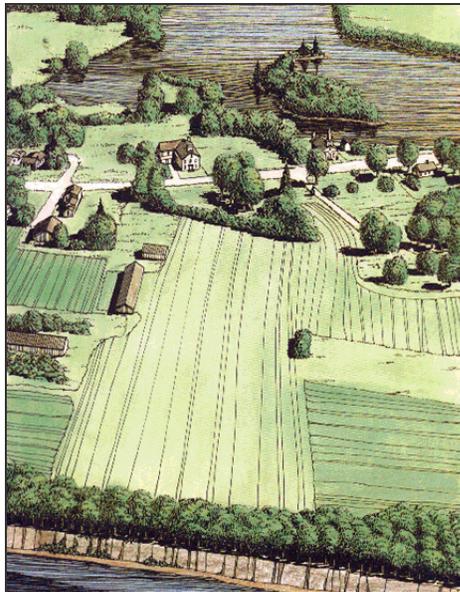
In contrast to the permanency of most PDR programs, development rights can also be leased for a specified period of time. Lease Development Rights (LDR) programs have several advantages. While a permanent easement program eliminates the opportunities for younger generations to redeem equity in their land, LDR allows a farmer to recover equity in the short-term and preserves development options for a younger generation. Furthermore, LDR typically costs less to implement. The major disadvantage of LDR is that there are no assurances the farmland will be ultimately protected, a requirement of most major funding sources.

## Objective 2: Implement farmland protection techniques at the local level.

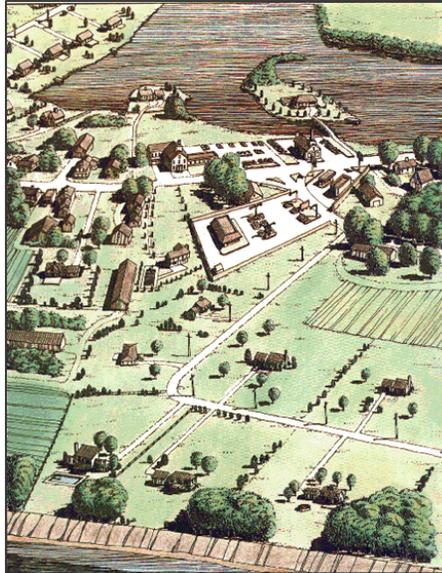
### Strategies

1) Work with local governments to establish cluster development options for major residential projects and to establish subdivision procedures that preserve open space and farmland. The following is a description of these techniques:

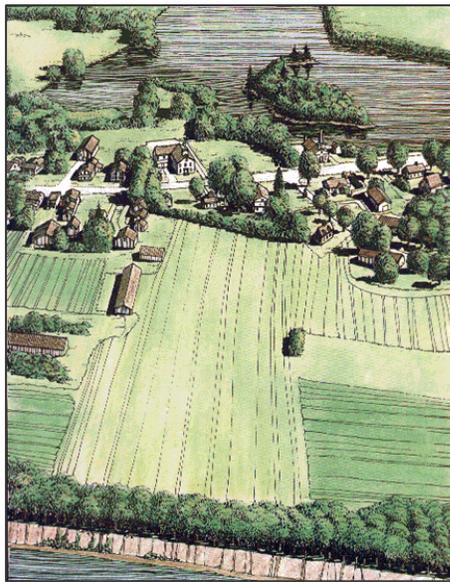
Cluster Development – Zoning or subdivision laws can allow, on a voluntary or mandatory basis, that new homes be grouped together on smaller lots in one location on a parcel. This grouping can protect open land by leaving a large portion of the parcel undeveloped. The undeveloped portion of the land is permanently restricted from development and can be used for future agricultural use. In Putnam County, preservation of working farms located in areas having prime farmland soils is critical. Undeveloped portions of a cluster should contain these prime farmlands as they offer the most opportunity for profitable agriculture.



This illustration is an example of a typical undeveloped parcel of farmland.



This is the same parcel developed with a conventional subdivision layout. Note that new houses and streets have been built throughout the former farmland and that there is little land left over for continued agriculture.



Under a clustered site layout, the parcel has been developed at the same density (same number of houses), but they have been clustered around existing buildings on or near the site. This leaves the majority of land open and available for farming with minimal interference from the new residences. Note also that the remaining farmland is still contiguous with an adjacent farm. Maintenance of as much unbroken farmland as possible is an important feature to strive for when using cluster development

Subdivision Review – Subdivision review determines where new lots will be located and how the land will be developed. Subdivision review can be used to lessen the impact of new development on agriculture. For example, some subdivision regulations require a percentage of each parcel being subdivided be maintained as open space. These types of provisions can work to protect at least some types of agricultural operations. Conservation subdivision is another technique that can be applied via subdivision regulations. Like the clustering technique, it is a method of siting new houses on a parcel in a manner that protects important environmental features. Conservation subdivisions are developed around features such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes,

views, historical features such as buildings and stonewalls, and farmland. It allows houses to be built at the density allowed by local law, but places them on the site in a way that preserves those important features. Conservation subdivision design is an excellent method to preserve open space and protect a variety of natural resources. Agriculture can certainly fit into a conservation design, but like clustering, intensive operations may not mix well with residences. However, operations such as hay, nurseries, organic vegetables, and other niche agricultural activities may fit in well. Preservation of farms that have prime agricultural soils should be a priority.



Illustrations by Randall Arendt, 1996. Conservation Design for Subdivisions: A Practical Guide to creating Open Space Networks.

This illustration shows a typical subdivision where new housing units are spread throughout all of the open, usable farmland on this parcel. In this situation, there is no opportunity to preserve any of the land on this parcel for continued agriculture.



In this example, the houses are sited in a conservation subdivision method. Note that there are the same numbers of houses in both the conventional and conservation subdivisions. However, the conservation subdivision sites houses away from prime areas that are preserved for continued use as agricultural fields, or for open space and environmental protection.

2) Work with local governments to help them move away from requiring minimum lot sizes and instead, institute use of a true density measurement of dwellings per acre. This allows more creative development and preservation of open space as well. Local governments could consider other methods of setting density to protect farmlands such as sliding scale zoning.

Sliding Scale Zoning – This is a zoning technique that uses a scale to determine the number of building lots that could be developed on a parcel. It allows each landowner a certain number of buildable lots based on the size of the parcel. The number of potential buildable lots decreases as the parcel increases in size. Thus, parcel size governs density. Smaller tracts are allowed to be denser than larger ones. Both minimum and maximum lot sizes are set, usually at one and two acres, respectively. Sliding scale zoning can be coupled with standards that restrict development to the least productive soils or restrict development on environmentally sensitive lands.

Smart Growth Initiatives – Building on traditional styles and locations of development can be another important tool in protecting farmland. Local communities should establish land use plans and policies that encourage growth to take place in hamlets and villages. Public water and sewer infrastructure should be limited to those areas as well. When policies and available infrastructure work together to direct growth to traditional built-up areas, there is less pressure on farmland.

Buffers - Buffers are physical barriers between incompatible land uses. Buffers are often required to separate agricultural uses from residential uses. Buffers can be strips of land (a minimum of 50' wide) or by vegetation such as hedgerows, trees or shrubs. When buffers are required, it is the responsibility of the developer to provide the buffer, rather than the farm owner.

3) Use of Agricultural Overlay zones can protect farmland by controlling the location, type and amount of development that can occur in a specific area. Overlay zones can be useful to fine-tune development regulations to be farm-friendly and can also be used to protect prime farmland soils. Overlay zones would be feasible in the towns of Southeast, Patterson, Putnam Valley, and Philipstown where there are a higher number of farms and a great deal of prime farmland soils.

4) Towns should evaluate the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs. TDR is an innovative way to accommodate both farmland and open space preservation interests and development. A TDR program allows building space to be transferred, or moved from one parcel where development is not desirable to another. TDR may be a useful farmland preservation technique because the private sector buys the rights, saving the public from a large expense. Further, TDR compensates landowners for land use restrictions at the same time it provides working open space to the community. TDR can help keep farmland prices affordable for agriculture, and can encourage development in designated growth areas where there is adequate public infrastructure. TDR programs have designated preservation zones (called the sending area) and a designated growth area (called the receiving area). Receiving areas are usually in or near a village or hamlet.

5) Evaluate the use of density bonuses. A density bonus is an incentive offered to land owners who provide some publicly desired amenity in their development such as open space, affordable housing, etc. A density bonus is authorized by New York State law and allows a landowner to build more houses than permitted under local law in return for provision of that amenity. It would be beneficial to offer incentives to preserve prime farmland soils and working farms.



6) Evaluate the use of “environmental control formulas” at the local level. Towns should consider establishing an “Environmental Formula” to fine-tune their density regulations on a site by site basis for major subdivisions. The environmental control formula is applied to each parcel as it is developed. The formula modifies density requirements of the zoning law according to

environmental conditions found on the site. It also requires that all development be placed in the most developable portions of the site. In this way, prime farmland soils and active farming areas can be better preserved at the same time that some level of development is authorized. Towns would need to identify important environmental and agricultural features to be protected and decide on a density “adjustment” that would be used in the formula to modify the base density.

# 11. Prioritizing Farmlands for Future Protection

## Identification of Important Farmlands in Putnam County

In order to implement this Plan successfully, Putnam County decision-makers will have to take advantage of the many farmland protection techniques available to them. Some of these techniques include purchase of development rights programs (PDR), and land use and economic development and planning techniques applied at the local level. These tools should be targeted to those specific farmlands in the County that have important characteristics making them critical to support continuing agriculture. In order to identify those lands, a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool has been developed. This tool is described below. Local and county-decision makers can use this technique to evaluate and rank farmland parcels in order to decide where the most appropriate locations for targeting protection measures are.

### A Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool (LESA) for Putnam County

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment, also referred to as LESA, is a tool to help citizens and officials in Putnam County locate and prioritize those lands that should be protected from conversion to nonagricultural uses. LESA was developed by the United States Natural Resources Conservation Service, and is based on a technique developed in Orange County, New York in 1971 (the first place it was used in the United States.) LESA has a long history of use in New York, and throughout the United States. It is basically a rating system designed with local conditions and needs in mind. It is a tool that can help local officials identify farmlands needing protection by taking into account not only soil quality, but also other factors that affect agricultural practices. Thus, LESA is an analytical tool. It is not a regulatory program. LESA's role in Putnam County should be to provide a systematic and objective procedure to rate and rank sites in order to help people make decisions on where to target farmland protection programs. A LESA system can be useful to answer questions such as what lands are most appropriate to designate for long-term continuation in agricultural uses, and which farms should be given the highest priority for purchase of development rights monies. Putnam County's LESA has been designed based on existing knowledge of the county, local soils, and local land use and farming conditions.

#### How LESA Works

LESA is a rating system. The LESA system combines soil quality factors with other factors that affect the importance of the site for continued agriculture. Soil quality factors are grouped under Land Evaluation Factors (LE). The other factors are grouped under Site Assessment Factors (SA). The SA factors include non-soil factors that measure limitations on agricultural productivity or farm practices; factors that measure development pressure or land conversion; and factors that measure other public values such as scenic or historic values. Each factor is given a weighting to show their relative

importance. Each factor has a numerical scale (usually on a scale of 1 to 100). For example, if there are 5 soil types, and type A is a prime farmland soil that has the best ability to support agriculture, it gets a rating of 100. Soil Type B may not be as good a soil, and may get a rating of 85. Soil Type C is on very steep slopes, is shallow and susceptible to erosion and gets a rating of 50. The same system is used for the SA factors. For example, one SA factor may be “adjacent uses” where farms that have other farms adjacent to it could receive a rating of 100. However, a farm that has fewer farms within a given distance may get a rating of 20. These illustrate the scaling portion of LESA. All the LE and SA factors are then combined and each is given a weight to show the relative importance of that whole factor. For example, it may be determined that the soil characteristics are much more important than the SA factor “adjacent land uses.” The LA factor would then be weighted much higher than the SA factor. The Guidebook for Land Evaluation and Site Assessment, prepared by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service has recommended that several steps be taken to develop a LESA system.

The steps are:

- 1) Specify LE factors
  - 2) Specify SA factors
  - 3) Develop a rating scale for each factor
  - 4) Assign weights to each factor
  - 5) Tally the weighted ratings to result in a LESA score
  - 6) Prepare score “thresholds” to be used in decision-making
  - 7) Test the LESA model
- Steps 1 through 6 are presented in this plan.  
Step 7 should be completed as the County proceeds with implementation of this Plan.

### **A Basis for LE and SA Factors for Putnam County**

Most of the funding that is available for implementing PDR and other farmland protection programs comes from State and Federal programs. Both the State and Federal programs have established specific criteria for funding eligibility. These criteria have been incorporated into the LE and SA factors for Putnam County, (outlined below.) In this way, farmland in the county that is highly ranked by the LESA system will also be identified as meeting those important funding criteria.

#### **State Funding Criteria**

Priority is given for funding under the State program when

A) Viable agricultural land is preserved (viable defined as “land highly suitable for agricultural production and which will continue to be economically feasible for such use if real property taxes, farm use restrictions, and speculative activities are limited to levels approximating those in commercial agricultural areas not influenced by the proximity of non-agricultural development”.)

B) Locations are facing significant development pressure; and

C) Locations serve as a buffer for a significant natural public resource containing important ecosystem or habitat characteristics.

Consideration is also given to:

- a) The number of acres that will be protected;
- b) The quality of the soil resources involved;
- c) The percentage of the total farm acreage available for agricultural production;
- d) The extent to which the property is bordered by or proximate to other farms which are already protected by a conservation easement or which might reasonably be expected to enter into a farmland preservation agreement in the future;
- e) The level of farm management that is demonstrated by the current landowner;
- f) The likelihood of the property's succession as a farm if the present ownership changes; and
- g) Federal Program Eligibility.

In order to be eligible for federal funding for conservation easements, the property must have:

A) Prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soil or contain historical or archaeological resources. Farms must contain at least 50% of prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soils. Eligible historical or archaeological parcels must be on a farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or formally determined eligible for listing by the State Historic Preservation Officer, or formally designated by the State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

B) Cropland, grassland, pastures land, and incidental forestland and wetlands that are part of an agricultural operation. Farms must be in compliance with federal wetland conservation and highly erodable land provisions.

### **LE factors for Putnam County**

A good deal of soil information is available from the Putnam County Soil Survey. Prime farmland and soils of statewide importance have been identified. The land capability classifications for all soil types have also been identified in the soil survey. The LE factor for the County should take into consideration these two soil features.

The initial score given to each parcel will be calculated as follows:

The percentage of the total acreage of the farm with Prime farmland soils multiplied by 2.

The percentage of the total acreage of the farm with soils of statewide importance.

The percentage of the total acreage of the farm with soils in capability class II or III multiplied by 2.

The percentage of the total acreage of the farm with soils in capability class IV.

### **SA Factors and Scores for Putnam County**

**Participation in Agricultural Programs:** Being in an agricultural district or applying for Agricultural Tax Exemption indicates a longer term potential for continued agriculture.

Is parcel in an agricultural district?

Yes 100

No 0

Does the property owned participate in the Agricultural tax exemption program?

Yes 100

No 0

### **Development pressure:**

Development pressure can be indicated and measured by a number of factors as follows:

#### *Population and housing increase:*

Comparing census figures at the tract level reveals areas that have seen greater increases in population density, and housing development. Real Property records from the County can also identify specific parcels that have been developed within the last ten years. Each farm can be evaluated as to how many new homes have been built within a half mile of the property.

The census tracts with the largest increase in housing and population density would receive 100. The lowest would receive 0

The farms with the greatest number of new residential building within a half mile would receive 100. The lowest would receive 0

#### *Distance to Public Water and Sewer:*

Generally, farmland closest to existing or potential public infrastructure facilities has a greater chance of being converted to non-farm uses. Those closer to this infrastructure would be rated higher. Since sewer districts indicate areas where Towns prefer that higher density development occur those farms that are within a

sewer district would be rated lower. Farms that are in zoning districts that do not allow agricultural use would also be rated lower for the same reason.

0-1/2 miles to water 80

1/2-2 miles to water 50

2+ miles to water 30

In a sewer district 0

In a zoning district that does not allow agricultural uses 0

### **Compatibility of Adjacent Uses:**

Adjacent land uses affect the ability of a farmer to conduct normal farming practices without incurring complaints and lawsuits. The more compatible the adjacent uses are, the more ability the farmer has to continue active operations. Compatible uses include forestry, other agricultural-oriented operations such as greenhouses, pastureland, cropland, farm buildings, industrial sites, utility corridors, mines, and certain recreational and school uses. Incompatible adjacent uses are home sites, and certain kinds of commercial development. A half mile wide buffer is placed around each farm parcel, and the total area of adjacent uses is determined as to being compatible or incompatible. The SA factor is measured as the percent of the total area that has compatible uses.

The percentage of other farms and agricultural uses identified in the GIS database within a half mile of the farm multiplied by 3.

The percentage of public-owned preserved forest, parkland, or other open space in the area within a half mile of the farm multiplied by 2.

The percentage of other properties identified as not being incompatible with agriculture within a half mile of the farm.

### **Environmentally sensitive features:**

Agricultural uses, if managed properly, are usually less damaging to environmentally sensitive areas than residential and commercial development. These are also important features to be protected as contributors to overall environmental health and rural character. Agricultural uses also help to preserve the historic rural working landscape.

If the farm is located in the NYC drinking water supply watershed 100.

If the farm contains a National Historic Register site, or is in a National Historic Register Historic District 100.

Also add the percentage of the total property acreage that is comprised of open water or stream, is frequently flooded according to the County Soil Survey Map, or is a DEC regulated wetland.

## Stewardship of Farm

**Farm Business Planning:** Farms that have prepared business plans are usually more profitable and more likely to stay in business.

Implemented a farm business plan 100

Enrolled in Conservation Programs, or has completed a whole farm or conservation plan 100

## Recommended Weighting of Factors

The LE factor should comprise 50% of the weight of the total score. Each of the five SA factors should comprise 10% of the total score. This means that the LESA weights the LE soil factors equally with all of the SA factors.

The Total LESA score for a parcel is calculated by:

1. Figuring LE and SA factor scores
2. Multiplying the LE and SA factor Scores by the Weight
3. Adding LE and SA Subtotals.

## The Formula

*The LE score* = (% Prime Soils x 2) + (% Soils of Statewide Importance) + (% Capability Class II and II soils x 2) + (% Capability Class IV soils)

*The SA score* = ((Ag District Participation + Ag Exemption Participation) x 0.1) + ((Rank of Census Tract Population Density Increase + Rank of Census Tract Housing Density Increase + Number of new homes within ½ mile + Distance from Town water + Location within a sewer district) x 0.1) + ((Percentage of land within ½ mile that is farmland x 3) + (Percentage of land within ½ mile that is preserved x 2) + (Percentage of land within ½ mile that is a compatible use) x 0.1) + ((Location in the NYC watershed + Location of a Historic Site + Percentage of land that is water, wetland, or flooded) x 0.1) + ((Farm business plan + Conservation program or plan) x 0.1)

Total LESA score = LE score + SA score

## Next Steps

This Plan offers recommended LE and SA factors and weightings for a Putnam County LESA. However, in order to implement a full LESA system for Putnam County, the following further steps should be taken:

- 1.) The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, together with local NRCS, SWCD, and Extension Staff, along with input from area farmers, should evaluate the suggested LE and SA factors and their ratings, and make adjustments as deemed necessary.
- 2.) Field-test the draft LESA system. It is recommended that one area, or township be selected to field test the system.
- 3.) As a result of the field-testing, further adjustments of the factors or weightings could be done.
- 4.) The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board should establish thresholds.
- 5.) The LESA system should undergo periodic evaluation and revision, if necessary.

**An Example:**

The following example illustrates the recommended LESA system for Putnam County:

A 50 acre farm has three soil types on it. 10 acres are prime farmland in capability class II, 20 acres are soils of statewide importance in capability class III, and the rest are in capability class IV. The farm is in an agricultural district. Census figures show population and housing density increases that are average for the County, however the number of new homes within a half mile is higher than 75% of the other farm properties in the County. The farm is 1 and ½ miles from town water, and is not in a sewer district. In a half mile wide area around the farm, 10% of the land is also agricultural, 20% is public open space, and 30% is otherwise compatible with farm operations. 5% of the property is mapped as DEC regulated wetlands, and it is located in the NYC watershed. There is a farm business plan, but it is not enrolled in any conservation programs.

The actual calculation is made as follows:

<b>Specific Factor</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Total Score</b>
<b>LE factors</b>			
<b>Soil Quality</b>			
20% prime farmland soils	60		
40% soils of statewide importance	80		
60% capability class II or III	120		
40% capability class IV	40		
<b>Soil Quality Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>SA factors</b>			

<b>Agricultural District Participation</b>			
Is in an agricultural district?	100		
Participates in Agricultural Tax Exemption	0		
<b>Agricultural District Participation Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>.1</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Development Pressure</b>			
Population density increase rank 50%	50		
Housing density increase rank 50%	50		
New Homes within ½ mile rank 75%	75		
Distance to Town water 50	50		
Is in a sewer district?	0		
<b>Development Pressure Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>.1</b>	<b>22.5</b>
<b>Compatibility of Adjacent Uses</b>			
Percent of land within ½ mile that is farmland – 10%	30		
Percent of land within ½ mile that is open space – 20%	40		
Percent of land within ½ mile that is compatible – 30%	30		
<b>Compatibility of Adjacent Uses Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>.1</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Environmental Sensitivities</b>			
Percent of the farm that has environmentally sensitive features – 5%	5		
Is in the NYC watershed?	100		
Is in a NR Historic District or contains a NR Site	0		
<b>Environmental Sensitivities Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>.1</b>	<b>10.5</b>
<b>Stewardship of Farm</b>			
Has a farm business plan?	100		
Has a conservation plan or program?	0		
<b>Stewardship Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>.1</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total LE and SA Score for this Farm</b>			<b>163</b>

The resulting score for this farm is then compared to the scores for other farms. Those farms with the highest ranking would be the priority lands to apply farmland protection techniques to.

## 12. Implementation Steps

**M**any people will be necessary to implement this plan. General responsibility and leadership will fall to the Putnam County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. The Soil and Water Conservation District will also have a vital role to play in implementing this plan. The following is an outline of recommended time frames and key players needed to assist in implementation of the specific action strategies. The plan should be reviewed and updated every five years.

### Time Frames:

- ⚡ Strategy to be implemented within first year
- P Priority strategy to be implemented in two to four years.
- I Important strategy to be implemented in five to eight years
- O Strategies that must be ongoing throughout life of plan

### Key Players in Plan Implementation

AFPB	Putnam County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
Town	Town governments including Planning Boards, ZBA's, Building Inspectors, Assessors, Town Boards
County	County Legislature or appropriate county office
Farmer's	Local farmers and growers
CCE	Cornell Cooperative Extension
WAC	Watershed Agricultural Council
NRCS/FSA	Natural Resources Conservation Service/Farm Service Agency
NGO	Area land trusts and other non-profit organizations
SWCD	Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District

Goal	Action Step	Responsible Group/Agency	Time Frame	Plan Page Reference
<b>Agricultural Economic Development</b>				
	Work with Putnam County Economic Development Corporation to integrate agriculture into county economic development initiatives	AFPB, County	P	56
	Establish loan funds and other incentives for small farm expansion or start up	AFPB, County	I	57
	Initiate AIDER program	AFPB, CCE, County	P	57
	Help farmers establish buying cooperatives	AFPB, CCE, WAC, SWCD, Farmers	P	57
	Enhance participation in Ag Districts Program	AFPB, SWCD	⚡	57

Goal	Action Step	Responsible Group/Agency	Time Frame	Plan Page Reference
	Enhance participation in and effectiveness of Ag Assessment program	AFPB, County, Town	↗	58
	Develop new local tax incentives to reduce costs of farmland	AFPB, County, Town, SWCD	P	58-59
	Enhance agri-tourism marketing	AFPB, County	O	59-60
	Develop more agri-tourism related businesses	AFPB, County, Farmers, SWCD, WAC	P	60
	Develop diversified, niche, and organic farms	AFPB, County, Farmers, SWCD, WAC, NGO	O	60-61
	Initiate coordinated direct marketing program that county farms can take advantage of	AFPB, County, Farmers, SWCD, WAC, NGO	P	61
<b>Community Support</b>				
	Initiate regular farm tour programs for local officials	AFPB	↗	62
	Widely distribute this plan to officials and the general public and initiate outreach program to town supervisors and planning boards	AFPB	↗	62-63
	Initiate regular farm tour programs for the general public	AFPB	↗	63
	Initiate agricultural education programs in area schools	AFPB	P	63
	Develop county identity and logo for farming along with sign program	AFPB	I	63
	Develop regular press releases and other promotional materials for are news media to keep agriculture in positive light	AFPB	↗ and O	63
	Further develop Tilly Foster Farm as an agricultural educational resource for the general public	County, AFPB	↗	64
	Initiate county-wide farm of distinction program	AFPB	I	64

Goal	Action Step	Responsible Group/Agency	Time Frame	Plan Page Reference
<b>Supportive Policies and Programs</b>				
	Work with towns to appoint an agricultural member to the planning board	AFPB, County	P	65
	Work to educate town boards and town planning boards about this plan	AFPB, County	↗	65
	Farmers should join chambers of commerce and participate in their economic development programs	Farmers	O	65
	Initiate a Putnam County Farm Bureau	Farmers, AFPB	I	65
	Enhance role of Putnam County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board	AFPB	↗	66
	Update this plan every five years	AFPB	O	66
	Train town and planning boards on ag district requirements related to zoning and land use	AFPB, County, Town	↗	66-68
	Promote new local review process that incorporates evaluation of impacts on agriculture	AFPB, Farmers, Town	P	69
	Establish web site to educate and promote agriculture in the county	AFPB, County	↗	70
	Work with local planning boards to enhance knowledge base related to planning and land use practices that can benefit agriculture	AFPB, County SWCD, Farmers, Town	↗	70
	Pass a county and local right to farm laws	AFPB, County, Town	↗	71
<b>Education</b>				
	Enhance coordination among farm support agencies in the county	AFPB, County, SWCD, CCE	P	72
	Develop printed directory of programs and funding opportunities serving agriculture in the county	AFPB, CCE	O	72
	Facilitate formation of a	AFPB, SWCD,	↗	72

Goal	Action Step	Responsible Group/Agency	Time Frame	Plan Page Reference
	farmer to farmer network group	CCE		
	Facilitate formation of a farmer-mentoring program	AFPB, SWCD, CCE	I	72
	Help county farmers complete farm business plans	WAC, SWCD, CCE	P	73
<b>Open Space</b>				
	Seek funding for purchase of development rights and use the LESA from this plan to guide decision making	AFPB, County	↗ and O	74-75
	Explore with county establishment of a leased development right program	AFPB, County	P	75
	Work with local governments to establish subdivision procedures and options that preserve open space such as clustering and conservation designs	AFPB, County, Town	P	76-79
	Work with local governments to establish sustainable levels of development that balance growth and open space and establish true density measurements instead of minimum lot sizes	AFPB	O	79
	Work with local governments to establish local agricultural overlay zones to further protect agricultural operations	AFPB	O	80
	Work with local governments to establish Transfer of Development Rights programs	AFPB	O	80
	Encourage use of incentives for preservation of agricultural lands such as density bonuses	AFPB	O	80

## 13. Appendices

### 13. a Agencies, Programs and Resources to Support Farming<sup>10</sup>

A support network of public and private resources is necessary to help farmers maintain and expand their operations. Many of these resources are described in this chapter, and are available directly to producers as well as to local municipalities and organizations.

#### Local Contacts

PUTNAM CO. SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
Contact Phone: 845-878-7918; web: <http://putnamcountyny.com>

USDA NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Contact: web: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>  
New York State Office: phone: 315-477-6504; web: <http://www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/>  
The following services are available in Putnam County from NRCS Service Center at 845-677-3194, extension 107.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): administered by the US Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) through the Farm Service Agency – the CRP encourages farmers to voluntarily plant permanent areas of grass and trees and land that need protection from erosion, to act as windbreaks, or in places where vegetation can improve water quality or provide food and habitat for wildlife.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program: (EQIP): Provides funds to eligible farmers for installing conservation measures. A range of practices qualify such as agricultural waste management facilities, erosion control measures and implementation of a nutrient management plan, establishment of rotational grazing systems and certain forestry and wildlife habitat improvement measures.

Wetlands Reserve Program: Seeks to restore and protect wetlands on private property on a voluntary basis. Landowners can receive payment to protect and improve wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal agricultural lands. Landowners can receive as much as 100% of the appraised agricultural market value of the property and as much as 100% of all appraisal fees, surveys and title searches

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP): a voluntary program for landowners to develop and improve habitat on grassland areas. Participants work with NRCS to prepare a wildlife habitat plan.

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative: Technical assistance is provided for rotational grazing systems. Assistance available includes: layout or rotational grazing systems, laneway placement and design and watering systems. Well-

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<sup>10</sup> Adapted from the Herkimer County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, 2003

managed pastures have been proven to be one of the most cost effective feeds that can be produced for grazing animals.

Forestry Incentive Program (FIP): supports sustainable forestry practices on privately owned, non-industrial, forest lands. Landowners may get up to 65% cost sharing for practices such as tree planting, timber stand improvement, and site preparation for natural regeneration

USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA):

Contact Phone: Pat Cassidy at 845-677-3952

National contact: phone: (202) 720-7809; web: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

Natural Disaster Assistance: The Emergency Conservation Program, Non-insurable Crop Disaster Assistance Program, Emergency Loan Assistance, and Emergency Haying and Grazing.

Farm Loan Program: Beginning Farmer Down Payment Farm Ownership, Direct Farmer Ownership, Direct Operating Loan, Guaranteed Operating Loan, and Guaranteed Farm Ownership

Price Support: On behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation, FSA administers Marketing Assistance Loans or Commodity Loans. Program participants are eligible for wheat, barley, oat, soybean and corn loans with the farm stored production as collateral. The producer may also be eligible for a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) that does not need to be repaid.

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Contact Phone: 845-278-6738

LOWER HUDSON- LONG ISLAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Contact Phone: 914-923-4866.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

Land Acquisition: 914-340-7541

Valhalla Office: 914-727-2001

Corona Office: 718-595-3525

Kingston Office: 914-340-7513

NYC WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL: Contact Mike Saviola at 914-962-6355, ext. 10

GREEN CHIMNEYS FARM: Contact Paul Kupchoc at 845-279-2995.

PUTNAM COUNTY TILLY FOSTER FARM: Contact Chris Ruthven at 845-225-3650

PUTNAM COUNTY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT: Contact at 845-878-3480

PUTNAM COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION BOARD:  
Contact George Michaud 845-225-3641, extension 310.

HORSE COUNCIL: Jean Rhuda at 845-628-0837

PUTNAM COUNTY TOURISM OFFICE: Contact at 845-225-0381

HUDSON HIGHLANDS LAND TRUST: Contact at 845-424-3358

PUTNAM COUNTY LAND TRUST: Contact at 845-228-4520

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY: Contact at 518-272-0195, ext. 32

OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE: Contact at 914-276-2618

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Contact at 518-272-0195 ext 32

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

### CORNELL UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/>

*Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI):* CaRDI works to strengthen and support New York's local communities and citizens. CaRDI and the Cornell Local Government Program serve as a point of entry to Cornell University's resources and expertise in community development and local governance, and provide outreach to community leaders, educators, elected officials and citizens interested in the vitality of their communities.

Contact: phone: 607-255-9510; web: <http://www.cardi.cornell.edu/>

*AIDER: Agricultural Industry Development, Enhancement & Retention:* AIDER is a community-based program for agriculture and food systems economic development. AIDER's focus is the implementation of high profile, action-based projects that strengthen and expand the agriculture and food sector of the local economy. AIDER achieves its goals by integrating agriculture into comprehensive economic development strategies at the local level.

Contact: Maureen Maloney Robb, Agricultural Economic Development Extension Associate; Phone: (315) 536-7444; web:

<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/programs/aider/>

*Community and Economic Development Toolbox:* The purpose of this toolbox is to provide accessible tools to local community and economic development (CED) practitioners, such as community leaders, newly elected officials, extension educators, and community technical assistance providers, so that they are more knowledgeable about basic CED issues and are better equipped to assist in decision making and determining the future of their communities. Contact: phone: 607-254-4418; web: <http://www.cdtoolbox.org>

*Cornell: Horticultural Business Management and Marketing Program:* Designed to enhance the competitive position of the New York fruit, vegetable, and ornamental horticultural industry through targeted, curriculum-driven educational programs. The program recognizes the strategic importance of these sectors of the agricultural sector and seeks to capitalize on the opportunities to promote economic development by increasing the profitability of producers and marketers

of fruit, vegetable and horticultural products and services. Emphasis is placed on adaptation of new technologies to enhance productivity while maintaining environmental quality and sustainability. Contact: Phone: 607-255-3688; email: [wl32@cornell.edu](mailto:wl32@cornell.edu)

*Cornell University Small Farm Program:* This program and associated web sites contain a listing of resources, grants, programs, and sites produced by the Cornell Cooperative Extension that focus on small farms. Also see <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/agfoodcommunity/CornellSmallFarmEfforts.html> This is an excellent database with articles dealing with farming practices, management, etc. Contact: Jim Hayes, 518-234-2105

*New York State Food Venture Center:* Offers guidance to parties seeking to introduce new food products and processes to the marketplace. Services include library and literature searches, laboratory analyses, and pilot plant development. The Food Venture Center provides assistance in meeting state and federal regulations for safe and properly labeled food products and helps companies understand and address state regulations and licensing requirements. In cooperation with faculty and staff of the Department of Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics, support is provided in the areas of business planning from concept, to venture capital, on to a mature company. The primary target audiences for this program are venture capitalists and entrepreneurs who have product concepts and who need assistance in technology transfer and the establishment of a food processing company. Contact: phone (315) 787-2273.

*Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station:* Designed to provide the fundamental knowledge and the research base for sustaining agriculture and food systems, protecting the environment and natural resources, and improving communities throughout New York State as well as contributing the New York State share to the national agricultural research program. Contact: Phone: 607-255-2552; web: <http://cuaes.cornell.edu/home.htm>

*New York State Agricultural Experiment Station:* Primary mission is to support New York's fruit and vegetable industry. Researchers and extension educators work to develop good farming, food storage, and processing practices while safeguarding the environment, increasing market share for New York producers, and assuring consumers safe, reasonably-priced, high-quality fruits and vegetables. The NYS Agricultural Experiment Station is a division of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University. Contact: phone: 315-787-2290; web: <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/>

*The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (NECFE):* NECFE is a joint effort to expand the activities of the NYS Food Venture Center at Cornell University and the Center for Food Science at the University of Vermont, and funded in part by Fund for Rural America/CSREES/USDA. Their goal is to provide comprehensive assistance to beginning and established food entrepreneurs thus promoting sustainable economic development of rural communities. The Center offers services, outreach and research development opportunities in four critical areas: business and product process development, product safety, process/product technology transfer and product commercialization

Contact: phone: (NECFE) 888-624-6785, (UVM) 802-656-8300 or (Cornell) 315-787-2274, Email NECFE at: [necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu](mailto:necfe@nysaes.cornell.edu)  
<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/index.html>

*The Community, Food & Agriculture Program (CFAP)* (Formerly the Farming Alternatives Program): CFAP works with agriculture, food, and community partners to promote "civic agriculture," that is, food and agriculture systems that sustain and strengthen farm families, local communities, and natural resources. CFAP conducts research on: (1) innovative food production and marketing initiatives that connect farmers with regional food processors and citizens (consumers); and (2) creative food-system-based community development Initiatives that provide new opportunities for farmers, communities, and consumers. Contact: Phone: (607) 255-9832

*Agriculture & Food Systems Sustainability Initiative*

This program is designed to empower individuals and enterprises in agriculture and food systems to thrive by maintaining strong rural communities, advancing a clean, healthy environment, promoting attractive landscapes, assuring a safe, nutritious, and abundant local food supply and supporting a thriving New York State economy. Contact: phone: (607) 255-3131; web: <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/initiatives/afs/index.cfm>

*Cornell Program on Agricultural and Small Business Finance:* Provides objective tax and financially related research and information for agricultural and small business operators, their advisors, capital providers, and policy makers. Sample programs: Developing & Utilizing the Capabilities of Personnel Farm Business; Analysis Farm Labor Policy & Regulations; FarmNet; Financial Education for Lenders & Farmers; Human Resource Management; Income Tax Management & Reporting; Risk Management; Sustainable Agriculture & the Environment; Thriving in an Environment of Change. Contact: Phone: Charles Cuykendall, (607) 255-2130; email: [chc4@cornell.edu](mailto:chc4@cornell.edu)

*Environment & Natural Resources Initiative:* Their goal is to improve the quality and sustainability of human environments and natural resources. This is accomplished by conserving and ensuring the quality of water supplies, promoting environmental stewardship and sound decision making about the management of natural resources, promoting community, agricultural, and residential environmental enhancement, preparing youth to make informed environmental choices and enhancing science education through the environment. Contact: Phone: (607) 255-2115

Also See: New Farmer Development Program: Cornell Cooperative Extension (212) 340-2937: John Nettleton

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) <http://www.usda.gov/>

*USDA Rural Development: New York:* USDA Rural Development's goal is to help all rural New Yorkers improve their quality of life. They do this by offering loans, loan guarantees, grants and technical assistance. Programs are designed to provide affordable financial assistance for homes, apartment buildings,

businesses, community facilities, water and wastewater systems, and much more. web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ny/index.htm> ; National Rural Development: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

*Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants*: Farm Labor Housing loans and grants are provided to buy, build, improve, or repair housing for farm laborers, including persons whose income is earned in aquaculture (fish and oyster farms) and those engaged in on-farm processing. Funds can be used to purchase a site or a leasehold interest in a site; to construct housing, day care facilities, or community rooms; to pay fees to purchase durable household furnishings; and to pay construction loan interest. Contact: phone: (607) 723-1384; web: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/ProgramBriefs/brief\\_mfh\\_flh.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/ProgramBriefs/brief_mfh_flh.htm)

*Community Facilities Loan Program*: provides low-interest direct and guaranteed loans for the development, construction, enlargement, improvement, and operation of community facilities in rural areas. Contact: phone: USDA rural development web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/dp.htm>

*Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants*: provided to finance a range of projects, including for profit businesses. Grants are provided to establish revolving loan funds to finance purposes such as community development assistance, education and training for economic development, business incubators and technical assistance. Contact: Phone: USDA Rural Development Office (315) 477-6400

*Rural Business Cooperative Service*: The goal of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) is to help rural residents form new cooperative businesses and improve the operations of existing cooperatives. To accomplish this, Cooperative Services provides technical assistance to cooperatives and those thinking of forming cooperatives. It also conducts cooperative-related research and produces information products to promote public understanding of cooperatives.

*Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program*: provides grants to nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions to improve the economic condition of rural areas through the development of new cooperatives and or the improvement of existing cooperatives. Contact: phone: 202-720-8460; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rcdg.htm>

*Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG)*: provides grants to non-profits and public bodies to finance and facilitate the development of small and emerging private business enterprises in rural areas. While these funds cannot be used for agricultural production, they can be used for commercial nurseries, timber operations, and limited agricultural production related to technical assistance. Contact: phone: (202) 720-1400

*Intermediary Re-lending Loan Program (IRP)*: The purpose of the IRP is to finance business facilities and community development projects in rural areas. This is achieved through loans made by the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) to intermediaries. Intermediaries re-lend funds to ultimate recipients for business facilities or community development. Intermediaries establish revolving loan funds so collections from loans made to ultimate recipients in excess of

necessary operating expenses and debt payments will be used for more loans to ultimate recipients. Contact: phone: (202) 720-1400; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/irp.htm>

*Rural Business Opportunity Grants:* offers grants to nonprofits and public bodies to assist in the economic development of rural areas by providing grants to assist business and community development. Contact: phone: (315) 477-6400; web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbog.htm>

*Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants (VADG):* VADG was authorized by the Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 and was amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). The Farm Bill establishes four related, but different programs from the \$40 million of funds per year. The programs are (1) VADG producer grants, (2) a resource center, (3) a series of innovation centers, and (4) university research on the impact of value-added activities. The Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) posted on their site only deals with the VADG producer grants. Contact: Phone: Robert Pestridge (315) 477-6426; email: [robert.pestridge@ny.usda.gov](mailto:robert.pestridge@ny.usda.gov) web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm>

*USDA Agricultural Marketing Service:* The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service administers programs that facilitate the efficient, fair marketing of U.S. agricultural Products, including food, fiber, and specialty crops. AMS programs promote a strategic marketing perspective that adapts product and marketing practices and technologies to the issues of today and the challenges of tomorrow. Contact: phone: (202) 720-5115; web: <http://www.ams.usda.gov>

*The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)* provides matching funds to State Departments of Agriculture and other State agencies for 20-30 projects per year, on average. These funds have been used by States to conduct marketing studies or assist in developing innovative approaches to the marketing of agricultural products. Contact: Phone: FSMIP Staff Officer (202) 720-2704; web: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/fsmip.htm>

*The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES):* The goal of this service is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities. Contact: phone: 202-720-7441; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/>

*Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program* awards grants to support the development of community food projects that promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues. Contact: phone: 202-720-4423; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/cfp/community.htm>

*The Small Farm Program:* The Small Farm Program is an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), committed to meeting the needs of the small farm community. Its goal is to improve the income levels and the economic viability of small farm enterprises through partnerships with the Land Grant System, public and private sectors by facilitating research, extension, and

education programs to meet the specific needs of small farmers. Contact: phone: 1-800-583-3071; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm>

*National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program*: Provides grants for research that will provide new knowledge for improved agricultural competitiveness, sustainability and economic performance, and for revitalization of rural economies. Research institutions, private organizations or corporations, and individuals are eligible to apply. Contact: (202) 401-5038; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/nri/>

*Small Business Innovation Research*: Small Business Innovation Research: awards grants to qualified small businesses for innovative research on important problems facing agriculture and rural America that could lead to significant public benefit. Contact: phone: (202) 401-4002; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/sbir/>

*AgrAbility Program*: The AgrAbility Project assists people with disabilities employed in agriculture. The project links the Cooperative Extension Service at a land-grant university with a private nonprofit disability service organization to provide practical education and assistance that promotes independence in agricultural production and rural living. Contact: Brad Rein, National Program Leader Phone: (202) 401-0151; web: <http://www.reeusda.gov/agsys/agsyspp/agrabil/agrabil.htm>

*Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, (Farm Bill)*: governs Federal farm programs for the next 6 years, was signed into law on May 13, 2002. Among the bill's highlights: it alters the farm payment program and introduces counter-cyclical farm income support; expands conservation land retirement programs and emphasizes on-farm environmental practices; relaxes rules to make more borrowers eligible for Federal farm credit assistance; restores food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants; adds various commodities to those requiring country-of-origin labeling; introduces provisions on animal welfare. Information about the 2002 farm bill: <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill/>  
Compares 1996 and 2002 farm bills side by side: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Features/farmbill/>

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION (SARE): provides project grants to improve management of on-farm resources to enhance productivity, profitability and competitiveness, to promote crop, livestock and enterprise diversification, - Land grant colleges, universities, state agricultural experiment stations, state cooperative extension services, non profits, individuals, state and federal governmental entities may apply. Contact: phone: (202) 720-4423; web: <http://www.sare.org> Northeast Region: phone: (802)-656-0471; web: <http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare>

*Farmer/Grower Grant Program* : The goal of the Farmer/Grower Grant Program is to develop, refine, and demonstrate new sustainable techniques and to explore innovative ideas developed by farmers across the region. Information gained from these farm-based projects may be used to redirect research priorities. Contact: phone: (802) 656-0471; web: <http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare/FGinfo.html>

Also see: Small Dairy Resource Handbook at  
<http://www.sare.org/handbook/dairy/>

#### NATIONAL CENTER FOR APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY:

Assists people and farmers in becoming more self-sufficient. The organization is divided into three program areas (Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, Sustainable Communities Program, and Sustainable Energy Program). Contact: phone: (406) 494-4572; <http://www.ncat.org>

#### APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER FOR RURAL AREAS (ATTRA):

ATTRA provides technical assistance to farmers, Extension agents, market gardeners, agricultural researchers, and other agricultural professionals in all 50 states. Topics addressed by ATTRA can be categorized into three broad areas: sustainable farming production practices alternative crop and livestock enterprises innovative marketing. Contact: phone 1-800-346-9140; web: <http://www.attra.org/>

#### SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Contact: phone: 1-(800) U-ASK-SBA or (315) 471-9393; web: <http://www.sba.gov/>

##### *Small Business Administration MicroLoan Program*

Small Business Administration MicroLoan Program: provides short-term loans to small business for financing inventory, purchasing equipment, machinery and fixtures, etc. Funds are available to nonprofit intermediaries, who make loans to eligible borrowers. Contact: phone: (607) 734-8130; web: <http://www.sba.gov/financing/frmicro.html>

*The 7(a) Loan Guaranty Program:* One of SBA's primary lending programs. 7(a) provides loans to small businesses unable to secure financing on reasonable terms through normal lending channels. The program operates through private-sector lenders that provide loans, which are, in turn, guaranteed by the SBA.  
<http://www.sba.gov/financing>

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

*Sustainable Development Challenge Grants (EPA):* encourage communities to develop locally oriented initiatives that address serious environmental problems through the application of sustainable development strategies. Successful projects integrate environmental protection, economic vitality and community well being. Contact: phone: (202) 260-6812; web: <http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity>

TECHNOLOGY OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM (TOP): TOP promotes the widespread availability and use of digital network technologies in the public and non-profit sectors. The program gives grants for model projects demonstrating innovative uses of network technologies. Projects are nationally significant demonstrations of how digital network technologies can be used to extend and improve the delivery of valuable services and opportunities to all Americans, especially the underserved. Contact: phone: (202) 482-2048; web: <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/top/index.html>

#### NEW YORK FARM BUREAU:

Farm Bureau is a non-governmental, volunteer organization financed and controlled by families for the purpose of solving economic and public policy issues challenging the agriculture industry. Farm Bureau's "grass roots" policy development process continues to ensure that the organization represents the majority position of its membership. Policy development begins at the county level with problem identification and culminates at the New York Farm Bureau Annual Meeting with a resolution addressing the issues.

Contact: phone: (518) 436-8495; web: <http://www.nyfb.org/>

Grassroots: The New York Farm Bureau's Newsletter "Grassroots": Web: <http://www.nyfb.org/periodic/Grassroots/grass0502/grassroots0502.htm>

Young Farmer Program: Contact: phone: Sandy Prokop (518) 436-8495

#### NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TAX AND FINANCE, NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF REAL PROPERTY SERVICE

NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: (800) 462-8100

NYS Office of Real Property Tax Service: phone: (518) 486-5446

Agricultural Assessment: provides property tax relief for farmers and farmland owners. Agricultural assessment provides "use value" assessment for eligible agricultural land. Contact: Putnam County Real Property Tax Service Agency at 225-3641 ext.310 or web:

<http://www.orps.state.ny.us/assessor/valuation/agriculture/index.htm>

#### Forestry Assessment:

Allows eligible landowners to receive a reduction in their tax assessment. Landowner must own a minimum of 50 acres of contiguous forest land and must be willing to commit his or her land to the production of forest crops.

web: <http://www.orps.state.ny.us/assessor/valuation/agriculture/index.htm>

Farmers' School Tax Credit: Eligible farmers can obtain an income tax or corporation franchise tax credit. Applies to school taxes paid by the farmer on land, structures, buildings used for agricultural production in New York.

Contact: NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100; web: <http://www.tax.ny.state.us>

Farm Buildings: New York's Real Property Tax Law (Section 483) provides a 10-year property tax exemption for new or reconstructed agricultural structures. For more information contact county real property, or town assessor or NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100 (as for property tax assistance); web: <http://www.tax.ny.state.us>

New Orchards and Vineyards: Newly planted or replanted orchards or vineyards receive a 100 percent exemption for the first four years following establishment. For more information contact local town assessor regarding real property Tax law (305-C)

New York State School Tax Relief (STAR Program) This program provides a partial exemption from school property taxes for owner-occupied primary residences. Senior citizens with combined incomes that do not exceed \$60,000

may be eligible for an enhanced exemption. Contact: NYS Department of Tax and Finance: phone: 1-800-462-8100 (Ask for income tax assistance); web: <http://www.tax.ny.state.us>

NEW YORK STATE BARNS RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION PROGRAM: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation provides funding for repairs on agricultural buildings including barns, sheds, and silos that are at least 50 years old. Contact: Phone: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Field Services Bureau, (518) 237-8643; web: <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/field/fsb/barns.htm>

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

Contact: phone: 1-800-554-4501; web: <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us>

*Farmland Viability Competitive Grants Program:* The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals that seek to improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms. The program provides financial assistance in the form of matching grants to applicants for projects which contribute to overall farm profitability and sound environmental management.

*NYS Agricultural and Farmland Protection Program:* Assists county governments in developing agricultural and farmland protection plans to maintain the economic viability of the State's agricultural industry and its supporting land base. The Department also assists local governments in the implementation of local farmland protection plans that focus on preserving the land base by purchasing the development rights on farms using conservation easements.

*Specialty Crop Grants:* The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals intended to promote and enhance specialty crop businesses in the State. Proposals that benefit a specialty crop production sector or sectors, as opposed to a specific business, will be favored.

*Grow New York Enterprise Program:* dedicates funding to increasing the demand for and expanding the use of New York's agriculture and forest products. The primary objective of the program is to provide funds to local governments who in turn use the dollars to assist qualifying businesses that undertake activities resulting in the creation or retention of job opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons. Contact: (518) 457-0752

*Farmland Viability Grants:* The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals that seek to improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms. The program provides financial assistance in the form of matching grants to applicants for projects that contribute to overall farm profitability and sound environmental management. (under Grow NY)

*Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program (ANPSACP)*  
ANPSACP is intended to support plans, activities, and projects that will reduce and/or prevent the nonpoint source contribution from agricultural activities, through watershed based and individual farm level agricultural assessments and plans to identify agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution, and through the implementation of Best Management Practices, as defined in Section 3 of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts Law.

*Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD): Farm Worker Child Care*

The Agri-Business Child Development (ABCD) Program delivers day care and early childhood development services to the children of individuals employed in the production of processing of New York State food and agricultural products.

*Food Trade Shows:* The Department of Agriculture and Markets provides a marketing opportunity for New York farms

*Farmers' Market Competitive Grants Program:* awards matching grants to individuals, partnerships, associations, cooperatives, and county agricultural and farmland protection boards for projects that improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms.

Contact: phone: (518) 457-7076

*Farmland Viability Program:* provides funding for matching grants for the development of plans or implementation of projects that are intended to improve the profitability, efficiency and farm income of participating farms.

Contact: Phone: Kim Blot (518) 457-7076

*Workforce Training: the Agricultural Workforce Certification Program:* provides classroom and on-the-job training to both new and experienced workers in various agricultural disciplines.

*Right to Farm* (section 305a of the Agriculture and Markets Law) Right to Farm laws are designed to protect farmers and farm operations from nuisance liability.

*Agricultural Environmental Management: (AEM)* addresses agricultural non-point source water quality issues. The program specifically helps to document farmer stewardship, maintain viability of the farm enterprise, assist farmers in complying with regulations and coordinate federal funding to meet state water quality objectives. Contact the Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District at 845-878-7918.

*Advisory Council:* the Advisory Council on Agriculture provides recommendations and performs a number of legally mandated functions relating to the Agricultural Districts Law.

*Soil and Water Conservation Committee:* establishes policy to guide and assist county Soil and Water Conservation Districts' programs that are funded by state and county appropriations. The committee also works jointly with the DEC and Agriculture and Markets in effectively protection New York's waters from non-point sources of pollution and advising other agencies on matters relating to soil and water conservation

*Non-Point Source Grants:* (NYS Agricultural Non-point Source Abatement and Control Program): provides funds to assist farmers with reducing their non-point source water pollution.

New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program: integrated management based program designed to address animal health, environmental stewardship and public health issues confronting the food animal producer.

Weights and Measures: responsible for assuring measurement accuracy and uniformity in commerce throughout NYS. The department regulates measuring device accuracy, packaged commodity net contents, and quality standards for gasoline and diesel fuel

#### NEW YORK STATE ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (NYSERDA)

Contact: Phone: (866) NYSERDA or (518) 862-1090; web: <http://www.nyserda.org/agricultural.html>

Agricultural Initiative: Through this program NYSERDA offers cost sharing and low-interest financing programs to help farms save energy, develop new products and increase profits. Previous projects have helped farmers: lower on-farm energy costs, use more environmentally friendly manure-management methods, improve profitability through value-added products, and to generate their own electricity. Applications will be accepted through June 2003.

Energy Efficiency Services Program: provide near-term solutions to agriculture's high-energy costs. Cost sharing by NYSERDA helps farmers identify and install cost-effective measures that save energy. Programs include technical assistance and a smart equipment choices assistance. Financial assistance includes the NY Energy Smart Loan Fund, NY Energy Smart Performance Program, New Construction Program, and FlexTech Program. Contact: phone: Mark Mayhew (866) NYSERDA, or (518) 862-1090, ext. 3319; web: <http://www.nyserda.org/flextech.html>

SMALL CITIES PROGRAM - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS: The Community Development Block Grant Program provides grants to eligible cities, towns, and villages with a population under 50,000 and counties with an area population under 200,000 to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities and or improve community facilities and services. Contact: phone: (315) 425-9110 or (518) 474-2057; web: <http://www.nysmallcities.com>

#### NEW YORK FARMLINK

The NY FarmLink Program is designed to improve the process and effectiveness of farm transfers by providing farmers with essential networking, consulting, and educational support. Contact: phone: 1-800-547-3276

#### NY FARM NET

An information, referral and consulting program for New York's farm community. Their mission is to provide farm families with a network of contacts and support services to help them develop skills for dealing with life challenges and transitions - through personalized education, confidential consulting, and referral.

Contact: phone: 1-800-547-FARM ([www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org) )

#### NORTHEAST FARM CREDIT AG ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Designed to support projects and activities that promote agriculture or enhance the economic viability of agriculture in the northeast. Contact: phone: (413) 821-9267

#### THE ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

This organization funds organic farming research and education efforts related to organic farming practices, disseminates research results to organic farmers and to growers interested in adopting organic production systems, and educates the public and decision-makers about organic farming issues. Contact: phone: (831) 426-6606; web: <http://www.ofrf.org>

#### NY FARMS!

NY Farms strengthens NY agriculture and food systems through a partnership working to create public awareness of the importance of farming, promote agriculture and food system literacy, and foster consumer loyalty to New York farm products. See *NY Farms mini-grants program*: for creative projects that educate diverse audiences about the importance of local farming and food systems and foster consumer loyalty to New York farm products. Sponsor must be a full member of NY Farms and have an organizational structure able to provide oversight. Contact: phone: 1-888-NYFARMS (693-2767)

#### THE FARMERS' MARKET FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

Farmers markets provide a means for local producers of agricultural products to sell those products directly to the consumer. The Farmers' Market Federation of New York is a statewide not-for-profit organization designed to both promote and provide support services for the farmers markets within New York State.

Contact: web: <http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com/>

Agri-Edge Development: helps agricultural operations start up, expand, diversity of improve their businesses. Helps ventures identify and secure financing, plan and structure projects and business relationships, and locate management expertise. Agri-Edge works to increase productivity and profitability for individual businesses, spark job creation and retention in agriculture, initiate growth in markets and serve as a catalyst for the vitality and stability of Northeast agriculture. Contact: phone: 1-888-858-7811 ext. 5507 or 5505; web: <http://www.dairylea.com/Services/aed.htm>

#### ORGANIC ALLIANCE:

The mission of the Organic Alliance is to encourage an ecologically and socially responsible agriculture that reflects humankind's obligation to protect the health of the planet for future generations. The Alliance promotes the environmental and economic benefits of certified organic food production to farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers. Contact: web: [www.organic.org](http://www.organic.org)

#### NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION (NOFA)

NOFA is an affiliation of seven state chapters, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The quarterly newspaper of NOFA Interstate, The Natural Farmer, publishes features on organic market conditions and other topics of interest to the Northeast organic community.

Contact: phone: 978-355-2853 or 978-355-2270; web: <http://www.nofa.org>

NEW YORK STATE FARMERS' DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION: This organization is designed to increase each member's profitability through the sharing of

marketing ideas, information and products. Contact: phone: (315) 475-1101; web: <http://www.nysfdma.com/>

#### NEW ENGLAND SMALL FARM INSTITUTE

A private non-profit organization supporting beginning farmers and sustainable small-scale agriculture throughout New England. Programs include the small farm library, small farm matching service, business and farm training skills, the small and sustainable farm policy initiative and Growing New Farmers. This organization is Massachusetts based, however there are many resources available for Putnam County farmers through their web site. Contact: phone: 413-323-4531; web: <http://www.smallfarm.org>

Growing New Farmers (GNF): GNF is a multi-faceted project that serves new farmers in the northeast. The GNF Service Provider Consortium is a network of over 150 organizations committed to offering and improving services for our region's new farmer community. GNF brings together service providers from across the Northeast who are committed to working with and advocating for new and beginning farmers from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia. Contact: Phone (413) 323- 4531; Web: <http://gnf.bigmindcatalyst.com/cqi/bmc.pl?page=pubpg1.html&node=1009>

#### HUDSON VALLEY HOMETOWN FOODS (Kinderhook, NY):

This new business is a small scale food processor that freezes and vacuum packages produce and meals for sale in New York City and other markets. They are in need of farmers that can produce freezable foods for their specific needs. They will also visit farmers and producers to educate on their system of packaging and sales for franchise opportunities. Contact: phone: (Anna Dawson) (518) 758-7342

#### THE COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT OF NEW YORK CITY (CENYC)

CENYC promotes environmental awareness and solutions to environmental problems. Programs include: Open Space Greening; Greenmarket; and Environmental Education and Waste Prevention and Recycling. Upstate farmers may be able to sell goods in NYC markets or find potential farm operators through these programs (Greenmarket, New Farmer Development Project). Contact: phone: (212) 788-7900; web: <http://www.cenyc.org>; email: [conyc@cenyc.org](mailto:conyc@cenyc.org)

GREENMARKET: Since 1976, Greenmarket has organized and managed open-air farmers markets in New York City. By providing an opportunity for growers to sell over 600 varieties of fruits, vegetables, and farm products directly to New Yorkers, Greenmarket supports farmers and preserves farmland for the future. Greenmarket believes that the open marketplace provides the most beneficial means of exchange between farmers and city residents.

THE NEW FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (NFDP) supports agriculturally experienced immigrants in the NYC vicinity in establishing environmentally and economically sustainable farm operations. Our mission is to combat the decline of family farms by bringing about an agricultural future for our participants, ensuring the vitality of regional farmland and a vibrant food supply. Contact Project Director, at (212) 477-3220

### BEGINNING FARMER CENTER:

The Beginning Farmer Center, located at Iowa State University Extension, focuses exclusively on the needs and issues facing beginning farmers. It also facilitates the matching of beginning farmers with existing farmers who wanted to transition their farm businesses to the next generation. The center has an extensive online publication list that is very useful for new farmers across the country. Contact: phone: 515-294-6160; web: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>

### PHILLIES BRIDGE FARM PROJECT, INC.

The Phillies Bridge Farm Project, Inc. demonstrates and promotes agriculture that is ecologically sound, community oriented, and economically viable. The Farm Project operates an organic vegetable community supported agriculture (CSA) farm that provides 80 shares for approximately 130 families, including at least 10% low-income families. The Project also provides school children, CSA members, and the general public with opportunities to learn about and participate in sustainable agriculture. Contact: phone: Christopher Duncan (845) 256-9108

### COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

These facilities provide agricultural and education programs for farmers.

*Cornell: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences:* offers coursework in Agricultural Resource Systems, Animal Systems, Economic and Social Systems, and Plant Systems. Contact: phone: 607-254-5137; web: <http://www.cals.cornell.edu/>

*SUNY Cobleskill Agriculture Division:*  
Contact: phone: (518) 255-5321; web: <http://www.cobleskill.edu/Academic/AG/>

*SUNY Morrisville College of Agriculture and Technology:*  
Contact: phone: (315) 684-6083; web: <http://www.morrisville.edu>

*SUNY – ESF College of Environmental Science and Forestry*  
Contact: phone: 315-470-6500; web: <http://www.esf.edu/>

### **13. b Sample Right to Farm Law (Can be adapted for Towns or County)**

#### Section 1. Definitions.

(a) Agricultural land shall mean all that real property within the boundaries of \_\_\_\_\_, in Putnam County currently used for agricultural operations or upon which agricultural operations may in the future be established.

(b) Agricultural Operation shall be defined as per Section 301 (11) of the State Agriculture and Markets Law and includes.

#### Section 2. Purpose and Intent

(a) It is the declared policy of this \_\_\_\_\_ to enhance and encourage agricultural operations within the \_\_\_\_\_. It is the further intent of this \_\_\_\_\_ to provide to the residents proper notification of the \_\_\_\_\_ recognition and support of agriculture through this law.

(b) It is the purpose and intent of this section to reduce the loss to the \_\_\_\_\_ of its agricultural resources by clarifying the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be considered a nuisance.

(c) An additional purpose of this law is to promote a good neighbor policy by advising purchasers and users of property adjacent to or near agricultural operations of the inherent potential problems associated with such purchase or residence. Such concerns may include, but are not limited to, the noises, odors, dust, chemicals, smoke, and hours of operation that may accompany agricultural operations. It is intended that through mandatory disclosures, purchasers and users will better understand the impact of living near agricultural operations and be prepared to accept attendant conditions as the natural result of living in or near rural areas.

#### Section 3. Right-to-Farm Declaration

Farmers, as well as those employed, retained, or otherwise authorized to act on behalf of farmers, may lawfully engage in agricultural practices within the \_\_\_\_\_ at all times and all such locations as are reasonable necessary to conduct the business of agriculture. For determining the reasonableness of the time, place and methodology of such practice, due weight and consideration shall be given to both traditional customs and procedures in the farming industry as well as to advances resulting from increased knowledge, research, and improved technologies.

Agricultural practices conducted on farmland shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance if such agricultural practices are:

1. Reasonable and necessary to the farm operation;
2. Conducted in a manner which is not negligent or reckless;
3. Conducted in conformity with generally accepted and sound agricultural practices;
4. Conducted in conformity with all local, state, and federal laws and regulations;

5. Conducted in a manner which does not constitute a threat to public health and safety or cause injury to health or safety of any person, and
6. Conducted in a manner that does not reasonably obstruct the free passage or use of navigable waters or public roadways.

#### Section 4. Disclosure and Notification

The \_\_\_\_\_ requires land holders or their agents in or within 500 feet of an agricultural district to comply with Section 10 of Article 25-AA of the State Agriculture and Markets Law and provide notice to prospective purchasers and occupants as follows: "It is the policy of this state and community to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products and also for its natural and ecological value. This notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies wholly or partially within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust, and odors." This notice shall be provided to prospective purchasers of property within an agricultural district or on property with boundaries within 500 feet of a farm operation located in an agricultural district. The seller or seller's agent shall include a copy of this notice as an addendum to the purchase and sale contract at the time an offer to purchase is made.

#### Section 5. Resolution of Disputes

(a) Should any controversy arise regarding any inconveniences or discomforts occasioned by agricultural operations which cannot be settled by direct negotiation between the parties involved, either party may submit the controversy to a dispute resolution committee as set forth below in an attempt to resolve the matter prior to the filing of any court action and prior to a request for a determination by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets about whether the practice in question is sound pursuant to Section 308 of Article 25-AA of the State Agriculture and Markets Law.

(b) Any controversy between parties may be submitted to a grievance committee whose decision shall be advisory only, within 30 days of the date of the occurrence of the particular activity giving rise to the controversy or of the date a party became aware of the occurrence.

(c) The committee shall be composed of three members selected from the community including one representative from the farm community, one person from Town government, and one person mutually agreed upon by both parties involved in the dispute.

(d) The effectiveness of the committee as a forum for the resolution of disputes is dependent upon full discussion and complete presentation of all pertinent facts concerning the dispute in order to eliminate any misunderstandings. The parties are encouraged to cooperate in the exchange of pertinent information concerning the controversy.

(e) The controversy shall be presented to the committee by written request of one of the parties within the time specified. Thereafter, the committee may investigate the facts of the controversy but must, within 25 days, hold a meeting to consider the merit of the matter, and within 10 days of the meeting render a decision in writing to the parties. At

the time of the meeting, both parties shall have an opportunity to present what each considers to be pertinent facts.

Section 6. Separability.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this law is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by the decision of a court or competent jurisdiction, it shall not affect the remaining portions of this ordinance.

Section 7. Effective Date.

This local law shall be effective immediately upon filing with the New York Secretary of State.

### **13. c. New York State Department of Agriculture Guidelines**

The following guidance information is direct from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets website: [www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/agservices/agdistricts.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/agservices/agdistricts.html) (and click on “guidance documents”.) These guidance documents are updated on a regular basis so this website should be checked periodically.

#### **Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: Guidance for Local Governments and Farmers**

Article XIV, Section 4 of the New York State Constitution, added in 1970, provides that the policy of the State shall be to encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural lands for the production of food and other agricultural products and states that the legislature, in implementing this policy, shall include adequate provision for the protection of agricultural lands. Shortly thereafter, in 1971, the Agricultural Districts Law, Agriculture and Markets Law (AML) Article 25-AA, was enacted implementing that policy. Section 305-a of Article 25-AA contains the following mandate:

“Local governments, when exercising their powers to enact and administer comprehensive plans and local laws, ordinances, rules or regulations, shall exercise these powers in such manner as may realize the policy and goals set forth in this article [*Article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law*], and shall not unreasonably restrict or regulate farm operations within agricultural districts in contravention of the purposes of this article unless it can be shown that the public health or safety is threatened.”

For purposes of AML §305-a, subd. 1, “Farm operation” means: “...the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise, including a ‘commercial horse boarding operation’ as defined in subdivision thirteen of this section. Such farm operation may consist of one or more parcels of owned or rented land, which parcels may be contiguous or noncontiguous to each other.” The definition of “crops, livestock and livestock products” is contained in AML §301(2).

The brochure *Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: How Do They Relate?* was prepared by the Department to assist municipalities in drafting and administering local laws and ordinances which may affect farming in an agricultural district. The brochure also offers guidance to farmers on the application of AML §305-a. Local governments and farmers are encouraged to review that document for information on the procedure for requesting Department assistance as well as general discussion of the law. The following guidelines provide more details on the application of AML §305-a to several common agricultural topics. However, they should not be substituted for legal advice from a municipality’s attorney. The Department hopes that this information will assist local governments and farmers in resolving issues that may impact farm operations within their communities.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

In examining whether a local law is unreasonably restrictive, the Department of Agriculture and Markets considers several factors, including, but not limited to: whether the requirements adversely affect the farm operator's ability to manage the farm operation effectively and efficiently; whether the requirements restrict production options which could affect the economic viability of the farm; whether the requirements will cause a lengthy delay in the construction of a farm building or implementation of a practice; the cost of compliance for the farm operation affected; and the availability of less onerous means to achieve the locality's objective. The local laws and their administration are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. These guidance documents are intended to inform local governments and farmers generally of how the Department interprets and applies AML §305-a. The facts and circumstances of each particular matter are addressed uniformly and in accordance with applicable statutory requirements.

Department also takes into account any relevant standards established under State law and regulations. Where local standards have exceeded the State standards, the Department has, in many instances, found the local laws to be unreasonably restrictive. Each law, however, is examined on its own merits. If a local government believes that local conditions warrant standards that differ from the State's, the Department considers those conditions in evaluating whether the local standards are unreasonably restrictive.

The Department recognizes and encourages the efforts of some local governments to comply with AML §305-a by providing a Right to Farm exemption, for example, stating that "[n]othing contained herein shall be deemed to limit the right to farm as set forth in Article 25-AA of the NYS Agriculture & Markets Law...." Such local laws often further provide that no "sound agricultural practice" as defined in Article 25-AA shall be deemed prohibited under the ordinance or subject to its permit requirements. This provision could be problematic for both the local government and farm operations. AML §308 (New York's Right to Farm law) does not define "sound agricultural practices." The Department does not make prospective judgments on agricultural practices and has not defined what constitutes a sound agricultural practice. Section 308 requires that agricultural practices be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Department staff reviews each practice, for which an opinion is requested, on its own merit and a Commissioner's Opinion only examines the condition and management of the practice in effect at the time of the review. Further, the absence of an opinion from the Commissioner does not mean that a particular practice is unsound.

Under the procedures followed by the Department in conducting sound agricultural practice reviews, generally staff consults the landowner, neighbors, State and local agencies, pertinent literature and experts in the particular field of interest. The landowner whose practice is under review generally needs to be a willing participant for the Department to fully evaluate a practice and reach a valid conclusion as to its soundness. Information regarding management of the practice and grant of access to the farm premises is usually needed from the farmer. The review process is time consuming and generally takes from six to twelve months before an opinion is issued. To require a farmer to obtain an opinion to avoid prosecution or permitting under the local law would be unduly burdensome and, generally, unreasonably restrictive.

#### Available Guidance Documents From Ag and Markets Website

1. Application to Request a Review Pursuant to Section 305-a of the AML
2. Brochure entitled Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: How Do They Relate?
3. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Farm Worker Housing
4. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Nutrient Management Practices (i.e. Land Application of Animal Waste, Recognizable and Non-recognizable Food Waste, Sewage Sludge and Septage, Animal Waste Storage/Management)
5. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting On-Farm Open Burning
6. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting the Control of Farm Animals
7. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Farm Operations' Use of Wetlands
8. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Direct Farm Marketing Activities
9. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting On-Farm Composting Facilities
10. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Temporary Greenhouses
11. Guideline for Review of Local Zoning and Planning Laws
12. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Commercial Horse Boarding Operations
13. Guideline for Review of Local Laws Affecting Junk and Junkyards

## ***14. Definitions***

AEM: Agricultural Environmental Management program.

AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT: An agricultural property tax relief program that allows eligible farmland to be assessed at its value for agriculture rather than its fair market value, which reflects "highest and best" use.

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT: A legally recognized geographic area formed by one or more landowners and approved by one or more government agencies, designed to keep land in agriculture. Agricultural districts are created for fixed, renewable terms. Enrollment is voluntary; landowners receive a variety of benefits that may include eligibility for differential assessment, limits on annexation and eminent domain, protection against unreasonable government regulation and private nuisance lawsuits, and eligibility for purchase of agricultural conservation easement programs.

AFPB: Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board.

AML: Agriculture and Markets Law; refers to state law.

APPRAISAL: A systematic method of determining the market value of property.

BMP: Best Management Practices.

BUFFERS: Physical barriers that separate farms from land uses that are incompatible with agriculture. Buffers help safeguard farms from vandals and trespassers, and protect homeowners from some of the negative impacts of commercial farming. Vegetated buffers and topographic barriers reduce the potential for clashes between farmers and their non-farming neighbors. Buffers may be required by local zoning ordinances.

CLUSTER ZONING: A form of zoning that allows houses to be built close together in areas where large minimum lot sizes are generally required. By grouping houses on small sections of a large parcel of land, cluster zoning can be used to protect open space. Also known as cluster development, land preservation subdivision, open land subdivision and open space subdivision.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: A regional, county or municipal document that contains a vision of how the community will grow and change and a set of plans and policies to guide land use decisions. Comprehensive plans also are known as general plans and master plans.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT: Legally recorded, voluntary agreements that limit land to specific uses. Easements may apply to entire parcels of land or to specific parts of the property. Most are permanent; term easements impose restrictions for a limited number of years. Land protected by conservation easements remains on the tax rolls and is privately owned and managed; landowners who donate permanent conservation easements are generally entitled to tax benefits.

COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES (COCS) STUDY: A case study method of allocating local revenues and expenditures to different land use categories. COCS

studies reveal the net contribution of residential, commercial, industrial, forest and agricultural lands to local budgets.

**DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS:** Development rights entitle property owners to develop land in accordance with local land use regulations. In some jurisdictions, these rights may be sold to public agencies or qualified nonprofit organizations through a purchase of agricultural conservation easement or purchase of development rights program. Sale of development rights to a public agency or land trust generally does not pass any affirmative interest in the property. Rather than the right to develop the land, the buyer acquires the responsibility to enforce the negative covenants or restrictions stipulated in the development rights agreement. Development rights may also be sold to individuals or a public agency through a transfer of development rights program. In this case, the buyer does acquire a positive right to develop land, but the right is transferred to a site that can accommodate growth.

**GIS: Geographic Information System:** refers to a computerized mapping and analysis tool used to create and analyze mapped data.

**LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT (LESA):** A numerical system that measures the quality of farmland. It is generally used to select tracts of land to be protected or developed.

**LAND TRUST:** A private, nonprofit conservation organization formed to protect natural resources such as productive farm and forest land, natural areas, historic structures and recreational areas. Land trusts purchase and accept donations of conservation easements. They educate the public about the need to conserve land, and some provide land use and estate planning services to local governments and individual citizens.

**NRCS:** The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service.

**PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR):** PDR programs pay farmers to keep their land available for agriculture. Landowners sell an agricultural conservation easement to a qualified public agency or private conservation organization. Landowners retain full ownership and use of their land for agricultural purposes. PDR programs do not give government agencies the right to develop land. Development rights are extinguished in exchange for compensation.

**RIGHT-TO-FARM LAW:** A state law or local ordinance that protects farmers and farm operations from public and private nuisance lawsuits. A private nuisance interferes with an individual's use and enjoyment of his or her property. Public nuisances involve actions that injure the public at large.

**SETBACK:** A zoning provision requiring new homes to be separated from existing farms by a specified distance and vice versa.

**SWCD:** Soil and Water Conservation District

**WAC:** The Watershed Agricultural Council

**WAP:** The Watershed Agricultural Program