



## **Learning a New Job Can be Tough Enough - Imagine Trying to Learn it in a Foreign Language...**

Western New York dairy farms with Spanish-speaking employees can now benefit from an independent spinoff program recently announced by the New York Farm Viability Institute’s bilingual dairy training project.

According to Cornell University and NYFVI, Hispanic dairy farm labor issues in the Northeast were first reported in 2005. Language and communication problems were cited as the two top challenges faced on dairy farms. In response, NYFVI developed a pilot project in 2007 to provide dairy owners with access to an English/Spanish speaking trainer who was well educated in both the dairy industry and Spanish-speaking cultures, customs, dialects and concerns.

To facilitate the training of Spanish-speaking employees on New York’s dairy farms, this new project will provide dairies access to a dairy-knowledgeable, culturally-sensitive bilingual trainer. NYFVI reports that worker retention is a key concern for any employer, in that most Spanish-speaking employees on dairy farms are interested in improving existing skills, while simultaneously learning new skills. As Spanish language training resources on milking parlor protocols, bovine reproduction, herd health, calving and calf care and other topics were developed, individual training sessions were customized to fit each farm’s specific needs. Bilingual trainers with technical knowledge about the dairy industry can help minimize language and cultural barriers so willing workers can learn to handle more responsibility, making New York’s farms stronger.

Expanding on the cooperative effort between Cornell Cooperative Extension, PRO-DAIRY and North West New York Dairy since 2007, the bilingual project has met with great success on farms in more than two dozen counties across New York State, resulting in the hiring of a Hispanic dairy training associate to work with farms in the 10-county region.

More information on the North West New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team’s new Dairy Hispanic Training Program is available at the Cornell Cooperative Extension office at 420 E. Main Street, Batavia, NY or at 585-343-3040, x133.

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## SUMMER 2012

## Rural Futures

News of Interest About Rural  
New York State

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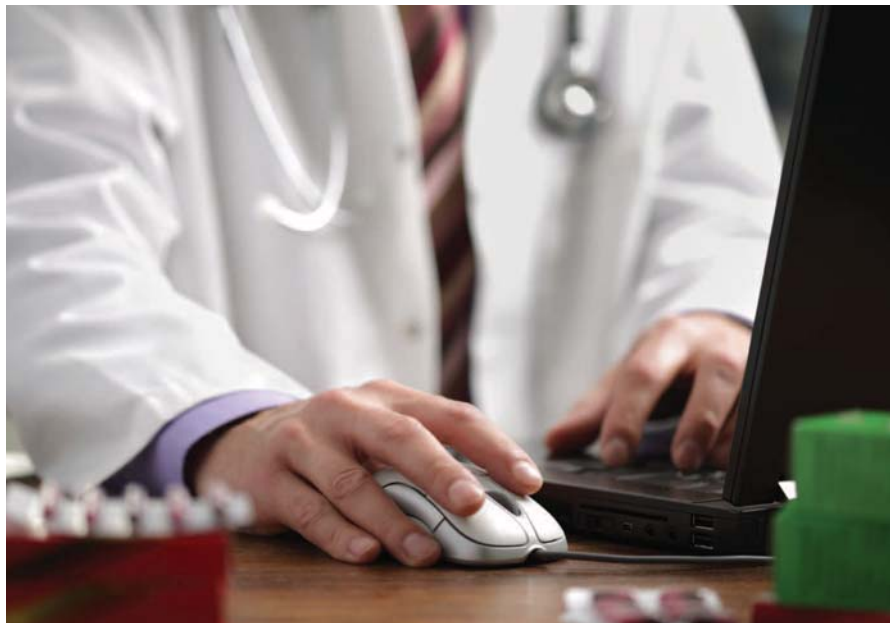
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## Commission Makes Strides in Telemedicine Credentialing



To address administrative barriers which may slow the implementation of telemedicine services statewide, the Commission on Rural Resources drafted and successfully passed a bill in May 2012 – S.6970/A.9834 – which will go a long way toward increasing access to quality healthcare for rural patients across New York State. The bill amends the public health law, and grants hospital privileges to providers of telemedicine services by allowing for the credentialing of health care professionals offering their services.

The Commission's telehealth/telemedicine roundtable, held in January, focused on many ideas and issues related to the utilization of telemedicine and the barriers currently faced by providers in doing so. One of the issues that arose continuously during the roundtable was the possibility of utilizing telemedicine services to provide care for potentially large numbers of rural patients. Many rural areas do not have specialists available, even in hospitals, for the diagnosis and treatment of many different kinds of diseases.

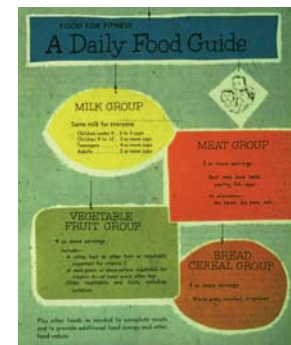
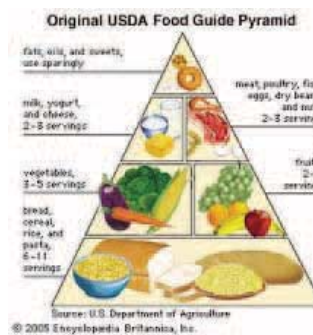
Often, telehealth is used when the patient's hospital does not have a local physician in the specialty area the patient needs. Currently, the patient's hospital is required to have a healthcare provider in the same specialty conduct a peer review of the consulting physician's treatment of patients at the patient's hospital. Because the patient's hospital does not have a physician in the same specialty, this can be very difficult and may add an additional cost for the patient's hospital to comply with this requirement. This bill will permit the patient site hospital to rely on both credentialing and quality assurance program peer review information that has been performed at the distant hospital site where the consulting physician is located.

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This bill will improve cost-effective access to patient care by removing an impediment for rural hospitals that do not have the access to specialists because of their remote location or lack of resources. Patients will have access to the most skilled physicians, and hospitals will be able to combine innovative technology with high quality care. These changes will make New York State law more consistent with federal rules and will allow people across the state to receive the care they need, regardless of where they live.

The Commission looks forward to the Governor signing the bill...and to implementation of the new law this year.

## Is this Your Plate?



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released its 'MyPlate' diagram – A new take on an “old” concept.

The USDA's new 'MyPlate' is the Department's latest revamping of the old Food Guide Pyramid. In an attempt to educate the general public not only on the staples of a healthy diet, but also the correct portion size for each of its components, the diagram features a labeled, color-coded and portion-sized plate.

The old “Food Pyramid” is a recognizable symbol in American culture. While people of all ages easily identify the graphic, research shows that many did not know how to “use” it correctly. Most of the confusion was due to the proportions the diagram seemed to represent.

While the Pyramid's intent was to demonstrate what food groups would provide the majority of calories in one's diet, many people viewed it as a representation of the portions of food groups that they should consume in comparison with other food groups. Thus, according to the Pyramid, carbohydrates seemed to be considerably over-represented relative to fruits, vegetables and proteins, and attempts to “remodel” the Pyramid proved unsuccessful in clearly communicating its message. Given that the public was looking to the Pyramid for a pictorial representation of portions of food relative to one another, and not for the source calories for energy expenditure, the new 'MyPlate' was designed.

The 'MyPlate' graphic is a simple, clutter-free pie-chart, with each food group represented by a proportional size and a distinct color. (It is no accident that green was designated for vegetables since it is recommended that leafy greens be represented well in one's diet.) One of the most innovative additions to the new diagram, though, is the dairy portion that accompanies the plate and fork, featured as a stand-alone item in the graphic. Altogether, the visual represents a place setting that should be present on any American dinner table.

Although the fundamental concepts of a healthy diet have not changed since the “Basic Four” campaign, ongoing research continues to provide more details regarding best practices for healthy eating models. The new 'MyPlate' is a great tool for health care providers, teachers and farmers to advertise the ever-essential presence and ballpark portions of fresh produce, lean meats, whole grains and dairy.

## County Health Rankings & Roadmaps: A Healthier Nation, County by County

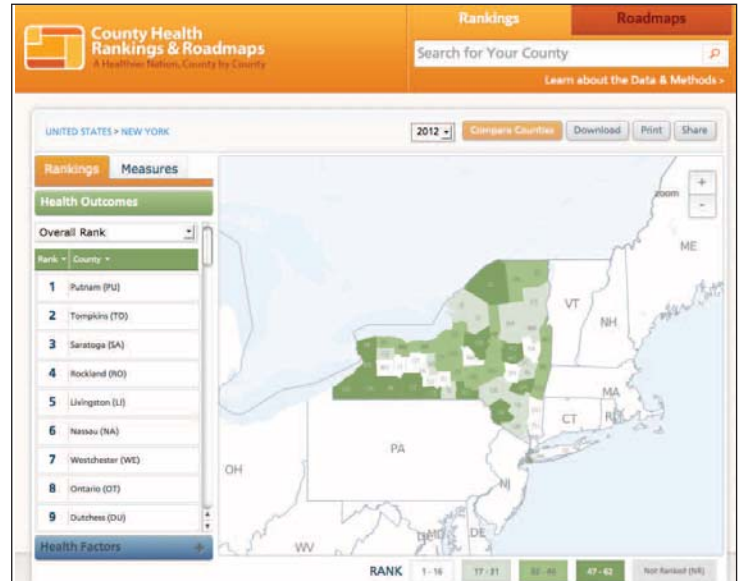
Much of what influences our health happens outside of the doctor's office – in our neighborhoods, schools and places of work. Having health insurance and quality health care are important to general health, but leadership and action beyond health care is needed. To help counties understand what influences the health of their residents and their life expectancies, the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation assembled and created the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program.

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program helps regions create solutions that make it easier for people to be healthy in their own communities, and focuses on specific factors, such as environment, income and education, that are known to affect health. Ranking the health of nearly every county in the nation, the County Health Rankings illustrate what is known when it comes to sickness or health, while the County Health Roadmaps show what can be done to create healthier environments.

The Rankings look at a variety of measures that affect health, such as access to healthy foods, income, smoking rates, obesity, teen births, high school graduation rates and death rates before age 75. Based on the latest publicly available data for each county, the Rankings are unique in their ability to measure the overall health of each county in all 50 states on the multiple factors influencing health.

In addition to the County Health Roadmaps' goal of improving health through efforts to build connections with local communities, national partners and leaders across all sectors, the project includes grants to local coalitions across the country that are working on this mission within their own communities. Partnerships are also underway with policymakers, business, education, public health, health care and community organizations with the goal of improved health outcomes.

**To access your county information, log on to:  
[www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-york/2012/rankings/outcomes/overall](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-york/2012/rankings/outcomes/overall)**



## NYS Agricultural Mediation Program

Many business and personal lives can be profoundly impacted by unresolved conflicts which waste time and energy, sabotage business and personal relationships and diminish the quality of life in our communities. A simple disagreement between neighbors can escalate and create divisions in a neighborhood, and divert the scarce resources of local law enforcement and other agencies. All too often, problems remain unresolved or poorly managed – partly because the underlying differences and interests are not effectively addressed.

To address many of these issues, New Yorkers have the opportunity to access local low cost or free mediation services as well as a statewide program – the NYS Agricultural Mediation Program (NYSAMP).

NYSAMP's network of community mediation centers report that mediation is used to resolve neighbor or Right to Farm complaints, disputes over unpaid bills or loans, family conflicts, small claims, landlord and tenants, special education, workplace problems, child support and visitation, custody and divorce – and many cases are referred to mediation by

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judges. In addition, mediation is also useful to farm families and their businesses in planning for finance and business, succession and family farm transfers. Some mediators have also been trained to facilitate community discussions or controversies involving multiple groups or stakeholders.

Mediation is quick and efficient, especially compared to litigation, because it is voluntary and collaborative. According to 2010 statistics from the Unified Court System, more than 84% of NYSAMP mediations resulted in agreements in just over 16 days.

NYSAMP is jointly funded by the USDA and the NYS Unified Court System, and is administered by the New York State Dispute Resolution Center, an independent non-profit membership association.

Most community mediation centers are listed in local directories and maintain websites.

**A complete listing of local mediation center affiliates organized by county is listed in the NYSAMP website at [www.nysamp.com](http://www.nysamp.com). NYSAMP's toll free number is 866-669-2246.**

## E-NET: Engage Now – Network for the Future Chautauqua Works to Attract, Develop and Retain Talent

ChautauquaWorks of Chautauqua County is an organization committed to building its county workforce with and for local residents. One initiative to develop a strong local workforce is its One-Stop centers - located in Dunkirk and Jamestown – which are dedicated to providing a variety of job skill services and assistance to local residents. Opportunities and services from current job postings, resume writing seminars, mock interviews and financial aid for job training are made available to patrons of the One-Stop centers.

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Understanding the necessity to retain, train and sustain a strong local workforce, *ChautauquaWorks* continues to expand their services to young people. The Engage Now – Network for the Future (E-NET) program promotes and helps build relationships between young people in Chautauqua County and the local businesses serving their towns, in an effort to retain new and young local talent for the local workforce.

E-NET staff coordinate and plan job shadowing and workplace fieldtrips for students, host career fairs and provide general assistance to young people looking for internships and future career opportunities. Most recently, a Community Service Experience program was developed to connect young people with local non-profit organizations for volunteer opportunities. Not only do the non-profit organizations benefit from the extra help, but young people are able to get first-hand experience directly working with and serving a local community organization.

In coordination with the *ChautauquaWorks* program, One-Stop Young Services centers are also available. Any interested young people, ages 16-21, can utilize the services provided by the centers. Assistance is available to help navigate and overcome barriers that youth may face when initially entering the workforce. The comprehensive youth service programs are intended for all local young people, although some services may require eligibility. E-NET staff is equipped to work with school district staffs, local organizations or individual youth to provide these great opportunities.

**Individuals can contact Kerri Brown at [kbrown@chautauquaworks.com](mailto:kbrown@chautauquaworks.com) or 716-487-5175 to learn more about summer internships, summer jobs or planning class fieldtrips.**

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### ***Partnering to Build a New Future: SCORE, Schoharie County Chamber of Commerce, Cobleskill Partnership and SUNY Cobleskill***

Schoharie County – while still suffering many of the after-effects of the 2011 flooding - has made measureable progress in renewing and rebuilding. Clean-up efforts have been led by residents who remain committed to the area and to many volunteers who donated money and tireless hours to the affected communities.

In spite of the destruction, and in order to help improve the economic outlook of the area while ensuring that agriculture remains a viable way of life, two major projects are currently underway in Schoharie County, thanks to the partnership efforts of SCORE, the Schoharie County Chamber of Commerce, Cobleskill Partnership and SUNY Cobleskill.

The Albany Chapter of SCORE is working with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Cobleskill Partnership, Inc. – both volunteer groups – to open a local chapter to advise businesses and potential businesses. Currently, five individuals have received training and are beginning their “apprenticeship” training:

- Eric Stein, CEO of the local hospital
- Chuck Finin, an energy entrepreneur on his second major business
- Chester Burton, professor from SUNY Cobleskill
- Gail Breen, head of the Fulton-Montgomery-Schoharie County Workforce Development
- Sarah Blood, member of the County’s Economic Development Office

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Along with Brian Kaiser, a co-founder of Cobleskill Partnership and community coordinator for SUNY Cobleskill, each has agreed to give their time and expertise to the cause. The Chamber of Commerce is helping by fielding the phone calls and advertising on their web page, and plans are being made to conduct seminars to help businesses harmed by the flood and other groups, such as local non-profits, which are struggling because of cutbacks in funding.

Another major effort is SUNY Cobleskill's work on setting up an agricultural business center within their Agricultural Business degree program. The goal is to help farmers learn direct marketing, to help them get their products to large

centers of population, to create a Schoharie County brand, to provide expert help in marketing, web pages, transportation and anything else that will help local farmers and related agricultural businesses succeed. While still in its planning stages, the goal is for the project to be fully underway when the College's new Agricultural Center is completed in 2014.

And just to make the point about the spirit of Schoharie County, all those involved are giving of their time on top of their full time occupations. This is a labor of commitment to the future by volunteers who believe in community and in giving back.

## Disaster Declarations and Federal/State Partnerships

### *Multiple natural disasters turned agriculture upside down this spring*

As the 2012 growing season got underway, farmers across New York State – particularly in Western and Northern New York – suffered widespread damage and loss to their crops as the result of an extremely rare frost event, designated as one of the worst statewide, multi-crop losses in New York State history. In addition to this disaster, New York farmers were also left reeling from damage caused by a combination of warmer-than-usual late winter and early spring temperatures, hail storms and violent tornados.

Assistance from the US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency is available to farmers to help them recover from these devastating production and physical losses and remain viable this season. Since March, multiple federal agriculture disaster declarations have been announced by the USDA. Specific to New York counties that experienced crop damage this spring, funding assistance, in the form of compensation for farm losses, low interest emergency loans and funds for rehabilitation of farmland is also available as farmers begin to rebuild their businesses. Information on these programs is available at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

USDA officials urge that reports from ag producers are vital in providing an accurate picture of storm damage to crops, buildings and equipment. These reports are also vital for farmers in assessing whether they qualify for federal disaster declaration assistance. Where tornadoes touched down, crops are gone. In addition to corn and soybeans, other hail-damaged crops that were not "green snapped" may rebound, but damage should still be reported, according

The screenshot shows the USDA Farm Service Agency website. The header includes the USDA and FSA logos, the text "United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency", and a navigation menu with links for Home, About FSA, State Offices, Newsroom, Online Services, Forms, Help, Contact Us, and En Español. The main content area is titled "Disaster Assistance Programs" and features a search bar, a "Browse by Audience" dropdown, and a "Browse by Subject" list. A prominent banner for the "Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish" (ELAP) program is displayed, along with a "Related Topics" sidebar listing various assistance programs like "Disaster Assistance Eligibility Tool" and "Disaster Payment Maps".

to the FSA. To illustrate the devastation, Cornell's Erie Lake Regional Research Laboratory has estimated New York State crop losses as the result of frost damage for grapes at 40-50%, cherries at 100%, apples at 50% and peaches at 90%.

On the State level, a bill with bipartisan support was introduced in June to provide farmers with a personal income tax credit of 35 percent of the value of crops damaged due to frost. Eligible crops are fruits including grapes, apples, peaches, cherries and berries; vegetables including tomatoes, snap beans, cabbage, beets and onions; and potatoes and dry beans. As the mainstay of our upstate economy, state and federal governments are working together to help mitigate farming losses and keep these farms operating and producing to meet demand for our products around the world.

## Armyworms Invade NYS

Armyworm larvae have invaded New York State. As they do not winter in New York, armyworm moth migrations are sporadic, cyclic and hard to predict, with the last notable infestations in New York occurring in 2001 and 2008. This year, adult moths entered western New York in late May, moving shortly thereafter into the North Country and Hudson Valley. Moths appear to have laid their eggs preferentially in wheat and pasture, and are now moving forward in large numbers (hence the “army” name) to mow down other fields of corn, pasture and lawns. While caterpillars have been noticed most in field crops, they may have originally taken hold in turfgrass. For homeowners, soap flushes (1-2 tablespoons of liquid dish soap/1 gal. of water) are effective in controlling populations if they are caught early, but insecticide use is likely to protect grasses. For farmers who experience crop damage, crop insurance will likely be available, depending upon the policy, and farmers with crops covered by the Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP) should contact their local Farm Services Agency representative if a loss has been experienced. For additional assistance on armyworm management, contact your local County Cornell Cooperative Extension Office at: [http://cce.cornell.edu/learnabout/pages/local\\_offices.aspx](http://cce.cornell.edu/learnabout/pages/local_offices.aspx)



## Commission Secures Funding for Home Telehealth Demonstration Program

### January Roundtable Highlights Needs for Electronic Healthcare Options

As part of the 2012 Enacted State Budget, the Commission on Rural Resources was successful in advocating, promoting and ultimately securing \$50,000 for services and expenses to conduct a telehealth demonstration program study.

The need and demand for telehealth and telemedicine services, particularly in rural areas across New York State, was highlighted in the Commission’s January 2012 roundtable, “Telehealth/Telemedicine: Putting the Pieces Together.” Participants made it clear that many such areas are faced with overall physician shortages and/or lack of specialists in fields such as psychiatry, obstetrics and dentistry.



To identify and promote the many successes that telehealth services can provide in the treatment of congestive heart failure, diabetes and/or chronic pulmonary obstructive disease in these rural areas, the budgeted funding will establish a rural home telehealth delivery demonstration study program. The Commissioner of Health will direct a local home health organization to study patients with these diseases who are currently utilizing telehealth services.

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The goal of the study is to identify and determine the cost of providing telehealth services to these populations, while simultaneously ascertaining the quality of care provided and the outcomes of patients receiving telehealth. The home health organization selected to conduct the study will evaluate its findings and provide cost benchmarks – with and without the use of telehealth – to the Legislature and the Department of Health. Cost benefit measurements in terms of the quality benefits outcomes for each condition addressed via telehealth will also be required and reported, with the goal of bringing telehealth services statewide.

**The Commission on Rural Resources has recently issued a number of updated publications, including the following:**



- *Local Roads Research and Coordination Council Manual: Guidelines for Rural Town and County Roads, 2012*
- *Telemedicine and Telehealth: Putting the Pieces Together (Executive Summary and Recommendations Based on January 9, 2012 Roundtable Discussion)*
- *Cattaraugus County, 2012 Guide to Technical and Financial Assistance for Economic and Business Development Leaders*

**COMING SOON:**

- *Keeping New York's Waters Pure 2012: A Financial and Technical Assistance Guide to Programs for Rural Community Water & Sewer Infrastructure Development & Water Quality Management*

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OR [RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV](mailto:RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV).**

## Precision Feeding of Dairy Cows

The New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Central New York Dairy and Field Crops Team have been educating farmers about feed and pasture sampling, as well as the use of computer-based analysis resources to efficiently utilize their pasture and crop resources. Feed should be evaluated by its quantity, quality, cost and the amount of nutrients in the cow manure, and feeding cows with precision leads to a reduction in costs without decreasing milk production. One Newport, NY dairy farmer believes the program saves him \$20,000 a year, mostly due to the fact that with precision feeding, the amount of the expensive protein ration given to dairy cows is often decreased. With precision feeding, as the amount of nutrients in cow manure decreases, so lessens a farm's potential environmental impact.



## USDA Seeks Applications to Create Jobs in Rural Areas

The USDA is accepting applications for loans and grants to promote economic development and businesses in rural areas. Funding for the grants will come from the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program (REDLG), with \$79 million in loans and \$10 million in grants dispersed through the program. With the goal of creating sustainable jobs and improving public infrastructure, the maximum grant is \$300,000, and the maximum loan is \$1 million. The zero interest loan is made to telephone and electric utility companies who are Rural Utility Service (RUS) borrowers. The company then relends the money to the ultimate recipient for eligible projects, also at zero percent interest. The grant program provides a grant to the rural utility company that uses the funds to establish a revolving loan fund that can be used for community facilities and infrastructure.

### APPLICATION DEADLINES

**are the last business day of each month through September 30, 2012, and should be sent to the Rural Development State Office. In New York, the address is: Jill Harvey, State Director, The Galleries of Syracuse, 441 South Salina Street, Suite 357, Syracuse, NY 13202-2541.**

## Organic Valley Prospers

Organic Valley is a company that produces organic milk, soy, cheese, butter, spreads, creams, eggs, produce and juice. Due to an increase in production costs, Organic Valley increased its farmer-owner pay price by \$2 per cwt of organic milk. The average national pay price is \$30, \$10 more than that of a non-organic farmer, which continues Organic Valley's history of ensuring that their farmers are able to prosper. Organic Valley has been successful in its efforts, growing 12% in the past year, with sales increasing from \$620 million to \$715 million. The company donates \$2.2 million annually to nonprofit organizations that advance farming and organic food and has begun to install wind turbines that will power 100% of its distribution center. The company also has a new brand of regional milk – “New York Fresh” milk, made completely in New York by 113 families and sold across the state.

## Apple Farmers Create Online Directory for Pickers



Apple pickers can now easily choose where to pick their apples. Apple farmers in New York have created a website that will serve as an online guide for pickers, and the New York Apple Association hopes the website will encourage New Yorkers to pick fresh and local apples.

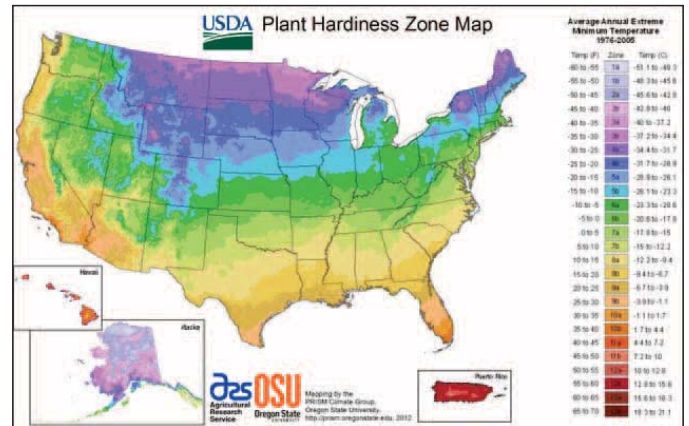
**To learn more about New York apples, visit: [www.nyapplecountry.com](http://www.nyapplecountry.com).**

## Emerging Farm-Based Industry: Maple



Research shows that northern New York's maple production sector has the natural and human resources to grow into a more than \$10 million/year industry. Current northern New York maple industry revenues are more than \$4.5 million annually. Northern New York Agricultural Development Program research and outreach have already spurred a 26% increase in the number of taps in the region between 2005 and 2010, adding more than \$1.1 million in farm-gate revenue.

## Plant Hardiness Map Improved



The USDA recently announced improvements to its "Plant Hardiness Map," which helps both gardeners and farmers plan for the upcoming year by dividing the nation into zones. The 2012 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, divided into 10 degree Fahrenheit zones. The site features printer-friendly national, regional and state maps, and is available at: [www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov](http://www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov)

## USDA Reduces Produce Reports

To cut costs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is reducing or eliminating some of its annual produce reports. The National Agricultural Statistics Service, which produces reports on fruit and vegetables throughout the year, will be cutting August's apple report, something the apple industry is not pleased about, as the report is used as a basis for its own forecast at the annual Apple Crop Outlook and Marketing Conference.

Early season and in-season reports for more than 10 other fresh produce items also have been dropped by the USDA, as cost-cutting measures. While some of the cutbacks had been previously announced, the USDA issued the comprehensive notice January 25 to make sure all interested parties knew the complete list of changes. These changes affect the 2012 growing season, and all end-of-season production reports remain. All reports will be reevaluated before the next season.

The following reports will see reductions or eliminations:

- **Vegetables** — reduce to one in-season report;
- **Apple** — forecast in October only (eliminate March preliminary summary and August report);
- **Apricot** — forecast in July only (eliminate June report);
- **Cherry production** — publish in June only (eliminate forecast in June crop production);
- **Grape** — forecast in August only (eliminate July and October reports);
- **Peach** — forecast in August only (eliminate May, June and July reports);
- **Pear** — forecast in August only (eliminate June report);
- **Pecan** — forecast in October only (eliminate December report);
- **Banana** revisions in May — eliminate;
- **Guavas** in May — eliminate;
- **Papaya** revisions in May — eliminate;
- **Prune** forecast and revisions in June — eliminate; and
- **Prunes and plums** forecast in August — eliminate.

## Costs Increase for Public School Lunches



Last December, the federal Child's Nutrition Bill was signed into law. A provision in the bill stipulating that public school lunches should be made healthier included more produce and less whole milk in the lunches. While the meals are healthier, schools – and parents – are finding that they are also more expensive. It is estimated that schools will eventually have to charge an average of \$2.46 for their lunches, with many schools increasing costs by \$0.25 per meal. To decrease the financial burden, families of four who earn \$28,665 a year are eligible for free lunches, and those who earn anything less than \$40,793 yearly will receive lunches at a reduced price. (A reduced price lunch is no more than \$0.40 cents/lunch.) While families with low incomes are helped, those slightly above the cut off will still be financially burdened with the increase. The federal government reimburses \$2.72 for free lunches, \$2.32 for reduced price lunches and \$0.26 cents for regularly sold lunches. However, the costs of lunch in schools vary. In New York City, lunch is sold for \$1.50, while lunch in Fairfax, Virginia is \$2.75.

## New Technology Makes Winter Roads Safer

Green Bay, Wisconsin has two salt spreaders that are increasing efficiency and road safety. The new spreading technology increases the likelihood the salt will stick to the road by wetting the salt as it is applied. Without the technology, 30% of the salt was wasted because it bounced off the road. Now, there is only a 4% chance of waste.

## USDA Support for Rural Community Colleges

In light of budget cuts across the country, rural community colleges are looking for ways to do more with less, despite the fact that for many residents of rural areas, community colleges provide the closest access to postsecondary education and a way to obtain the skills needed for existing jobs. However, like some of their students, many rural community colleges are doing more with less as state budgets are being cut and new resources are becoming harder to find. During the 2011 rural community colleges conference, many attendees asked about funding and resources available from the Department of Education, but few were as familiar with opportunities in other federal agencies. Along this line, the USDA offers many forms of support, including Rural Development programs used to promote distance learning, improve school facilities and offer home retention services as a benefit for faculty. The Community Service program provides funds for transportation vehicles needed on campus, and the construction of new classrooms and dorms. In addition, distance learning and telemarketing grants from the USDA may be used to purchase video conferencing equipment for distance learning programs, allowing community college to offer more classes.

## Jefferson County Receives Grant for Homelessness Prevention

Funding from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has enabled the Jefferson County Department of Social Services to continue its HEARTH program, a program working to decrease the number of homeless people in Jefferson County. The Jefferson County Department of Social Services and North Country Management Services will work together with the Watertown Urban Mission, which will actually provide services to those in need. A three year plan, the Solutions to Ending Homelessness Program (STEHP), will provide financial services to individuals and families below 30% of the region's median income. Participants will receive rental and utility assistance, hotel vouchers for emergencies, security deposits, moving costs, house inspection and landlord/tenant dispute resolution services. Anyone who receives STEHP funds may benefit from case management services with the goal of helping them become self-sufficient. The program will continue through December 31, 2014.

### Grocery Prices Rising... So Go Out to Dinner!

With grocery prices across the board slowly rising, shoppers are buying cheaper ingredients for meals prepared at home. Ironically, as families have economized by purchasing less expensive foods, they have increased demand for “luxury foods” like fresh fish and steaks. As the 2011 Consumer Price Index increased between 3.25-3.75%, the USDA reported that the price of meat and eggs increased by 8%, and the price of fats and oils increased by 9%. Fruit and vegetable prices are increasing at a slower rate - only 4.5%. Higher energy prices also mean more money out of pocket for food shoppers, and more people are eating at home because of unemployment, stagnant wages and uncertain times. So what is the silver lining? Restaurant prices did not rise as quickly last year – about 2 to 2.5 percent – and are expected to increase slowly in 2012.

### Conservation Funds Increased



The omnibus spending bill passed by Congress at the end of 2011 authorized the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$322 million for fiscal year 2012. This is a 7% funding increase over last year. With an additional \$28 million in Title 6 money designated for conservation, the LWCF will be funded in 2012 at a grand total of \$350 million. At a time when government at all levels is cutting back on environmental spending, the final 2012 LWCF appropriation will go a long way in promoting and supporting important conservation projects.

### Ag Producers' Costs Likely to Rise Due to High Oil Prices



According to the U.S. Department of Energy, West Texas Intermediate crude oil is expected to cost around \$100.25 a barrel throughout 2012. This is a 5.7% increase from the 2011 cost of \$94.86. The price continues to fluctuate, however, as American and European economic downturns could lower prices, while conflicts with oil suppliers like Libya would significantly raise them. The high cost of oil has already made the cost of harvesting crops and transporting livestock higher, as according to the American Farm Bureau Federation, it will cost an Illinois farmer \$1,040 to fill up his Case IH 9370 tractor's 270 gallon tank with diesel – a 77% increase from 2009. All these increased costs lead to inflated prices for consumers. Retail diesel is expected to average at \$3.85/gallon – a 1% increase. Regular grade gasoline will average at \$3.48. This is a \$0.05 decrease from 2011. The U.S. Energy Department says the United States will consume 18.96 million barrels a day in 2012, a 0.5% increase from 2011.

### Increased Funding for New York State Parks

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF  
Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation



Included in New York State's 2012 Enacted Budget is the New York Works Fund, which will provide \$89 million, leveraging \$143 million in total funding, to rehabilitate state parks. This is the single largest infusion in history of capital dollars for New York's parks, and is very timely considering that 83% of state parks are deteriorating. Projects will be funded in every region of the state with the goal of enhancing visitor experience. The state has 49 parks and historic sites, which offer many opportunities for recreation, add to New York's cultural experience and attract tourism dollars.

## Small Cattle Herd Will Lead to High Retail Beef Prices

Retail prices for beef are expected to rise due to the smallest cattle herd since 1952. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's cattle inventory report, there are 90.7 million cattle on farms and ranches - 3% lower than last year. The University of Missouri Extension office also reports that beef prices increased by 13% in 2011, and the price is expected to continue to rise. The USDA report also notes the number of females that have not yet calved has increased by 1%, meaning that in three years - the time it will take for the increase to have an impact - the availability of cattle will be improved. Until then, fewer cattle will be sold to feedlots. Although in 12 out of the last 14 years cattle herds have shrunk, the amount of meat on the market has been largely unchanged. This is attributed to better calving percentages and genetics that contribute to faster growth. Beef exports increased 23% last year, but domestic consumption decreased by 3.7%.



## App Helps California Teachers Stay Current with Standards

A new web application, known as the California Common Core State Standards Web app (eStandards), has been developed to improve the standard of teaching in California. The application enables smart phone users to view what the state expects students to learn at each grade level. The app was developed at the Sacramento County Office of Education to make it easier for teachers to access information related to curriculum requirements, and thus, promote a cohesive education standard across California. The app has four categories: English Language Arts, Mathematics K-7, Mathematics 8 and Mathematics 9-12, and is available to parents so that they can keep up on what their children should be learning. eStandards allows users to search the overview for a single subject, retain search history, e-mail others and bookmark standards.



**More information is available at: <http://db.readinglions.net/commoncore/app/display.lasso#home>**

## Rural Post Offices Will Cut Hours, Remain Open

Spurred by an outcry from communities and postal employees alike, the postal service has dropped plans to close thousands of the nation's rural post offices. Instead, operations will be trimmed at 13,000 post offices to between 2-6 hours per day. Before taking action on the plan, which would take two years to finish, the Postal Service must get regulatory approval and community input. The plan does give communities options other than cutting hours: closing their post office and starting up door-to-door delivery; offering stamp sales and fixed-rate shipping in already-existing small community businesses such as local pharmacies or grocery stores; and merging local post offices with others nearby. As many lawmakers are worried that the plan is not drastic enough to help pull USPS from its forecast \$14.1 billion debt, the postal service will also offer buyout packages of up to \$20,000 to 13,000 workers eligible for retirement.



## Practical Problem Solving: Restoring NNY Alfalfa Crops

Northern New York Agricultural Development Program research has one-upped the alfalfa snout beetle (ASB) that destroys entire fields of forage fed to dairy and beef cattle, horse and other livestock. As of 2011, ASB was present in nine New York State counties and in Ontario, Canada. Adult ASB feed on red and white clovers, broad-leaved dock, wild carrot, wild strawberries, blackberries, dogwood, other legumes and weeds. Costs for producing milk rises between 22-25% due to rising feed costs to purchase protein supplement, added replanting costs and lower yields. Cornell University, in collaboration with NY Farm Viability Institute and Northern NY Agricultural Development Program, developed a low-cost bio-control procedure to reduce infestation levels and help prevent further spread of the insect. Biological control is accomplished by inoculating fields with entomopathogenic nematodes (EPNs). Close soil contact makes ASB susceptible to attack by EPNs, which are insect attacking nematodes. The nematodes staged release from host insects are called infective juveniles (IJs), and long-term biological control appears to be a feasible management strategy, as studies indicate that EPNs can persist in soils for a number of years.

## Mad Foods?



**Madison County Tourism has launched its new culinary tourism initiative, MadFoods.com.**

**MadFoods.com is a guide to the culinary escapades of Madison County and includes information on regional restaurants, food, events, beverages, farms and chefs.**



Empire State Development reports, in its Economic Impact of Tourism in New York for 2011, that visitor spending in New York State generated \$6.9 billion in state and local taxes in 2011. Highlights of the report include an 8.1% increase in visitor direct spending to a new high of \$53.8 billion. Tourism industry also increased by 3.8% - to a high of 482,231. Statistics are compiled by Tourism Economics, and detail the direct spending, employment, wages and taxes generated by New York State tourism.