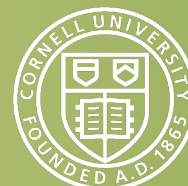


Erie County Ag News



IN THIS ISSUE

- Meat Processing and Marketing Workshop October 19
- Spotlight on Toonie Moonie Organics
- Marketing Musings - Monthly Virtual Agritourism Workshops
- Bridging Your Way to Social Security
- CCE Intern Spotlight: John Pirrung



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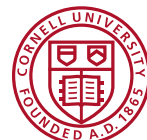
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Contents

- 3 Ag CDL Training Cancelled
- 4 Discrimination Financial Assistance Program
- 5 Empire State Producers Expo
- 6 Enterprise Budgeting for Small Farms and Homesteads
- 9 Advanced Soil Health Certificate Course
- 10 Meat Processing and Marketing Workshop
- 11 Spotlight on Toonie Moonie Organics
- 17 Upcoming Small Farms Online Course Season
- 19 Market Musings: Monthly Virtual Agritourism Workshops
- 21 Bridging Your Way to Social Security
- 23 USDA Disaster Designation for NY to Assist Farms Impacted by May Freeze Event
- 25 RMA Announces Changes to Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Policies
- 27 EPA Issues Updated Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) Rules
- 29 CCE Erie Intern Spotlight: John Pirrung



Cover photo Pixabay



UPCOMING AGRICULTURAL EVENTS

Virtual Broiler Field Day

September 20, 2023

6:30pm - 8:30pm

Online Webinar - Zoom

Virtual Broiler Field Day

Learn the ins and outs of setting up your processing equipment, processing chickens, adding value through cuts, and pricing your chicken to make a profit! More details: <https://swnydlfc.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2193>

Technology for Grazing Dairies

Webinar

September 27, 2023

12pm-1pm

Virtual - Zoom

Dr. Glenda Pereira of the University of Maine presents an overview of the technology available, useful, and practical for dairies who currently manage, or are thinking about managing, their cows in a grazing system. More details: <https://swnydlfc.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2215>

Save the Date!

Ground Lease Workshop

Join CCE Erie for dinner and a program about ground leases on Tuesday, October 17, 6:30 - 8:00 pm. A ground lease is a shared ownership agreement between a community organization and a farmer that helps farmers access land at a lower cost and build equity in farm infrastructure. Contact Kathleen McCormick for more information (km864@cornell.edu, 716-652-5400 ext. 146).

Tools for Calculating Forage

Availability - Fall Grazing Pasture Walk

October 6, 2023

12pm - 3pm

Birds-All Farm

Canaseraga, NY

Join us for an interactive pasture walk focused on tools to assist you in calculating forage availability to match livestock needs and paddock size. More details: <https://swnydlfc.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2228>

Meat Processing and Marketing Workshop

October 19, 2023

6:30pm - 8:30pm

Town of Aurora Senior Center

East Aurora, NY

Farms participating in this workshop will hear from experts on topics covering evaluating livestock for optimal harvest timing, working with your processor, determining if value-added products are worth it, advertising and selling meats, an introduction to MeatSuite.com, and creating consumer-friendly bulk meat sales. More details: <https://swnydlfc.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2204urban-farm-day-tour>

Ag CDL Training – Erie County Fairgrounds Session CANCELLED - Open Enrollment Option STILL AVAILABLE

John Whitney, Agriculture Educator, CCE Erie County



Photo: John Whitney

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County (CCE-Erie) is in its second year offering an Agricultural Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training program. The program now had planned two training options for experienced farm owners, operators, and employees:

- Open Enrollment with direct scheduling with the contracted instructor
- Group Class at the Erie County Fairgrounds, October 17-28

Due to a lack of enrollment in the group class, the Fairgrounds session is cancelled. The Open Enrollment option remains available.

Program details and additional information are available on the Cornell Cooperative Extension – Erie web page: <https://bit.ly/3quaKNh>

Potential participants are reminded that this reduced rate, accelerated training is intended for experienced

drivers. Beginner or less experienced drivers will need to explore other commercial driver's license training options through area providers. Participants should also plan on getting plenty of driving practice before their road test! Sponsoring farms are asked to provide assurance that participants have access to manual transmission tractor-trailers and that employees do have considerable driving experience prior to enrolling. See the employer letter on the program web page.

For more information, contact John Whitney at jrw44@cornell.edu or 716-796-3204. ■



Discrimination Financial Assistance Program



Photo: Pixabay

Today, Windsor Group LLC announced the opening of a local office at Sunny Brook Builders owned by local farmer, Don Barber, that will provide support to eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who may apply for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP). The office, located on 2147 Slaterville Rd in Caroline, NY, opened on Friday, August 18, 2023.

As part of an effort to reach as many agricultural producers as possible who may be eligible for the program, local brick-and-mortar offices are being opened across the country to ensure easy access and personalized assistance. The offices are one part of a comprehensive outreach process that is designed so that farmers and ranchers have multiple options to gain assistance at no cost. Producers also have the option to file applications online at 22007apply.gov, by mail, or by turning in applications at the brick-and-mortar offices.

The application period for this program is July 7 through October 31, 2023. Farmers, ranchers,

and forest landowners are eligible to apply if they encountered discrimination by USDA in its farm loan programs before January 1, 2021, and/or currently hold assigned or assumed USDA farm loan debt that was subject to discrimination prior to January 1, 2021.

Anyone interested in applying or finding out more can schedule an appointment or visit the office in Caroline, NY between 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. ET, Monday – Friday.

USDA Discrimination Financial Assistance Program
New York Office
2147 Slaterville Rd
Caroline, NY 14850 ■





The 2024 Empire State Producers Expo will take place on January 23-24 at the Oncenter, Syracuse. This annual show is hosted by the New York State Vegetable Growers Association in order to provide a comprehensive trade show and educational conference for New York producers, as well as neighboring states and Eastern Canada.

This year's conference has been planned exclusively by the New York State Vegetable Growers Association. Each session has been planned to encapsulate what farmers want to learn and hear about. The show is going back to its roots: sessions that farmers are interested in and lots of networking opportunities all under one roof. Panel discussions feature some of the top industry experts and growers in New York. Between educational sessions, attendees can visit the trade show featuring commercial vendors and non-profit exhibitors.

Session topics include commodity specific programs in sweet corn, onions, cabbage, soil health, high

tunnel, disease management, tomatoes, berries, cut flowers, snap beans, cucurbits and more.

DEC pesticide recertification credits will be offered during the appropriate educational sessions.

The Becker Forum will take place January 22, 2024 at the Oncenter, Syracuse.

Registration will open November 2023, you can register and get more info through the NYS Vegetable Growers Association website www.nysvga.org For registration help, call 585-993-1767. ■



Enterprise Budgeting for Small Farms and Homesteads

Penn State Extension

Creating a budget can be a valuable experience not only for folks who are raising crops or livestock homesteading. No matter the scale of your operation, knowing your costs and potential income will decisions.

Why create an enterprise budget? Use of an enterprise budget has several benefits. One is that it enables us to create simulations to show potential scenarios and outcomes of individual enterprises. This is cheaper to do on paper with a budget than after crops are planted or animals are purchased. Doing this, you can use the budget to create a roadmap for your production. Focusing and refining your production plan to identify potential hidden costs that may have otherwise been forgotten until it is too late. Use of a budget also enables you to put your plans into fileable form that you can reference later to identify the areas where you may have over or underestimated costs or income. Perhaps most importantly, utilizing an enterprise budget will enable you to know your costs of production. If you do not know your costs of production, it is impossible to know what price you need to charge for your product. Just because your neighbor is selling a product at a certain price does not guarantee that you will be profitable at the same price.

Creating enterprise budgets with actual numbers when the season is completed, will provide an excellent tool for analysis. You will see where your estimations may have varied from what actually happened. This information is helpful in future projections and years.



Photo: Canva

Enterprise Budgets Components

An enterprise budget can be broken into three main components. The first part is referred to as income or receipts. This part of the budget shows the products in units that will generate revenue from the enterprise such as dozens of eggs, bushels of corn, or pounds of product. In this section you will estimate the quantity of units produced and expected price per unit. It is important that these numbers are an honest estimate that is representative of 3 out of 5 years. While numbers from outlier years can be used for best/worst case scenarios, they should not be used for normal budgeting purposes as they are not average and will skew your expectations. The basic formula for this part of the budget is $\text{Income} = \text{Quantity produced} \times \text{Unit price}$.

Please keep in mind when estimating income that, not all production will be sold. You may have some production with quality issues that cannot be sold as

Continued on page 7>>

first quality. This may be due to insect pressure or disease and may need to be discarded, consumed by the family, or sold as seconds. In livestock production, a percentage for death loss is always included.

The second part of an enterprise budget consists of variable costs, often also referred to as operating costs or contribution margin. These are costs that will vary with changes in quantity of production such as feed, bedding, repairs, packaging, interest, and labor. The quantities of all these expenses are directly correlated with the scale of your production. Even if there is no hired labor it is important to consider your time and ensure that the cost of your labor is included in the budget. If you have interest expense, it is important to note that interest should be charged to the enterprise from the dates that expenses are incurred until the date that product is sold, repaying the debt. If your goal is to generate profit from your enterprise, it is especially important at this point to check if your revenue is covering your operating costs. If operating costs are not covered by revenue you should look for ways to reduce costs without harming production or find a way to increase revenue. If this cannot be done you will lose money on every unit of product produced.

The third and last part of an enterprise budget is fixed costs, also called ownership costs. These costs are incurred whether production happens or not. This includes insurance, taxes, interest, and depreciation on buildings and equipment. Most of these costs are incurred during the first year as establishment costs, which are depreciated over their estimated useful life for the sake of budgeting. If in the first year a small cooler is purchased to store your products in, it will likely be used for future years of production. The cost of the cooler will be depreciated over its estimated lifespan. Be sure to use realistic figures and not figures used for income tax purposes. The cooler may last fifteen years instead of what is allowed by the Internal Revenue

Service (IRS). If this is not done in the budget, it will appear that you will lose a large amount of money the first year only to be disproportionately profitable in future years. It is important to consider that if you are preparing a budget before any purchases have been made, these costs are still avoidable. It is also important to remember that fixed costs are spread evenly to units produced. While total fixed costs will not vary, the fixed costs per unit of production will decrease with volume if you are within the capacity of your facilities. If you purchase a building with the capacity of 100 birds but only house 50 birds, your fixed costs per bird will be higher than if the building was filled. However, it is important to remember that you need to have a market for your product if starting or increasing production.

Variable and Fixed costs will be added together to find your total costs. Your total costs will then be subtracted from Income to find projected profits or losses.

Break-even Analysis

Completing your enterprise budget will allow you to do some analysis of the long-term viability of your production. This can be done by doing a couple break-even analysis. The first can be to check your break-even for variable costs using the following formula: $\text{Break-even} = \frac{\text{Total Variable Costs}}{\text{Expected Units of product}}$. This will help you identify the price that you would need to cover just your variable costs. This is important to know because if you cannot at least cover your variable costs, you will be unable to put funds toward fixed costs such as buildings and equipment.

Using your enterprise budget, you can figure out what price you would need to break-even. The formula used for this is: $\text{Break-even price} = \frac{\text{Total Costs}}{\text{Expect Yield or Units}}$. The break-even price should be equal to or less than average market price if you plan to be profitable. If you have over-supply or an underdeveloped market for your product you

will be unable to cover your costs of production on anything that you are forced to sell under this price.

You will also be able to find your break-even yield or units of production needed to break-even at expected sale prices. This can be done using: Break-even Yield = Total costs ÷ Sale price. This can be helpful if you are adjusting costs for items that will improve or reduce production. Using this formula will help you to see if cost adjustments will result in a realistic break-even yield. This formula is also used to find how many units of production is needed to generate enough profit to cover your fixed costs.

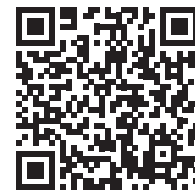
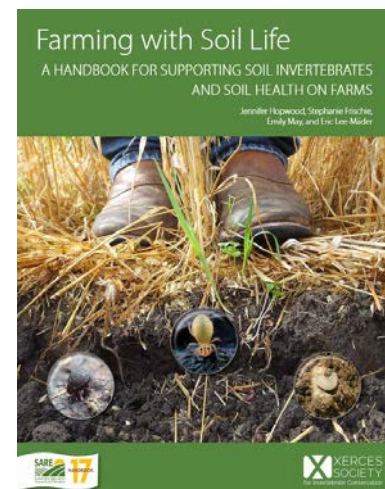
Things to Keep in Mind

An enterprise budget does not necessarily account for the costs of management and the risks associated with your enterprise. It is also important to consider opportunity costs; what would your return be for your time and money if it were invested somewhere else. Also, an enterprise budget should be created for every product produced on your farm. For example, if you are raising corn and soybeans to feed your poultry separate budgets should be created for corn, soybeans, and the poultry. These budgets can be combined to create a whole farm budget.

An enterprise budget is only as good as the numbers that are used. in it. For it to be an accurate tool it is important that values used are realistic and achievable. You should conduct research to determine the most accurate income and costs for the enterprise. However, you can change numbers to create best-and worst-case scenarios for your enterprise to see how you will fare if everything goes wrong or if everything is perfect. Often reality will be somewhere in the middle, so it is beneficial to have a plan for both. It is also important to remember that an enterprise budget can be a valuable source of economic information but is not a substitute for good management of production and proper planning to market your products. ■

New Book: Farming With Soil Life

Smart farmers know that healthy soil hosts a flourishing and diverse ecosystem of bacteria, fungi and invertebrates. But the complex relationships between soil life, productivity and resilience are not well understood. Now available from the Xerces Society and SARE, [Farming with Soil Life: A Handbook for Supporting Soil Invertebrates and Soil Health on Farms](#) is a user-friendly guide to identifying, understanding and better managing soil life to improve the sustainability of your farming system



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Cornell CALS
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Cornell Soil Health Laboratory

Cornell University’s Soil Health program is pleased to announce the upcoming 2023 Advanced Soil Health International Certificate Training Course. The course will be held virtually from October 3 to November 14, 2023, offering practitioners, educators, and students a valuable opportunity to deepen their understanding of the latest science and practices in soil health.

Why Attend?

In-depth Knowledge: Gain valuable insights into soil health and explore the latest scientific advancements. Led by renowned experts from Cornell University, including Dr. Harold van Es, Joseph Amsili, and Dr. Debbie Aller, this course ensures a comprehensive learning experience.

- **Comprehensive Curriculum:** Delve into essential aspects of soil health, covering soil biology, physics, chemistry, management practices, assessment, monitoring and improvement, and digital technology. This course provides a comprehensive understanding of soil health concepts, from foundational principles to advanced techniques.
- **Flexible Learning Options:** Tailor your learning experience to meet your specific needs.

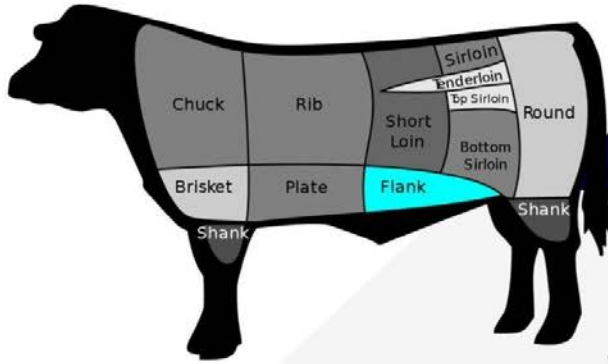
Participants can choose between the full course (basic & advanced modules) or the basic modules only. The three basic modules provide a comprehensive overview, while the four advanced modules delve into more specialized areas, exploring soil health assessment, monitoring, and improvement in greater detail.

- **Recognized Achievement:** Upon successfully finishing the course, participants will receive a certificate of completion, demonstrating their expertise and commitment to sustainable agriculture. Additionally, those who complete the full course and fulfill a small project assignment will earn a micro-credential, further validating their knowledge and skills.

Registration Details:

To secure your spot in this course, please visit soilhealthtraining.org and register today. The fee is \$250 for the full course (\$125 for nations not on the advanced economy list), \$125 for the basic modules only, and a discounted rate of \$75 for New York State residents and students. Additionally, a limited number of scholarships are available to ensure financial constraints do not hinder participation. ■

MEAT PROCESSING AND MARKETING WORKSHOP



Cornell
Cooperative
Extension

Thursday, October 19th, 2023
6:30pm - 8:30pm

Town of Aurora Senior Center
101 King St., East Aurora, NY 14052

**Registration is \$10 per farm,
which includes dinner.**

Pre-registrations are needed by
Tuesday, October 17th,

TO REGISTER:

Visit our website:

<https://tinyurl.com/MeatMarketingSWNY>

Contact Amy at (716) 640-0844
or amb544@cornell.edu



more info



THE TOPICS WE'LL COVER INCLUDE:

- Evaluating livestock for ideal harvest timing
- Livestock handling & delivery for meat quality
- Working with your processor (including addressing difficult situations)
- Carcass math: breakdown and pricing
- How much value does value-added add?
- Creating customer and processor-friendly bulk meat sales
- Introduction to MeatSuite.com & the Cornell Meat Pricing Calculator
- Sneak peak at the forthcoming Meat Processor Directory



National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*This workshop is provided at a reduced cost thanks to work supported by
USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2021-70027-34693.*



NORTHEAST
EXTENSION
RISK
MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION

Cornell Cooperative Extension offers educational programming and research based information to agricultural producers, growers, and agribusinesses. Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and education recognized for valuing AA/EO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

Spotlight on Toonie Moonie Organics

John Whitney, Agriculture Educator, CCE Erie County

(Note: this interview was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this post-pandemic period, some of the discussion is less relevant. However, it remains interesting to read how this small, woman-owned business worked through the impacts of COVID-19 on supply chains, staffing, marketing, and production.)

View the video of the spotlight here: <https://bit.ly/3sOxlzO>

[John Whitney] This interview is the 21st in a series focusing on vendors who are selling their wares at the Western New York Welcome Center's Taste New York Market. In this vendor spotlight, Kim Condon, Founder and Owner of Toonie Moonie Organics, along with Tamara Sines, manager of social media and Marketing, discuss the history of Toonie Moonie marshmallow creme and its line of certified organic and Kosher products along with business and marketing experiences, tips, and strategies.

[Tamara Sines] We currently have a variety of flavors at Toonie Moonie Organics. We started, of course, with the vanilla flavor. So right here is the fantastic packaging. Half the fun of taking the photos of Toonie Moonie is because the packaging is just so stand out. So that's our vanilla and then we have a chocolate marshmallow spread. We also have caramel. We have a few products in the works that will be coming out later this month. We have a pumpkin spice coming which we are so excited about, and we know our customers are also so excited when we did the teaser on social media. And then we do have a great maple which we are also so excited about. So, there's a little maple leaf there. It is so much fun and ... that's half the fun of being able to create different desserts or, you know, different product shots for each piece of what Toonie Moonie can offer. That's my favorite part about working here. Kim can tell us some about the history of Toonie Moonie Organics. Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it. The relationships with

the various Taste New York locations and their people has been just a really nice experience. We're certainly appreciative and very proud to be in the stores.

[John] We're glad to have you as well. Thank you.

[Kim Congdon] Toonie Moonie began several years ago. I was a single parent and looking for an opportunity to develop a business that incorporated my values and decided to go the route of an organic food product, specifically an organic sweet, and narrowed down in on a marshmallow crème spread. I decided to turn my garage into a commercial kitchen. That's where we began. I worked closely with Cornell University on various shelf-life studies and aspects of developing the food product. I also worked with RIT for packaging and developing our packaging. And since that time, we've transitioned into four different facilities before landing where we are now which is Oneonta, New York.

[Tamara] Kim Condon is our owner and founder. We are a woman-owned business which we take a lot of pride in. We make sure to employ a very diverse and inclusive group of employees here at Toonie Moonie Organics. Some of our employees include single parents who are unable to subscribe to the 9 to 5 schedule. Other employees of ours may have disabilities and or restraints on time and maybe need to work from home. My goal with Toonie Moonie from



Photos from www.tooniemoonie.com

the start was to get as many eyes on our product as possible. Customers are from with the conventional marshmallow spread but introducing them to a marshmallow spread that is both certified organic and certified Kosher is very exciting to us.

[John] Why marshmallow?

[Kim] Why marshmallow? Marshmallow creme is a nostalgic product. It's been around for many years. It was very popular in the Deco period and just has a really neat, interesting history. It's a loved product. It's a product that I grew up with. But as I had children of my own, I was looking and wanting to incorporate healthier versions of some of those nostalgic foods and sweets that I enjoyed as a child. And through my research discovered that there was no alternative for a healthy marshmallow spread, marshmallow creme.

[John] As an organic product?

[Kim] Yes, as an organic product.

[John] So your product is organic and it has other certifications as well?



[Kim] It does. We are certified organic and certified kosher. We're also a gluten-free product, dairy-free, and vegetarian. We have not pursued those certifications at this time but those are qualities and attributes of our product.

[John] How many employees do you have in your current staffing?

[Kim] Our team currently consists of nine team members, and it's a diverse team. The Toonie Moonie team reflects our belief that diversity and inclusion are essential to building the best place to work and grow. Diversity of thought, openness, and inclusion of team members with challenges has been a big part of the Toonie Moonie experience, since the beginning and is part of our success story.

[John] Kim what is it about your background that led you in the in the direction of wanting to be a manufacturer and marketer of a food product of any kind?

[Kim] I would say primarily it was being a mom and wanting to develop a product that I would feed my

Continued on page 13 >>

children. And I have an art background and I wanted to create a job that included being creative and that I would enjoy. Toonie Moonie was my childhood nickname that my mother had given me, and the logo is actually a version of me when I was a child. So, the company is very personal for sure. But I love the creative aspect of the company. The logo, the packaging, just the whole product development, the website, you know, all parts of it. I love the creative part, the creative aspect of the company.

[John] So, the business itself was not formally part of your background other than whatever marketing and business-related activities you did in the art world?

[Kim] Correct. Business was certainly not in my background. It's been a learning curve, to say the least. I'm proud of how far we've come. I've had tremendous help along the way. I've worked closely with our local small business development center and developed a nice relationship with the director. She has been phenomenal. I developed a close relationship with my local bank and my contact there, and they've been extremely supportive and patient along the way. So, the learning curve has definitely been a challenge but something I'm proud of as well.

[John] It's hard to describe, I suppose, the scale of marshmallow spread production in quantitative terms, but maybe you can talk a little bit about it in some kind of a volume description?

[Kim] Well, I guess maybe one way to do that would be to talk about our customers and where you can find Toonie Moonie. We are in several Taste New York locations and we are in all Whole Foods Markets which is about, just under 500 stores. And we're in hundreds and hundreds of natural independent markets throughout the country. We're also available on Amazon and via our website. We do make a lot of marshmallow creme. It's definitely a marshmallow world here at Toonie Moonie. Currently, Toonie

Moonie Organics is the only certified organic and certified Kosher marshmallow spread on the market. We are sold in Whole Foods Markets throughout all the United States and also thousands of natural food stores throughout the United States. And many different bakeries use our ingredients. We also are in many breweries, some breweries. And some meaderies actually use Toonie Moonie Organics as an ingredient in their mead.

[John] Kim, one of the requirements for marketing within the Taste of New York system is that products are produced in New York if they don't happen to be grown in New York. And yours obviously are produced in New York. But maybe you can tell me a little bit about the ingredients in your marshmallow spread world and where those come from, and potentially even how the supply chain has impacted your production in the recent months and years as we've worked through the COVID-19 pandemic?

[Kim] Certainly. Well, our ingredients are not made or grown in New York State, but our product certainly is, right here in Oneonta, New York. We really have a very simple ingredient list. We have five ingredients. They include organic tapioca syrup, organic cane sugar, organic vanilla extract, organic dried egg whites, and we use bottled natural spring water. So, the spring water is local and from New York State and that's something that we certainly value greatly. The other ingredients are not. Our tapioca syrup originates in Thailand. The sugar is from Brazil. We buy from our vendors here in the United States, but the original, ingredient originates outside of the country. The egg whites are from this country. They're from the United States. And the COVID... COVID has been very challenging - the supply chain specifically. It's been a real challenge to source our ingredients and our packaging. There have been many delays resulting in our production stopping. We've had, I think now it's a total of eight or 10 weeks this year where we simply have not been able to produce because we don't have an ingredient, or we don't have the proper packaging.



[John] And that's very, very challenging.

[Kim] Yes, so, a lot of the bakeries, cafes, and restaurants that used our product, unfortunately, weren't able to open during COVID or have restricted hours during COVID. So, a lot of those businesses that would buy from us, unfortunately, stopped buying during that time. I'm still having to order larger quantities of packaging ingredients just so I have some assurance that we will have them in stock in inventory. The typical turnaround time when I would order an ingredient or packaging was about two weeks. Now it can be if, I'm lucky, two months, and sometimes it's longer.

[John] Which is challenging to plan around, especially for a company that is growing. Just in time procurement is a thing of the past, at least for now; you have to plan ahead further than you ever would have thought?

[Kim] Correct.

[John] To some extent people staying home doing more cooking may have been looking to your products for some of their ingredients and that was probably a good thing?

[Kim] Yes, I think that's true. But we also sell our product in bulk and I sell to bakers and breweries, meaderies, a variety of other manufacturers that use our product as an ingredient in their product and some of the the business that we lost during COVID were our bakeries, our cafes, the restaurants that use our product in their desserts. Those sales just were non-existent.

[John] Are they starting to come back yet, or not quite?

[Kim] They are. Yes.

[John] Good.

[Kim] Happily. And I'm so appreciative that our customers have come back as, as the restrictions are being lifted.

Our classic vanilla is by far the most popular flavor, but we do offer other flavors. The flavors that we currently are offering are vanilla, chocolate, caramel, and banana and we had hoped to introduce some summer flavors which would include strawberry, lemon, and cotton candy but due to the supply chain issues we're only producing chocolate and vanilla. But in December we hope to introduce our fall and winter flavors. Again, they were pushed because of supply chain issues but we will be introducing our pumpkin spice maple and peppermint. We're currently focusing on developing our social media and Tamara does a wonderful job working with influencers and developing posts that she can share.

[Tamara] My job is to make sure that we provide our customers with a variety of different ways to use Toonie Moonie so they continue to understand and buy the fantastic product. Another big highlight for me is I want to make sure the organic quality and the, you know, Kosher certification is sung throughout our

Continued on page 15>>

social media because it is a value we take pride in here at Toonie Moonie.

[John] What social media platforms are you using right now?

[Tamara] We currently are using Facebook and Instagram. And your web page itself has a robust recipes section. That's a really important component of our website. And we are also on TikTok. We do a lot of video work now with making recipes or showing production. Another big part of marketing for us is showing our product in action. Because we want customers to be excited and for that light bulb to go off on what they can use our product for. One of joys of working with Toonie Moonie Organics marketing is seeing what our customers do with our product. Sometimes we do get influencers who are maybe organic lifestyle influencers or organic bakers who find our product naturally or do contact us and say we "love your product," "We love using it," "What do you guys have new coming," "Can I get anything sent to me?" "Can we work a deal where I make a product and share my audience?" And then we also get to share it. It's tons of fun. We have had great feedback from many different influencers in many different states.

[John] Tamara, you used the term "influencer." I think many people in the social media world do know what an influencer is but some people may not. What is an influencer and how does that work with your business?

[Tamara] Influencers are people on Instagram, Facebook, or even TikTok that have a larger following. Usually, it's 10,000 followers and up. They essentially get products, maybe review those products, and share those reviews or even share how they use those products with their audience. We get the opportunity to work with those influencers and see what they make of our product, and how they showcase it in their own home, how they share it with their friends,

how they share it with their audience. We get the luxury of working with so many different influencers throughout the country. And the feedback from those influencers and from their own followers makes us so happy. Working with influencers, we do get to see the excitement that our product brings to them and their followers as well.

[John] How much of your business is e-commerce and online sales?

[Tamara] 10% of our sales come from e-commerce and then the remaining 90% comes from distribution.

[John] Have you had to make any significant changes in your market and sales planning because of COVID-19?

[Tamara] One thing we really wanted to be transparent about was the availability of our product and since we have had these supply chain issues, communicating with our customers has been very important to us. We have been putting out a lot more information on both our Facebook and Instagram but also our e-commerce site. We've been making sure to update our customers with different demographics or different explanations as to what's going on. We really wanted to make sure that our customers knew how we were doing. We are coming back when we're going to be restocked. What's going to be restocked. Even in the last couple of weeks we've made sure to change our e-commerce graphics to support our customers and know that we are going to be continuing production. Everything's looking good and the good news is everything will be restocked in December. And we do have two new flavors coming out in December.

We have a great group of people here and I think Kim takes great pride in finding the employees that really do make a difference both while I'm here but also while I'm at home working. We make it work. In college, my major was in fashion but my concentration

was in sustainable fashion. So sustainability and working with companies who care about the environment, who put people over profit. That's where I wanted to end up. And Toonie Moonie Organics truly puts the environment over anything - really cares about the employees and, and the comfort of the employees.

One value that really stuck out to me was interest in dog rescue. Kim Condon rescues has rescued many, many dogs and that is something I really valued while job searching, and getting to understand the culture or the interest behind Toonie Moonie and the brand of Toonie Moonie.

[John] Kim, maybe as a manufacturer of a product with the name marshmallow, can you tell us a little bit about where that name came from?

[Kim] Sure, marshmallow root was used to create marshmallows. I've read as far back as Egyptian times to bind and to give marshmallows that spongy texture. Now, conventional marshmallows, modern day marshmallows, have opted to use gelatin. The difference between marshmallow creme and marshmallows is we don't need that ingredient. We don't need the gelatin or the marshmallow root for that matter to create the texture. It's a different texture. We're creating a spreadable marshmallow creme, whereas a marshmallow of course known for being that fluffy, spongy, cloud confection.

[John] And the name itself still ties back to the original plant root origin?

[Kim] Yes. It does. Marshmallow has a really

interesting, rich history for sure.

[John] Thank you to Kim Condon and Tamara Sines for enthusiastically sharing the story of Toonie Moonie Organics based in Oneonta, New York. For a lovely, more detailed recounting of the origin of Toonie Moonie Organics, I encourage you to visit Our Story on the web page www.tooniemoonie.com.

Toonie Moonie Organics products are available in many of the TasteNY markets across New York state including the Western New York Welcome Center on Grand Island as well as through a growing list of wholesale and retail markets and distributors in the region and throughout the country. As Kim said, that now includes the entire Whole Foods chain and more than a 1000, natural food and smaller retail shops. Online sales options are available under the order link on the web page.

As a woman-owned business, Toonie Moonie Organics, makers of the original organic marshmallow creme is an example of how small businesses in New York State are continually adjusting to changes in the economy and markets as they strive to make locally grown, manufactured, or processed and packaged foods, beverages, goods, and services available to consumers throughout the state, region, and beyond. ■



Taste NY at the Western New York
Welcome Center is operated by:

**Cornell Cooperative Extension
Erie County**

Taste NY Market at the Western NY Welcome Center
1999 Alvin Road
Grand Island, New York 14072
(716) 773-0970
erietasteny@cornell.edu

Upcoming Small Farms Online Course Season Featuring New Courses

via Cornell Small Farms Program



Are you looking to improve your technical or business skills to benefit your farming operation? Consider joining one of our more than 30 online courses during live instruction this upcoming online course season.

The Cornell Small Farms Program is excited to announce that our upcoming online course season will begin live webinars this fall, and will feature new courses to offer even more learning opportunities. New additions to our online course suite include [“Growing Uncommon Fruit,”](#) which will help you determine whether incorporating uncommon fruit into your operation is the right decision for you, and [“Farm Strategies for Farmer Well-Being”](#) on strategies to make your farm feel more manageable.

In addition to new courses, we are expanding our Spanish-first online course offerings with our [“BF 101: Cómo Iniciar su Negocio Agrícola,”](#) [“BF 102: Mercados y Rentabilidad,”](#) and “BF 204: QuickBooks para Negocios Agrícolas” (el curso se lanzará a principios del 2024).

Our growing team of [online course instructors](#) includes experienced farmers, extension educators, and agriculture service providers. The online courses are offered on a user-friendly platform, which grants registrants permanent access to their course content. Also, courses have tiered pricing based on household size and income to make access to the courses more affordable and equitable for everyone.

Registration is now open for [all courses](#), with live content starting in September for our first block of courses.

[BF 101: Starting at Square One](#)

So you’re thinking about starting a farm, but feeling overwhelmed by all the decisions? This course was designed to assist new and aspiring farmers in taking the first steps in thinking through farm start-up (whether you already have land access or not).

[BF 101: Cómo Iniciar su Negocio Agrícola](#)

¿Está pensando en comenzar un negocio agrícola

propio, pero se siente confundido por todas las decisiones que esto involucra? Este curso está diseñado para ayudar a los agricultores nuevos y aspirantes a dar los primeros pasos para iniciar su propio negocio agrícola (finca, rancho, granja) ya sea que tenga acceso a la tierra o no.

[BF 112: Reading the Land](#)

This course is a 4-week exploration of how you can confirm and/or measure improved land health. You will learn how to read the land, and how to conduct various biological monitoring practices, from simple to more complex.

[BF 149: Identifying and Partnering with Mushrooms in Farms, Gardens and Forests](#)

Gain an overview of foundational knowledge needed to understand how mushrooms might play a role in your farm and/or greater community. You will learn the basic biology and life cycle, how to properly harvest and identify a specimen, and receive basic information and examples of ways humans are using mushrooms successfully depending on their goals and context.

[BF 202: Writing a Business Plan](#)

Arm yourself with a business plan and you will have a guide to aid your farm decision-making and demonstrate to yourself and your family that your ideas are feasible. This course is designed to help you build your plan, including developing financial statements.

[BF 204: Quickbooks for Farmers](#)

Are you a beginning farmer? Or are you a current farmer with the desire to switch to an online accounting system? Then our quick guide to

Quickbooks is for you. Learn the software's basic features, such as sales tax, inventory, invoicing, adjustments, and year-end procedures.

[BF 233: Beef Cattle Management](#)

This new course will show you how having a successful cattle business is about much more than just buying a few head and putting them in a field. Learn about appropriate breeds, marketing strategies, and many more aspects of starting a beef enterprise.

Our program offers nearly three dozen online courses to help farmers improve their technical and business skills. These courses cover a range of topics any farmer needs to succeed, such as [soil health](#), [holistic financial planning](#), [poultry production](#), [vegetable farming](#), and so much more. Experienced farmers, extension educators, and agriculture service providers guide students through course content, including weekly live webinars, videos, and resources.

Last year we added ["Goat Production,"](#) which will guide beginning farmers through the production and marketing of goats for dairy, meat and fiber, and ["Identifying and Partnering with Mushrooms in Farms, Gardens and Forests"](#) to teach you basic ID, species, life cycle, and potential applications of mushrooms to solve community-level challenges. In recent years we've also added: ["Access to Capital"](#) for anyone seeking funding for a farm enterprise; ["Cut Flower Production"](#) on the business of flower farming; a course on ["Beef Cattle Management;"](#) a primer on ["Social Media & Online Marketing"](#) for your farm business; and a 4-week intensive in how ["Reading the Land"](#) can help you monitor its health.

The bulk of the course happens on your own time, with discussions, readings, and assignments in

Teachable, our online course platform. To add to the experience, webinars will be woven into the interface of the course for a dedicated time slot each year to allow you to meet on a weekly basis to learn from presenters and ask questions in real-time. If you miss one, they are always recorded and posted for later viewing.

You can [browse all of our course offerings](#) on our website. You can learn more about our courses, including answers to common questions, on our [course FAQ](#). ■



**Cornell Small Farm
Program Course Offerings**

Marketing Musings - Monthly Virtual Agritourism Workshops

John Whitney, Agriculture Educator, CCE Erie County

Public interest in sustainability and local agriculture continues to grow, providing an opportunity and incentive for farms to add agritourism to their marketing mix. Is agritourism something you are considering for your farm? Are you looking to expand or refine what you are already doing in the agritourism arena?

In 2022, Cornell Cooperative Extension established a Program Work Team (PWT) under the leadership of Lindsey Pashow, a statewide agribusiness development and marketing specialist with the CCE-Harvest New York team. Lindsey also owns and operates Adirondack View Vineyard located in Keeseville, New York. The Agritourism PWT has been offering a monthly virtual workshop series. To date, these one-hour sessions have included:



Lindsey Pashow

- January 17: What is Agritourism? Starting an Agritourism Business
- February 20: Where is Agritourism Allowed?

- March 20: Protecting Your Agritourism Operation: Liability and Insurance
- April 17: Customer Service for Agritourism
- May 15: Tax Considerations for Agritourism
- June 19: Agritourism Pricing Workshop: How to figure out what your customers will bear
- July 17: Marketing Your Agritourism Operation
- August 21: Working with Tour Companies

Additional sessions are scheduled for September 18th, October 16th, November 20th, and December 18th. [Pre-registration](#) for these free sessions is required. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting and adding the sessions to your calendar.

All workshops are recorded and are available on the Cornell Cooperative Extension Agritourism PWT's YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/@cceagritourism>



View Agritourism Videos

Agritourism revenues more than tripled between 2002 and 2017 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS).¹ While still a relatively small proportion of total farm income at 5.6 percent ², agritourism is continuing to grow both as a revenue source and as another way to help revitalize economies, educate the public about agriculture, and preserve agricultural heritage.

Agritourism has benefits for farmers, communities, tourism businesses, and particularly people not directly connected with farms by providing opportunities to experience nature and agriculture in all its diversity and to interact with the land and the people who manage it. Agritourism can operate at various price points from minimal cost or cost-subsidized offerings for school groups and families, to high-end, "boutique" experiences.

Examples include u-pick operations, corn mazes, farm-to-table and on-farm dining, open houses, school tours, open houses, product tastings, farm stays, weddings & other events, and getaways for families and friends. The possibilities are endless. A great starting reference is "[Getting Started in AGRITOURISM](#)" by Monika Roth and Jim Ochterski, first published by Cornell Cooperative Extension in 2007 with revisions in 2017.

Discussions are underway locally with Cornell Cooperative Extension-Erie, the [Erie County Department of Environment and Planning](#), [Visit Buffalo Niagara](#), [Erie County Farm Bureau](#), and others to explore agritourism development and promotional opportunities. ■

References & Resources

1 & 2 USDA Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/november/agritourism-allows-farms-to-diversify-and-has-potential-benefits-for-rural-communities/>

3 Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County. <https://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/resources/getting-started-in-agritourism>

Bridging to Your Way to Social Security

Kathleen McCormick, Agriculture Educator, CCE Erie County

Planning for the future of your farm means making some high-stakes decisions about how to generate income when you retire. One of these decisions is when to claim your Social Security benefits. Most people can't wait to start getting those checks. A 2020 report from the Bipartisan Policy Center found that more than 70% of recipients claim their benefits before they are eligible for their maximum benefit. No surprise - Social Security is a nearly perfect source of retirement income. Your benefit increases with inflation, doesn't go down if the stock market crashes, is paid for the rest of your life and then is paid to your spouse when you're gone. And a portion of it is income tax free.

It Pays to Wait

You can claim your Social Security benefit beginning at age 62, but waiting until age 70 increases your monthly benefit by 8% each year until age 70 when it maxes out. The table to the right shows an example of how the benefit grows for someone with a monthly benefit of \$1,000 at a full retirement age of 67.

Social Security Bridge Strategy

The bridge strategy is a straightforward way to capitalize on the 8% annual increase in benefit value and lock-in a 76% higher lifetime Social Security income according to researchers at the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. For example, suppose your Social Security benefit is \$1,176 per month at age 65. If you delay taking the benefit until age 70, your benefit would be at

Claim at age:	Monthly Benefit:
62	\$700
63	\$750
64	\$800
65	\$867
66	\$933
67	\$1,000
68	\$1,080
69	\$1,160
70	\$1,240

From: How to Help Americans Claim Social Security at the Right Age, Bipartisan Policy Center, August 2020 (<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/report/how-to-help-americans-claim-social-security-at-the-right-age/>)

Claiming Social Security early comes at a cost. A study by economists from the Federal Reserve and Boston University estimated that people typically lose more than \$182,000 of lifetime income when they claim early. Why leave any money on the table if you can help it? You need a strategy to make sure you don't.

least \$1,667 per month and likely a little bit more due to cost of living adjustments. In effect, the Social Security bridge would buy you an additional \$491 per month (\$5,892 per year) in lifetime retirement income.

To create this larger stream of predictable income, you build the bridge by withdrawing the amount you would receive from Social Security from other



Photo Brent Moore- flickr

savings. Continuing with the example above, you would build your bridge with \$100,020 from other retirement savings to provide income from age 65 to 70 (\$1,667 per month x 60 months = \$100,020). Financial planners recommend establishing a Social Security bridge fund as a separate account in an existing IRA or 401(k) plan or in a new investment account. Because the investment horizon is short, the money should be in stable, liquid investments such as such as a short-term bond fund, a money market fund or short-term CDs.

Delaying Social Security benefits is not a good choice for everyone. Not everyone can afford to delay. It may not make sense to delay if you have health problems that will likely you shorten your life expectancy. Setting up a bridge fund will put a big dent in your savings. That could mean not

having cash for unexpected expenses like medical bills or emergency home repairs. It will also reduce your nest egg earlier in retirement which can diminish or deplete the inheritance you'd like to leave for loved ones.

Bottom Line

The Social Security bridge is a way to delay Social Security payments to obtain a larger lifetime benefit. Those who wait until age 70 will increase their lifetime benefit by approximately 76% compared to those who claim at age 62, the earliest possible age. A social security bridge is not for everyone, but it can't be beat for maximizing a source of income that is adjusted annually for inflation and can't be depleted by bad markets, bad investing decisions or bad luck. ■

State Agriculture Commissioner Announces USDA Disaster Designation for NY to Assist Farms Impacted by May Freeze Event

NYS Agriculture and Markets

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball today announced that 31 counties across New York State have been designated as a primary natural disaster area by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) following the late May frost/freeze event. These designations mean that impacted farmers in those areas may be eligible for assistance, including emergency loans, from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). The Department requested the Disaster Designation from the USDA through a joint letter with other states that are a part of the Northeastern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NEASDA).

Commissioner Ball said, “In the days following the unseasonable frost, we visited and spoke with a number of our growers across the State to understand the extent of the damage facing the industry. Many of them hadn’t seen frost conditions that late in the season in decades. We have been working with many partners since May to put together our request for a disaster designation and to secure the assistance needed to help our growers overcome this challenging time. We encourage our farms to take advantage of the emergency loans and to continue to report losses to lessen the impacts of this damaging severe weather event.”

A disaster declaration is based on reporting of crop loss to the federal Farm Service Agency. The USDA declared 31 counties in New York as

primary natural disaster areas and an additional 24 counties as contiguous disaster counties. Farmers in the following counties who were impacted by the severe weather event may be considered for FSA emergency loans, provided eligibility requirements are met.

Primary Counties

Albany	Onondaga	Schuyler
Broome	Ontario	Seneca
Cattaraugus	Orleans	Steuben
Cayuga	Oswego	Tioga
Chautauqua	Otsego	Tompkins
Chemung	Putnam	Ulster
Columbia	Rensselaer	Washington
Cortland	Saratoga	Wayne
Dutchess	Schenectady	Westchester
Greene	Schoharie	Yates
Jefferson		

Contiguous Counties

Allegany	Fulton	Madison
Orange	Bronx	Genesee
Monroe	Rockland	Chenango
Hamilton	Montgomery	Delaware
St. Lawrence	Herkimer	Nassau
Sullivan	Erie	Lewis
Niagara	Warren	Essex
Livingston	Oneida	Wyoming

Farmers will have eight months to apply for emergency loans and can do so with their local FSA office.

Crop Loss Declaration for Farm Wineries

In addition to the USDA Disaster Designation, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has also issued a Crop Loss Declaration to help farm wineries impacted by the May freeze event sustain their business operations. The emergency declaration allows farm winery owners, licensed by the New York State Liquor Authority, to temporarily source grapes or juice from outside of New York through December 31, 2023, while still maintaining their New York farm winery status and enabling them to continue to manufacture or sell wine produced from out-of-state grapes or juice for the impacted varieties.

Farm wineries can apply for the exemption here, and instructions for the application, including the mailing address, can be found here. The deadline to apply for the exemption is October 31, 2023, and the deadline to purchase out-of-state grapes or juice is December 31, 2023.

The Department joined representatives from the New York Wine & Grape Foundation, New York Farm Bureau, the USDA FSA, Empire State Development, and Cornell Cooperative Extension to tour several vineyards in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions impacted by the freeze event in May. The group visited with grape growers in Steuben, Schuyler, and Seneca Counties to assess the damage in the region and better understand the outlook and plan for recovery.

According to the Department's Division of Emergency Management and Cornell Cooperative Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN),



Photo Pixabay

during the reporting period of May 15 to 25, 2023, New York State experienced extremely low temperatures, which resulted in frost damage to a number of crops throughout many regions of New York State. Reports of damage included vineyards in the Southern Tier, Finger Lakes and Hudson Valley, and other commodities, such as apples, peaches, and other stone fruit, and berries in several other regions, including the North Country, Central New York, Capital Region, and Hudson Valley areas. The Department is also assessing the impact of crop loss for farm cideries.

The USDA FSA recommends that farmers affected by the freeze should document their conditions (pictures and video) and any losses. Farmers can file a CCC- 576 (Notice of Loss) with their local USDA FSA. Contact information for the offices can be found here.

New York is the third largest grape producer and the third largest wine producer in the country. According to the New York Wine & Grape Foundation, these growers generate a \$6.65 billion economic impact for New York State. There are 471 wineries in New York, growing a variety of grapes on 35,000 acres. ■

RMA Announces Changes to Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm Policies

United States Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that it is improving crop insurance options for small and diversified farmers through improvements to the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) and Micro Farm insurance plans. These updates are part of USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) efforts to increase participation and access to crop insurance.

“The improvements to Whole Farm Revenue Protection and Micro Farm policies are a direct response from feedback we’ve received from producers” said RMA Administrator Marcia Bunger. “These are two of the most comprehensive risk management plans available, and they are especially important to specialty crop, organic, urban, and direct-market producers.”

Improvements to WFRP for the 2024 policy year include:

- Allowing all eligible producers to qualify for 80% and 85% coverage levels.
- Allowing producers to purchase catastrophic coverage level policies for individual crops with WFRP.
- Expanding yield history to a 10-year maximum (from 4 years) for all crops not covered by another federal crop insurance policy.



Photo Canva

- Making the policy more affordable for single commodity producers.
- Allowing producers to customize their coverage by choosing whether WFRP will consider other federal crop insurance policies as primary insurance when calculating premium and revenue to count during claim time.

Improvements to Micro Farm for the 2024 policy year include:

- Moving the sales closing date to a less busy time of year to help agents dedicate time

to marketing the program. This is important specifically for producers that are purchasing Micro Farm for the first time as it provides additional time for agents to assist growers with important risk management decisions.

- Allowing producers to purchase other Federal crop insurance with Micro Farm.
- Allowing vertically integrated entities to be eligible for Micro Farm.
- Making the Expanding Operations feature available with Micro Farm.

About WFRP and Micro Farm:

WFRP and Micro Farm policies provide a risk management safety net for all commodities grown on a farm under one policy. Both policy options were designed to meet the needs of specialty, organic (both crops and livestock), or those marketing to local, regional, farm-identity preserved, specialty, or direct markets. The Micro Farm insurance plan is tailored for any farm with up to \$350,000 in approved revenue, and WFRP covers any farm with up to \$17 million in insured revenue. RMA introduced Micro Farm in 2021.

Currently, producers hold 1,784 WFRP policies covering \$2.17 billion in liabilities, and they hold 93 Micro Farm policies covering \$6.15 million in liabilities.

More Information

Crop insurance is sold and delivered solely through private crop insurance agents. A list of crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers and online at the RMA Agent Locator. Learn more about crop insurance and the modern farm safety net at rma.usda.gov or by contacting your RMA Regional Office. ■



Congratulations to Katelyn Walley-Stoll, Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Business Management Specialist and Team Leader on receiving an “Achievement Award” for her work with CCE.

The Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crop Team also received an award for their newsletter, “Crops, Cows, and Critters”.



EPA Issues Updated Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) Rules

John Whitney, Agriculture Educator, CCE Erie County

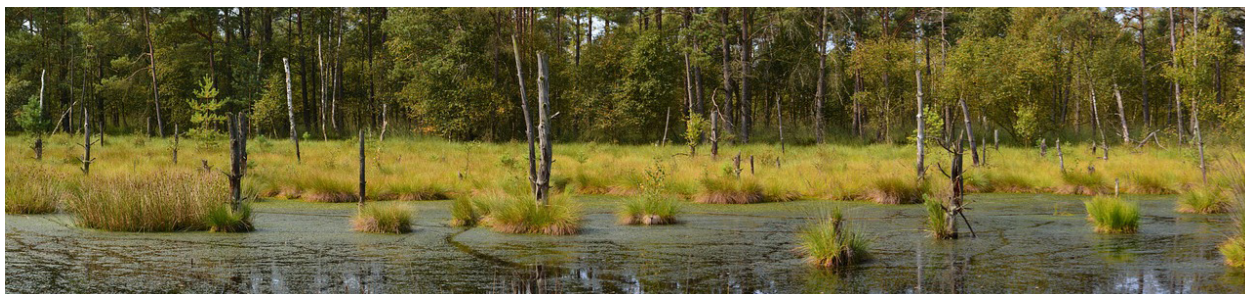


Photo bernswaelzt - Pixabay

On August 29, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a final rule that updates and amends the “Revised Definition of ‘Waters of the United States’” (WOTUS) to conform with U.S. Supreme Court’s May 25, 2023 decision in the case of Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency¹. Background on the revised rule is viewable at: <https://www.epa.gov/wotus/amendments-2023-rule>.

The updated rules become final when published in the Federal Register. The pre-publication text is viewable by scanning this QR Code or by visiting the EPA’s WOTUS website.



The WOTUS regulatory rules and interpretations have long been a source of confusion and controversy since the term and regulatory concept was introduced in the Clean Water Act of 1972². The amendments add clarity for landowners, managers, and advisors as well as for federal and state regulators, other federal agencies, and state, local and Tribal partners while continuing to provide protection for the environment and aquatic and riparian ecosystems.

These updates are expected to have far-reaching implications for streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands² and ³. A public webinar is scheduled for September 12, 2023, to be followed by a series of listening sessions to help identify areas of concern that may be outside the scope of the conforming amendments⁴. A recording of the public webinar will be available.

The revised definition of “waters of the United States” requires that protected wetlands have a clearer linkage to navigable waterbodies and waterways like oceans and rivers⁵ and ⁶. The final rule is expected to provide regulatory clarity for farmers,



Photo Alain Audet - Pixabay

landowners, and businesses while protecting the nation’s navigable waters and ensuring that they remain clean and healthy 4 and 5.

EPA has prepared a detailed fact sheet on the amendments made to the revised definition of “waters of the United States” and their implications. It can be found at:

https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-08/FINAL_WOTUSPublicFactSheet08292023.pdf.

While the updated definition restores some protections that were removed by the prior administration, it also clarifies WOTUS exclusions including wetlands that were converted to cropland before 1985, waste treatment centers, ditches, areas with human-made irrigation, artificial lakes and ponds, and artificial pools 5. Some outlets are describing the changes as “weakening” WOTUS

rules. Others say “strengthening.” Does that mean the EPA has it about right, at least in the current judicial and political environment? ■

REFERENCES & LINKS

- 1: <https://www.epa.gov/wotus>
- 2: <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act>
- 3: <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/waters-of-the-united-states-protection-epa-rcna62989>
- 4: <https://www.morningagclips.com/epa-and-army-amend-waters-of-the-united-states-rule/>
- 5: <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/4176945-epa-announces-new-waters-rule-after-supreme-court-decision-weakening-protections/>
- 6: https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-08/FINAL_WOTUSPublicFactSheet08292023.pdf

CCE Erie Intern Spotlight: John Pirrung

Maddie Webb, Erie County 4-H Educator
Sharon Bachman , CCE Erie Ag Educator

John Pirrung is an Erie County 4-H Alumni who has been busy this summer working with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County. During his time as a 4-Her, John was a member of the Marilla Lads and Lassies, where he created many impressive projects to display in the Youth Development Building. John has stayed involved with Erie County 4-H by attending an Alumni meeting, as well as serving as an assistant instructor to multiple Monthly Workshops this year.

John is currently a student at Cornell University where he is studying Environment and Sustainability through CALS (College of Agriculture and Life Sciences). This summer, John found an internship through his university with Cornell Cooperative Extension that took him back to his roots in Erie County. Instead of being involved with the 4-H side of Cooperative Extension, this time John worked with the Agriculture department within CCE of Erie County. The purpose of this internship was to “work with Cornell’s Weeds and Climate Change project team members to develop science-based outreach tools for agricultural producers to help adapt weed management strategies with climate change.” John’s internship provided him with a mix of office and field experience. Please enjoy the excerpt below from one of John’s blog posts, which describes a day of field work during his internship:

“Hello Readers,

...last week I went on a tour around some of Buffalo’s urban agriculture initiatives. The first stop of the tour was inside a Freight Farm, which is a vertical farm operated entirely within a shipping container. It was absolutely amazing to see agriculture and technology blended this way, and I’m very hopeful to see Freight Farms become more popular and more affordable. If this farm stays in Buffalo for another year, I may have an internship goal for next summer. The next stop gave us a quick look at the site where some suburban greenhouses are going to be built, hopefully by November we’ll see them all up and running. The last stop was a great raised bed garden which also had a shed set up to experiment with hydroponics, and it was at this site that we had a conversation about new compost and fertilizer technology that may be coming to Buffalo soon. The tour was amazing and it was honestly so cool to see how much new agricultural tech is out there, everything from AI-powered watering systems to chemical reactors that turn compost into liquid fertilizer. I can definitely see myself in a career using this tech, so I’ll be keeping a close eye on all of this over the next few years.”

As part of his internship with CCE Erie, John worked on translating information from a comprehensive research review into grower factsheets that will in the near future be shared on Cornell Weed Ecology Lab web pages.



John Pirrung and Sharon Bachman speaking at the Weed Management Workshop on Aug 15, 2023. Photo by Maggie Mecca

One of the main efforts of the internships was to organize a field session where agronomic weed research information could be presented and draft materials such as the factsheets could be shared with growers for their input before final production.

On August 15th about 17 growers plus Cornell researchers, Extension educators and partners participated in the workshop. The weather was wet, but we were able to cover the materials thanks to our partnership with Providence Farm Collective (and their tent). Ten workshop participants received copies of the recently updated Weeds of the Northeast (<https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9781501755729/weeds-of-the-northeast/#bookTabs=1>) thanks to funding from the Weed Ecology Lab. Dr. Antonio DiTommaso, the faculty sponsor for our internship, oversaw the update to this most recent edition.

Want to learn more about weed ecology and the updates to the book? Late this month,

Northeast IPM is sponsoring a webinar:

[IPM Toolbox webinar: Weeds of the Northeast](#)

September 21, 2023, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. EDT | Zoom | Free, registration required

Antonio DiTommaso—professor of weed science and chair of the soil and crop sciences section in the School of Integrative Plant Science at Cornell University—will introduce the new edition of the comprehensive reference book, *Weeds of the Northeast*, which he co-authored, and answer your weed-related questions. The book includes descriptions and photos of floral and vegetative characteristics, giving home gardeners, landscape managers, pest management specialists, and allergists the ability to identify weeds before they flower.

- For more information: <https://www.northeastipm.org/ipm-in-action/the-ipm-toolbox/weeds-of-the-northeast/>
- To register: https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xoZq9txQTIK3EE78TyBDeQ ■

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