

# **LEWIS COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN**

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## **SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Background**

In March of 2003, a volunteer steering committee involved and knowledgeable about local agriculture began the process of evaluating and planning for the future of Lewis County agriculture. This group, a sub-committee of the county's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, was charged with development of an Agricultural Enhancement Plan and met several times over the past year to discuss issues, needs, and opportunities facing local agriculture. This plan is a result of their work and dedication and is written as a guide for Lewis County and the various local and regional agricultural support groups. The document has been developed in accordance with New York State Agricultural and Markets Law Article 25-AAA, to be adopted by the Lewis County Legislature.

### **Plan Layout**

The structure of this plan is based on the goals established by the agricultural enhancement plan committee. Each section begins with background information, relevant data, and a discussion of needs and concerns related to a specific agricultural goal.

Following this "set-up" the plan details a series of recommendations and action steps to serve as a guide for plan implementation. *(Note: these strategies are also summarized in a table in the plan's appendix.)*



### **Vision Statements**

A vision statement is a plan's long-term goal. It is a far-reaching statement that helps guide plan recommendations, strategies, and implementation. In working on this plan, the steering committee developed six individual vision statements that highlight opportunities for agriculture in Lewis County. The statements recognize that while Lewis County is already home to a very strong agricultural industry, it is important to keep looking forward and find ways for enhancement and strengthening. The Lewis County Agricultural Enhancement Plan's Vision Statements:

Agriculture in Lewis County will continue to thrive and play an essential role as the most important industry in the region's economy.

Our community will understand and support the importance of agriculture to our economy and quality of life.

Agriculture will be enhanced as a viable and profitable profession.

Lewis County will maintain its strong agricultural infrastructure and support network and continue to be a place where farming excels.

Lewis County and the region will be at the forefront of agricultural innovation.

Lewis County will be a leader in regional agricultural initiatives.

### **Goals**

Keeping the long-term vision statements in mind, the agricultural enhancement plan steering committee identified three goals which form the more precise framework of their recommendations. Similar to the vision statements, the goals are meant to be far-reaching and comprehensive. However, they are also designed to be specific enough so that they can be easily implemented and measured for success. The following sections of this plan highlight some of the background information surrounding each goal, discuss existing efforts as well as needs and deficiencies, and outline targeted recommendations, opportunities, and examples of programs from other communities. The Agricultural Enhancement Plan's primary goals are:

Improve the community's understanding of agriculture and its importance to the county's economy and quality of life.

Increase the profitability of agriculture in Lewis County.

Increase the competitiveness of the county and region in future farming initiatives.

### **Primary Recommendations**

This document includes a large variety of strategies targeting the enhancement of local agriculture. Each goal listed above is described in detail and followed by a series of action steps, ideas, examples, and concepts. However, during development of the plan, the Agricultural Enhancement Steering Committee also identified a series of priorities or primary recommendations for short-term implementation. These recommendations, described below (and in more detail later in the plan), reflect some of the "early-action" projects to enhance Lewis County Agriculture. Where appropriate, roles and approximate funding requirements have been allocated to assist in the decision making process of implementation. The Lewis County Agricultural Enhancement Plan's Primary Recommendations and Priorities include:

### **Agricultural Investment Program**

**Lewis County should secure matching grant funds to study and demonstrate the precise impact of dollars invested in agriculture.** The program should focus on gaining a better understanding of agriculture’s overall impact on the economy including spillover jobs, sales multipliers, and savings in municipal taxes. The program’s report and analysis should highlight the financial impacts that grants, loans, and tax incentives focused on farm operations might have on the overall economy.

The report should also include an ideal “appropriate level of county and community investment in agricultural economic development,” and discuss expected results, and sources and uses of funding. This would be an ideal project to conduct in partnership with Jefferson County.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Planning Department

Costs: Approximate County investment needed to initiate program and conduct the study: \$25,000

### **Establish a process for continued investment**

Implementation of the agricultural enhancement plan should not focus solely on individual projects and events. Rather, **a process should be established to ensure for continued investment and support for agricultural initiatives.** County staff should work with the local support network (Cornell, Tug Hill, etc.) to establish a long-term enhancement procedure that includes monitoring implementation steps, critiquing existing efforts, funding, and identifying new opportunities.

The primary responsibility for implementation, in part, depends on the level of county investment in staff and matching grant funds. However, opportunities for a lead role are present for all of the county’s agricultural support groups such as Lewis County Planning, Lewis County Local Development Corporation (specifically for funding initiatives and grants), Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, the Tug Hill Commission, existing cooperatives, or an agricultural economic development coordinator (potential future staff position).

As a first step, **the county should designate an “implementation committee” to begin prioritizing activities and setting the plan in motion.** This committee should include members from as many of the aforementioned groups as possible as well as representatives from the farm community (farmers, farm bureau, wood products, etc.).

Primary Implementation Responsibility: All agricultural support groups and organizations.

Costs: Undetermined, would include staff time at meetings, committee organization. This activity would be a continuation of the process used to develop this enhancement plan.

**Continue and expand efforts to educate youth who are interested in agriculture to acquire hands-on, practical experience.**

Lewis County should explore expanded opportunities for summer interns to work in the agricultural industry. Consider expanding the dairy prospects program to “Agricultural Prospects” and provide similar education for farming techniques outside of the dairy industry. In addition, work to establish/enhance connections with farmers and encourage them to use interns.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, existing youth organizations such as Jr. Holstein and FFA, Lewis County Employment and Training Department.

Costs: Staff time at additional meetings, development of promotional materials.

**Celebrate success**

**Develop a “farm innovator” program to recognize an individual or organization that has been successful or integral to farming in Lewis County.** This initiative should differ from beautification or commodity-specific awards and be open to the all of those involved in agriculture (producers, support groups, community leaders, manufacturers, etc.). Some potential award categories or concepts could include implementing a value-added program, innovative cost reduction, achieving a certain level or quality of milk production, utilizing alternative energy or environmental management, promoting Lewis County or regional products to new markets, etc.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Farm Bureau (Lewis County).

Costs: Less than \$1,000 to cover signs or certificates for recognized farms and entrepreneurs and to develop the program’s standards.

**Take a regional approach to marketing**

Regional cooperation will help give Lewis County a stronger voice in marketing and promotional initiatives. One such opportunity is the North Country Branding initiative coordinated through the Jefferson County Job Development Corporation. This program is a sales and marketing cooperative for North Country producers and includes the development of a regional branding identity. While the program is still in its infancy, Lewis County is within the North Country region and its farmers are eligible to participate in the program. The goal of the program is to sell products under this label at a premium price in cities along the New York State Thruway, New York City, and New England. Interested producers should contact the Jefferson County Job Development Corporation at (315) 782-

5865. In addition to encouraging local producers to participate in this effort, Lewis County should:

- ensure that the initiative identifies new opportunities for marketing the region's products,
- encourage wood processing businesses in particular to get involved,
- work to get a Lewis County producer on the organization's board, and
- encourage the development of a North Country online store (similar to those previously discussed).

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, Lewis County Planning Department, Lewis County Local Development Corporation, Lewis County Industrial Development Agency, Tug Hill Commission, existing local cooperatives.

Costs: Undetermined.

### **Wood processing**

To enhance the wood products industry, Lewis County should identify candidates (e.g. businesses, mills, etc) for funding of a **value-added wood processing feasibility study**. In cooperation with Empire State Development Corporation or the Development Authority of the North County the county should determine a process for identifying potential candidate firms/activities and to secure matching grant funding.

The study should consider potential projects related to the county's small mills, re-use of larger facilities, and vertical integration feasibility.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Local Development Corporation, Lewis County Planning, Adirondack North Country Association.

Costs: \$5,000 for consultant services to develop grant application and conduct initial research and feasibility (demonstration of need). Subsequently, an additional \$50,000 to \$75,000 may be needed to survey producers and assess capacity to generate economic development. Part or all of this study could be covered through state or federal grants.

### **Support producers interested in pursuing organic and natural food opportunities**

The organic product industry is one of fastest-growing (if not the fastest) markets in agriculture. Lewis County is well positioned to take advantage of these trends and access the approximately 30 million people who are buying organic foods on a regular basis. Lewis County's agricultural support network should undertake a series of initiatives to support farmers who are looking to begin organic and natural food product development (specifically organic meat, vegetables, and milk):

- Initiate a farmer to farmer discussion group on organic farming techniques, issues, etc.
- Identify producers interested in undertaking organic or natural operations
- Initiate an organic conference or speaker series
- Work with the Tug Hill Commission to develop an ongoing organic farming newsletter and techniques report (or tie in with and make available materials from the Northeast Organic Farming Association)
- Apply for grants through USDA diversification and USDA Integrated Organic programs
- Consider offering incentives such as grants or low interest loans for organic farming efforts. Consider development of a low interest loan fund targeting organic farming initiatives (utilize the county's local development corporation or private investors to capitalize the fund)

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Planning Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, Tug Hill Commission.

Costs: Approximately \$2,000 for consultant services to write grant and conduct initial research (could be substituted by in-house services of Planning Department).

### **Increase agritourism**

Lewis County farmers can **take advantage of many agritourism opportunities that focus on the region's natural setting and environment, products, and even our severe winter climate.** The key to success is generating clusters of related activities that encourage tourists to visit the county. Some initial agritourism opportunities should focus on the maple industry, other wood products (e.g., crafts and furniture makers), development of a retail ag-products center, snowmobiling, and bed and breakfasts along tourist corridors. Furthermore, consider opportunities for maintaining the agricultural character of tourist corridors.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, Soil and Water Conservation District of Lewis County (mapping assistance), Lewis County Planning Department (grant writing, etc.).

Costs: Approximately \$5,000 to \$10,000 to identify existing agritourism operations in Lewis County, apply for agritourism grants, and begin development of web and promotional materials.

### **Develop and promote financial incentives for business development**

Ensure that the county's farmers have access to funds for business development, expansion and investment at reasonable interest rates. Consider establishment of a micro-enterprise program targeted at agricultural innovation. Work towards

acquiring a micro-enterprise grant through the Governor's Office for Small Cities. The micro-enterprise grant could be just one component of a larger business development program. This program should work towards "capitalizing innovation" and provide farmers access to funding that will help with transitional business growth and experimentation (e.g., transition into new crops, technologies, etc.).

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Local Development Corporation, Lewis County Industrial Development Agency, Lewis County Planning Department.

Costs: Approximately \$5,000 for consultant services to develop state/federal grant and identify and establish need. Funding available through the New York State's Grow New York Enterprise Program – information at the Agriculture and Markets web page: [www.agmkt.state.ny.us/GNYRFP.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/GNYRFP.html)

### **Enhance business management**

Business management is commonly cited as the key to preserving farmland and maintaining farm viability, particularly in slow-growth areas. Lewis County can help local farm entrepreneurs enhance their businesses through a series of cost-side and business planning initiatives such as:

- Explore ways to reduce energy and utility costs for farmers.
- Make information available on tax exemption programs such as the farm building exemption, STAR, NYS Historic Barn Credit, and NYS Barn Rehabilitation.
- Ensure that Cornell Cooperative Extension has the resources to continue providing education on agricultural practices, and business management
- Expand participation in existing programs (consider giving credits for participation, conduct media outreach through television, newspapers, radio and at events).
- Develop a comprehensive list of available educational opportunities. The list should be printed, mailed, included in newsletters, put on the web, etc.
- Continue the farmer to farmer discussion groups (CCE's Dairy Managers Discussion Group). Work to identify new topics of interest such as natural and organic farming, co-op buying, utility cost reduction, custom cropping, etc.
- Consider establishing a formal business development program that includes business consultants, small businesses development counselors and volunteers to provide technical assistance in business planning, financial management, etc.
- Establish a grant fund for business planning to help farmers pay for education and management programs.
- Fully investigate the potential benefits of new "broadband connectivity" to the Route 12 corridor.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, Soil and Water Conservation District of Lewis County, Farm Bureau (Lewis County).

Costs: Undetermined.

**Getting value out of the land**

Survey farmers along growth areas (primarily the county's highway corridors) to evaluate the need for money to help keep farms in production and pass them on to future generations. **Promote and take advantage of state and federal purchase of development rights programs** in these areas. Use these programs to maximize visual benefits along tourist corridors with high quality visual attributes.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Planning Department.

Costs: Approximately \$3,000 to cover consultant services to develop grant, survey farm owners in high traffic areas (e.g., along state highways) and identify additional farm transfer needs, issues and concerns among local farmers. Note: these programs typically allow for recuperation of funds utilized for grant administration.

**Allocate funds and staff for grant writing**

As an initial implementation step, Lewis County should **allocate a budget to grant writing efforts**. Many of the programs and initiatives outlined in this plan can be funded substantially through grants. However, due to the time constraints of current staff it may be necessary to hire consultants or part-time help to research and develop additional grant proposals.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County.

Costs: Undetermined – based on potential grants and programs to be pursued. However, it is likely that approximately \$5,000 would be needed to initiate one or two grant programs.

**Support agricultural research and development**

Lewis County should continue to tie in efforts with Jefferson County and regional groups to establish incubator space for new businesses, conduct high-tech agriculture-related research, deal with (and take advantage of) globalization and global markets, and establish a community kitchen for new product testing and bridging the gap to diversification. The county should lobby for and take advantage of opportunities available with universities looking to conduct applied local research. In general, these initiatives should strive to develop a closer connection between research and local production.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Planning Department, Lewis County Local Development Corporation, Tug Hill Commission, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County

Costs: Undetermined

### **Support regional ag-economic development**

Lewis County's newly formed Local Development Corporation (LDC) should **explore formal or informal partnerships with Jefferson County's Agricultural Development Corporation.** The primary purpose of this regional entity should remain the advancement of agricultural economic development opportunities. This group could also be responsible for establishing and monitoring an agricultural economic development specialist staff position to set up the business development/entrepreneurial programs outlined in this plan. In general, every effort should be made to share resources with surrounding counties.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Industrial Development Agency, Lewis County Local Development Corporation, Lewis County Planning Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, Tug Hill Commission.

Costs: Undetermined – would include staff time at meetings. However, this program could eventually lead to the establishment of an agricultural development coordinator position.

### **Encourage cooperatives to foster innovation**

Lewis County cooperatives should be encouraged to establish programs, incentives, and funds to help farmers transition into diversification or the use of new technologies. Cooperatives are well-positioned to identify investors and investment opportunities and should be encouraged to move enhancement initiatives forward. For example, these efforts could include assistance with the development and testing of products, marketing, transitioning lands to new farmers, assisting with research and development (e.g., grant assistance), and help to take some of the risk out of transitioning to new product development and/or technologies.

Primary Implementation Responsibility: Lewis County Cooperatives, Lewis County Local Development Corporation, Lewis County Planning Department, Lewis County Industrial Development Agency

Costs: Undetermined.



## **SECTION B: IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY’S UNDERSTANDING OF AGRICULTURE AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE COUNTY’S ECONOMY AND QUALITY OF LIFE.**

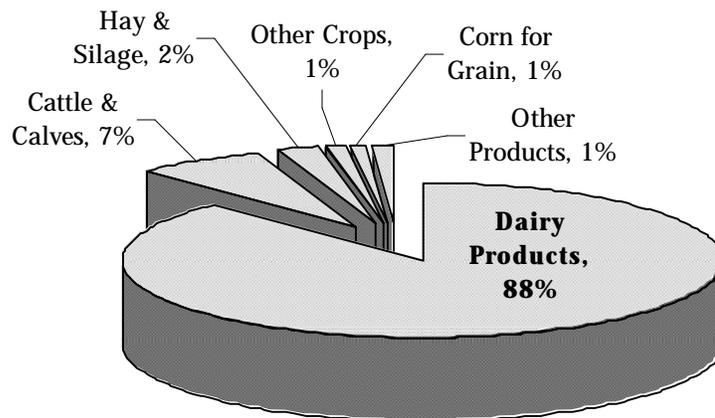
Lewis County thrives on Agriculture. There are few places in New York where farming is as essential a component of the local economy and daily life as in our community. Our agricultural industry consists of approximately 720 farms covering 186,000 acres of land<sup>1</sup> and includes dairy operations, wood products businesses involved in the harvesting of timber, production of maple syrup, and the production of wood crafts (among other wood related industries), agribusinesses and supply companies, co-operatives, county, local, and federal government agencies, and other support groups. These individuals, businesses, and groups make up the vast network of our agricultural community – a community that is deep-rooted, close-knit, and full of entrepreneurial spirit. (Note: Please see Map 1 Lewis County Farm Locations in the appendix.)

### Economic Impact

In addition to being a part of our lifestyle, agriculture has a significant influence on our economy. In terms of dollar impact, the sale of agricultural products contributes over \$60 million annually to the local economy with the vast majority of these sales coming from dairy products (typically almost 90 percent of all sales are derived from dairy annually). Furthermore, Lewis County farms contribute an additional \$40 million annually in production expenditures, provide employment for almost 700 individuals, and represent the principal occupation for over 450 farm operators (1997 US Census of Agriculture).

### Agricultural Sales Detail

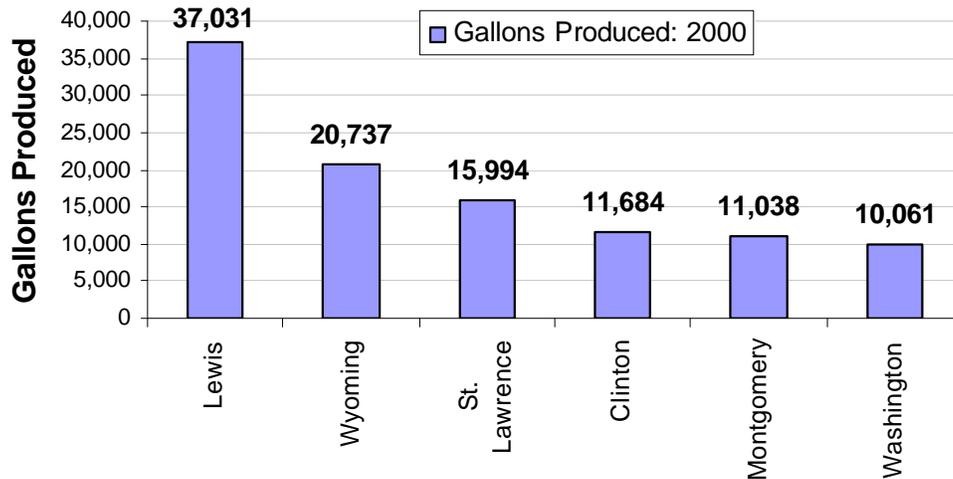
Dairy products make up the bulk of sales of agricultural products in Lewis County. According to the 1997 US Census of Agriculture, dairy products accounted for 88 percent of the total sales in the county, while a much smaller amount (7%) came from the sale of cattle and calves with hay and silage and other crops or products accounting for the remaining five percent (5%).



*Chart: Agricultural Sales Breakdown: percent of total sales by product (US Census of Agriculture, 1997)*

<sup>1</sup> NYS Agricultural Statistics, 2003

Outside of dairy, the production of maple syrup is one of the county’s strongest agricultural sub-industries. Lewis County is home to the most maple syrup producers and taps in the state and produces almost 40,000 gallons of maple syrup annually, twice the amount of the second leading county, and 18 percent of the total amount produced statewide. However, the abundance of producers and lack of close markets has kept competition high and consumer prices low. While being the leading county in the actual production of maple syrup, Lewis County is near the bottom in the sale price per gallon (\$22.55 per gallon for Lewis County syrup in 2000 compared with a high of \$46.55 in Schuyler County).



*Graph: Top Six Maple Producing Counties in 2000 New York State Agricultural Statistics Service ([www.nass.usda.gov/ny/maple.htm](http://www.nass.usda.gov/ny/maple.htm))*

### Changes in Farms and Farmland

Even in our strong agricultural climate, Lewis County has not been unaffected by national and state trends of farm and farmland loss. Since 1950 the county has lost over 130,000 acres of farmland and today, less than 25 percent of the county’s land is considered “farmland” (compared with 40% in 1950). The most dramatic reductions in Lewis County farm numbers occurred during the 1960s when there was a 30 percent loss in farms and a 25 percent reduction in farmland (during that time the county’s population only increased by 2%). During the last 20 years the loss of farms and farmland has slowed during which time the county saw a five percent (5%) reduction in farms and an eleven percent (11%) reduction in farmland.

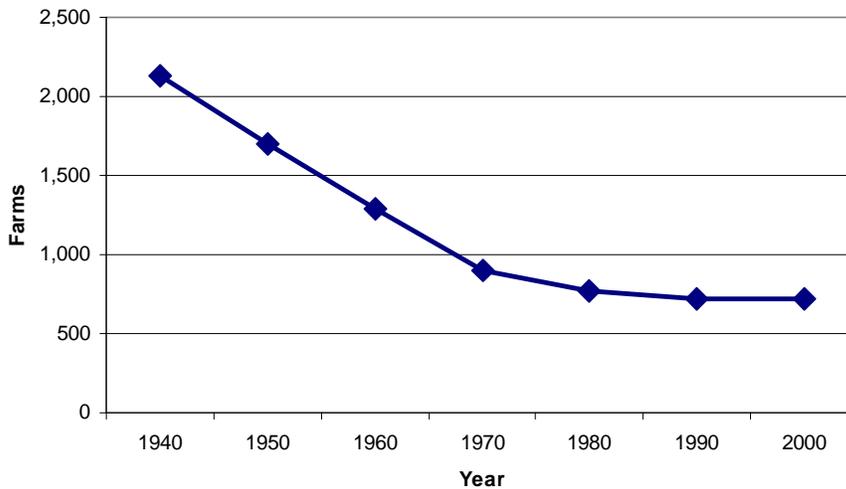
By way of comparison, since 1980 New York State as a whole saw a 20 percent reduction in the number of farms and farmland.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, the statewide loss of farmland during the last twenty years has been due to a complex set of

<sup>2</sup> Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service <http://www.nass.usda.gov:81/ipedb/>

circumstances including development pressure from residential growth, decline or stagnation of prices paid to farmers for products, technological advances, global food policies, etc. While the same issues have resulted in less active farms and farmland in Lewis County, population growth and development pressure have played a much smaller role locally than in counties closer to urban centers.

Table: Percent Change in Number of Farms – Selected Years New York  
(Agricultural Statistics Service and US Census of Agriculture)

	1940-50	1950-59	1959-69	1969-78	1978-92	1992-01
New York State	-19%	-35%	-34%	-19%	-18%	-3%
Lewis County	-20%	-24%	-30%	-15%	-6%	1%



Graph: Number of Lewis County Farms by Decade  
(New York Agricultural Statistics Service and US  
Census of Agriculture)

### Our Agricultural Infrastructure is Our Community

There is a general acceptance of agriculture among the non-farm community – a key characteristic that makes our area an attractive location for new (and current) farmers. Since farming is such a major component of the community, there is a common knowledge and understanding of standard practices and there are rarely conflicts among residents and producers. Of course, our “agricultural infrastructure” includes support agencies (such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA, etc.), agri-businesses, banks and lenders familiar with agriculture, and cooperatives. But it is the community that forms the foundation of this infrastructure and it is with the community where our agricultural enhancement program starts.

**GOAL 1: We must improve the community’s understanding of agriculture and its importance to the county’s economy and quality of life.**

Lewis County must strive to improve agriculture’s image and public perception. We must clearly demonstrate how agriculture currently enhances our communities and how it can be a leading industry for generations. To achieve this goal we recommend an approach that targets government, youth, and the general public:



- First, increase government’s awareness and support for agriculture.
- Second, help our community’s youth better understand the opportunities available in agriculture and encourage them to participate in any and all levels of the industry.
- Finally, enhance the general community’s understanding and appreciation of Lewis County agriculture while addressing the potential for conflicts between farm and non-farm activities.

**RECOMMENDATION #1: INCREASE GOVERNMENT’S AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR AGRICULTURE**

**EXISTING PROGRAMS**

Lewis County benefits from a large number of productive agricultural service providers. The county is home to farm support groups including (but not limited to) Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Lewis County government. County farmers also receive support from the Tug Hill Commission, the Black River – St. Lawrence Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA),

**Lewis County**

County government typically contributes just under \$300,000 annually to farm support agencies with the bulk of their funds directed to Cornell Cooperative Extension (\$230,000 in 2003).<sup>3</sup> The county has also been supportive of past agricultural enhancement initiatives and supported development of a milk component testing lab. Furthermore, the Lewis County Industrial Development

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Lewis County Budget, 2004

Agency (LCIDA) has been an excellent resource for farmers looking for a presence on the internet (the LCIDA places information about Lewis County producers and products on their home page: [www.lcida.org](http://www.lcida.org)).

### **Local Governments**

Locally, most municipal governments in Lewis County are aware of the importance of agriculture to their communities and have areas designated for agriculture or have undertaken efforts to enhance agriculture. Most notably, the Town of Lowville has been very active in promoting the economic development potential of agriculture and is leading the way in promotion of an agricultural business park initiative. For the most part, towns with large numbers of farms in Lewis County have some form of zoning regulation in place that recognizes the special uses and activities associated with agriculture (particularly those along the Black River Valley). Further, some towns also provide relief from administrative and other regulatory requirements for agricultural properties. For example, the Town of Denmark's Planning Board may waive the formal subdivision process in cases where the applicant's subdivision is for agricultural purposes only. (*Note: please see the appendix for a summary of municipal zoning regulations in Lewis County.*)

### **NEED**

#### Understanding the Economic Power of Agriculture

Agriculture receives a great deal of attention and support from the Lewis County community. However, to enhance this industry we must address and rectify the perception that agriculture is not a significant contributor to the economy. Too often initiatives, programs, and grants targeting agriculture are considered "hand-outs" or subsidies while similar tactics focused on other industries are seen as incentives. This perception partly stems from a lack of easily quantifiable evidence of how investments in agriculture result in economic development and quality of life benefits for the overall community.

Consider the method in which successful economic development programs are generally measured: in terms of jobs created directly as a result of dollars invested. For example, a grant for \$50,000 that leads to the hiring of five employees at a restaurant might be considered a success. Conversely, the same \$50,000 invested in agriculture might result in

#### Highlight: Food Manufacturing Multipliers

According to a recent report studying the impacts of agriculture on the New York State economy, food manufacturing and dairy processing activities in particular are big economic winners. For example, for every job in dairy processing, an additional 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  jobs are created in related industries.

*"Agriculture-Based Economic Development: Trends and Prospects for New York" by Nelson L. Bills*

fewer employees, but indirect benefits (while more difficult to measure) would likely be far greater. For instance, the grant might help the farmer increase profits, a significant portion of which will be spent within the county supporting other local businesses or help keep the farm operational. These issues point to the need for a better understanding of how money invested in agriculture relates to economic development.



### Development Pressure in Lewis County

Overall, one of the most serious threats to New York State agriculture is development pressure. Growth, whether residential or commercial, in or near agricultural areas, unleashes a complex set of factors that make it more difficult to maintain viable farming. These factors typically include:

- increases in farmer/non-farmer conflicts over agricultural practices,
- a reduction in the number of support organizations and businesses (e.g., feed stores, banks knowledgeable in lending to agricultural businesses),
- a change in focus by local and county governments,
- increases in local regulations (e.g., new zoning laws), and
- perhaps most importantly – an increase in land values (and taxes).

Nationally, development pressure and the types of factors listed above have been the primary driving force behind most farmland protection programs. Locally, development pressure and population growth have been rather light and have not seriously influenced changes in the number of farms or farmland acreage. For example, during the 1990s, Lewis County's rate of population growth was less than one percent (1%), significantly slower than the five percent (5%) rate for New York State overall.

However, it is important to watch "how" we are growing. While the rate of population growth may be slow, the rate of housing development is much higher. During the 1990s the county added almost 2,000 housing units, a fifteen percent (15%) increase, while the state's housing supply increased by six percent (6%) overall. This sharp increase may represent several aspects of the housing market such as meeting built-up housing demand or possibly the conversion of seasonal housing to full-time residences. Nevertheless, a recent New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets study<sup>4</sup> suggests that housing growth may

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<sup>4</sup> A Study of Strategies for the Protection of New York Farmland in Areas Not Experiencing High Development Pressure, Nov. 2002 (New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets).

be a better indicator of farmland conversion pressures than population growth. Furthermore, in slow growth areas such as Lewis County, the increase in the number of housing units will often mirror a reduction in farmland. For example, a five percent (5%) increase in housing will often result in a five percent (5%) loss in farmland.

## **ACTION STEPS**

Assuredly, governments must be responsible for their expenditures and economic development initiatives. Since investment in agriculture often does not lead to direct increases in employment “on the farm,” it may be difficult to account for enhancement programs targeting farming. As such, the following strategies are designed to improve government’s understanding of the economic benefits of agriculture and where to target investments.

### **A. Allocate funds and staff for grant writing**

As an initial implementation step, Lewis County should allocate a small budget to grant writing efforts. Many of the programs and initiatives outlined in this plan can be funded substantially through grants. However, due to the time constraints of current staff it may be necessary to hire consultants or part-time help to research and develop grant proposals. *(Note: specific grants and funding opportunities are highlighted at various points throughout this plan).*

### **B. Agricultural Investment Program**

While this plan laid a foundation for generating a better understanding of agriculture’s impact on the economy, Lewis County should secure grant funds to study and demonstrate the precise impact of dollars invested in the industry. The program should focus on gaining a better understanding of agriculture’s overall impact on the economy including spillover jobs, sales multipliers, and savings in municipal taxes. The program’s report and analysis should highlight the financial impacts that grants, loans, and tax incentives focused on farm operations might have on the overall economy.

The report should also include a proposed appropriate level of county investment in agricultural economic development, expected results, and highlight sources and uses of funding. This would be an ideal project to conduct in partnership with Jefferson County.

### **C. Public Relations**

Lewis County and our support organizations should work to develop and maintain a positive and constructive outlook on agriculture by our county legislature. The agricultural community must keep government aware and up-to-date on the “state of the industry.” Ideas include:

Speaker series and tours: The primary outreach method to county legislature should be through a speaker series of industry professionals who can speak knowledgeably at legislature meetings about various agricultural issues and trends. In addition, county legislators should be encouraged to take part in a county farm tour highlighting specific innovations, issues, and opportunities in agriculture. Finally, all those interested in agriculture should be encouraged to visit agricultural operations throughout the region (e.g., Hudson Valley, Vermont).

Annual Conference: Lewis County should initiate an annual regional conference with the intention of bringing state and national experts to the area. This conference should be coordinated with surrounding counties and focus on the future of agriculture and how the region can best be positioned to take advantage of its natural, human, and cultural resources. This conference (or smaller versions/gatherings) could also serve to promote and discuss case studies of communities that have achieved success in today's global business environment.



#### **D. Promote Agricultural Land Uses**

Lewis County municipalities should be encouraged to monitor housing growth patterns and target development away from agricultural areas. When housing is proposed near farms, every effort should be made to provide a buffer between residences and the farm and locate housing on the least productive farmland soils. Furthermore, Lewis County Planning Department should closely examine each municipality's land development regulations (e.g., zoning, subdivision regulations) to generate a better understanding of how agricultural properties are treated in the development process and to ensure that they are not restricted from accepted farming practices.

RECOMMENDATION #2 INCREASE YOUTH'S PARTICIPATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF AGRICULTURE

**EXISTING PROGRAMS**

Young people in Lewis County have access to a number of programs and activities designed to involve them in agriculture. While the majority of these programs are run by Cornell Cooperative Extension's staff in Lowville, assistance with delivery, promotion, and funding is often a team approach involving a variety of the county's agricultural support agencies. These educational programs, some of which are discussed below, help to expose the county's youth to a variety of agriculture-related topics from on the farm safety to career opportunities in farming. Please note that this is not a complete list but rather a short synopsis of a few of the county's successful, innovative, and popular programs.

4-H Youth Development

By far, the most popular agricultural-related program geared towards youth is the Lewis County 4-H Youth Development program. Of course, the 4-H program does not focus solely on agriculture. Nevertheless, in addition to helping young people prepare for adulthood, many activities and events are a young person's first introduction to forestry, ecology, and potential careers in natural resources and agriculture.

Farm Safety Day Camp: Several local agricultural organizations and support agencies help with this annual program sponsored by Progressive Farmer magazine. The one-day event targets fifth graders and covers a variety of home and farm safety issues such as tractor/mower safety, electrical hazards through hands-on safety lessons and demonstrations. The program also aims to give students a better appreciation and understanding of agriculture in Lewis County.



*Participants at Farm Safety Day Camp*

### Dairy Prospects

Ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students from Lewis and Jefferson Counties can participate in Cornell Cooperative Extension’s one-year program designed to enhance and build on their interest the dairy industry. The Dairy Prospects program was run for the first time during the 2002-03 school year and provides participants with a unique agriculture-related travel opportunities, hands-on workshops, and other activities designed to teach about successful dairy businesses and the variety of career opportunities they offer.



*Angeline, a participant in the Dairy Prospects program touring an organic dairy farm in Vermont.*

### **NEED**

Why should Lewis County target youth in an agricultural enhancement plan? Consider the following:

- Farmland acreage accounts for almost one quarter of all the land in Lewis County. However, the average farm operator is around 50 years old.
- Locally (as well as nationwide), it is becoming less common for retiring farmers to pass their operations to children or younger relatives.
- Young students are often steered away from careers in agriculture for opportunities in other industries and fields.
- The vast majority of our farms are “family owned.”

Without the participation of the county’s young people in agriculture, who will be tomorrow’s farm owners and operators? The county’s “Come Farm with Us” program has been successful in drawing farmers from other areas to our region, but attraction efforts can only partially contribute to keeping our farmland in production.

We must encourage and better-enable our young residents to get involved in the “business of agriculture.” Too often students are steered away from an education in agriculture and related careers. We must highlight the vast diversity of opportunities available in agriculture and reverse the trend of turning youth away and instill in them a sense of pride about contributing to our community and quality of life through agriculture.

## **ACTION STEPS**

### **A. Enhance the presence of agriculture in schools**

Schools are our best opportunity to cultivate interest in farming and related fields. Several state and county programs are already present and working in Lewis County. However, **a comprehensive program is needed to present a unified message to the youth.** Components of this program should include:

- An increased effort to work with guidance counselors and school officials aimed at promoting career opportunities in agriculture.
- A simple brochure or information packet that includes industry highlights, innovative “high-tech” career opportunities in agriculture, an inventory of available agricultural scholarships, and information on the “Dairy Prospects” program (and other programs as appropriate).
- Participation by agricultural industry representatives at school “career days” to promote opportunities in agriculture. For example, this representative could be someone with knowledge on a specific technology (e.g., bio-genetics) and how it can be applied in Lewis County.
- Expanded educational opportunities for “secondary agricultural practices” (e.g., accounting, marketing, genetics, etc.). Programs should ensure students understand the connection between these activities and agriculture.
- Take advantage of all state and federal programs already helping to promote agriculture in schools. Some of these programs include: Future Farmers of America, New York State Ag in the Classroom program ([www.cerp.cornell.edu/aitc](http://www.cerp.cornell.edu/aitc)), and New York Harvest for Kids ([www.prideofny.com/Farm2School.html](http://www.prideofny.com/Farm2School.html)).

### **B. Continue and expand efforts to educate youth who are interested in agriculture to acquire hands-on, practical experience**

- Expand opportunities for summer interns to work in the agricultural industry and consider expansion of the dairy prospects program to “Agricultural Prospects” to include types of farming other than dairy. In addition, consider development of a short introductory session to the Dairy Prospects program to provide information and a sample of the types of activities students could undertake. This would be particularly useful during off-years as the program is currently offered bi-annually.

- Establish connections with farmers and encourage them to use interns. Develop opportunities for youth to engage and learn about agriculture through a practice farm and/or community kitchen.
- Continue funding for Farm Safety Day Camp, continue support for and encourage participation in local 4-H programs, and work with 4-H ambassadors to highlight specific opportunities at regional colleges to continue education in agriculture.

**RECOMMENDATION #3 ENHANCE THE GENERAL COMMUNITY’S UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF AGRICULTURE**

**NEED**

Unfortunately, the benefits of agriculture are not commonly promoted to the non-farm community. Most of the efforts to promote the importance of agriculture are conducted through programs targeting youth (as described above). However, it is in our best interest to promote the vast array of economic, societal, cultural, and environmental benefits of agriculture to all residents of the county – especially those not involved in agriculture. If we expect the public to support initiatives that target the enhancement of agriculture, we must ensure that the connections between agricultural enhancement, quality of life, and economic development are made and easily understood.

**ACTION STEPS**

**A. Take advantage of all opportunities for advertising and promotion of agriculture.**

- Use Cornell Cooperative Extension’s newsletter to summarize important changes in the industry, upcoming events and programs, available grant monies, etc. Encourage private cooperatives to include similar announcements and news items.
- Use existing mapping systems to portray the importance and status of agriculture to the community. The county, Tug Hill, and Soil and Water Conservation District, all have geographic information systems capability. Ensure that this data is made available to the public on web sites, in newsletters, and through the media. Potential maps include a maple syrup sugar shack locator, existing diversified farm operations, primary agricultural soils, areas of development pressure and growth, etc.
  - A specific map should be developed that highlights crops, special events, and unique places that could be used as part of farm tour or for general

- promotion. The map could also include important facts, statistics, and pictures.
- Ensure the local and regional media is kept apprised and interested in agricultural-related news items. The agricultural community should develop regular press releases on local success stories and ensure that the media sees and reports on the positive aspects of agriculture. The county should encourage the media (both local and outside the community) to learn about and report on Lewis County agriculture. For example, the county could develop an annual media day showcasing a new product or event.
  - Take advantage of public television to promote and educate the community on the importance of agriculture to Lewis County. Take advantage of pre-existing resource (videos were created for the Come Farm with Us program and the maple syrup industry) to promote agriculture on public television. Work to keep News Channel Ten (our all news channel) involved in agricultural activities and promotion.
  - Work to create recognition for Lewis County products in high profile markets (e.g., New York City) through alternative methods such as television cooking shows or online farmers' markets.

## **B. Celebrate success**

- Develop a "farm innovator" program to recognize an individual or organization that has been successful or integral to farming in Lewis County. This initiative should differ from beautification or commodity-specific awards and be open to the all of those involved in agriculture (producers, support groups, community leaders, manufacturers, etc.). Some potential award categories or concepts could include implementing a value-added program, innovative cost reduction, achieving a certain level or quality of milk production, utilizing alternative energy or environmental management, promoting Lewis County or regional products to new markets, etc.
- Inventory existing promotional events (e.g., Maple Syrup Weekend) and explore opportunities for expansion or unifying event, such as a county-wide agriculture-industry day that focuses on consumers (rather than Agribusiness Days, which focuses on suppliers).
- Take advantage of existing programs such as the County Fair and the Farmers' Markets to promote agriculture. Encourage farmers to highlight their products and activities at these events.

**C. Encourage the “non-farm public” to interact with agriculture**

- Encourage farmers to stay involved in the community. For example, encourage them to open their farm for tours, regularly communicate with neighbors, sponsor local sports teams, etc.
- Develop a farm open house program and/or hold events on farms to encourage non-farming community to interact and better understand agriculture operations. This type of program could take place quarterly highlighting different activities and crops depending on the season (e.g., maple sugaring in spring, ice cream in summer).
- Continue to collaborate with organizations involved with or focused on promotion of tourism (e.g., Chamber of Commerce) to highlight the positive aspects of agriculture and agricultural land. Develop self-guided tours brochures, u-pick maps, information on farmers’ markets, etc. for them to distribute with other tourist-related materials. More information on tourism-related programs are discussed in the following section (Goal 2).

**D. Address and resolve conflicts between agriculture and non-farm community**

Currently the Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board is set up to deal with conflicts, however, this process has never been tested. As Lewis County grows, new residents who are unfamiliar with farming must be brought “up to speed” on what they can expect.

Farmer actions

- Encourage use of mediation of conflicts (rather than litigation) through our Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board or other groups such as the Jefferson-Lewis Mediation Center (free service: [www.jefflewismediation.org](http://www.jefflewismediation.org), or 376-7991).
- Encourage farmers to employ responsible and defensible farming practices.
- Promote and take advantage of the benefits of local farms to the community by offering farm tours, organizing hay rides, etc.
- Develop a “neighbor relations packet” with information on farms for farmers to give to neighbors and/or develop a fact sheet or newsletter for residents and government officials on the importance of agriculture to the county.

Municipal actions

- Encourage municipalities to pass local right-to-farm laws.
- Encourage use of agricultural zoning in farm areas.
- Inform real estate agents on agricultural districts, existing Right-to-Farm legislation, fact sheets, agricultural districts, disclosure notices, sound farming practices, etc. Make sure they have correct information to distribute to prospective home buyers.



## **SECTION C: INCREASE THE PROFITABILITY OF AGRICULTURE IN LEWIS COUNTY**

The primary objective of this plan is to identify ways to enhance the viability of Lewis County agriculture and the profitability of individual farm operations. Lewis County is already one of the strongest agricultural counties in New York State: the county ranks first in maple syrup production, is one of the top five in the number of milk cows and milk production, and is eighth in cash receipts from livestock (2000 and 2003 NYS Agricultural Statistics).

### Productivity and Milk Prices

As a dairy-based economy the profitability of agriculture in our region is closely tied to the price of milk and, recent increases notwithstanding, these prices have been relatively stagnant for decades. Unfortunately, there is very little a single county can do to affect price change at the state, national, and global level. Within this framework, individual farmers typically focus on reducing costs and increasing efficiency to the highest degree possible as measures to increase profits. Farmers have realized that if the price they are paid for their milk remained flat or declined, but the cost of doing business continually increased with inflation, the only way to stay afloat was to increase efficiency and produce more milk. As a result, today's dairy farms have become incredibly resourceful and technical business operations. Lewis County farmers are continually investing in and adopting new technologies, reducing costs, and becoming better farm managers to ensure their operations remain profitable.

### A Diversity of Agricultural Models

The foundation and purpose of this plan is the **enhancement of agriculture**. To achieve this basic goal, our farm entrepreneurs, our county and local governments, the agricultural support network, and the general community must embrace a diversity of solutions that when laced together will stimulate agricultural growth and profits across the industry. If we are seriously encouraging our young people to consider careers in agriculture, we must go beyond the education, outreach, and promotional efforts and create an environment where there are real opportunities to be successful and make a decent living at it.

### **Goal 2: Increase the profitability of agriculture in Lewis County**

Our community is already working to enhance the profitability of agriculture. Efforts include a new marketing effort targeting the New York City metropolitan area, establishment of a "commercial kitchen" for new product testing and development, and a promotional program helping to recruit farmers from around the country (just to name a few). These programs are the types of initiatives that must receive continued attention and investment. To increase farm profitability

we must continue to take advantage of our natural and cultural resources. We must also expand our concepts and opinions about “what is agriculture” and continually reach for new opportunities and meet new challenges.

Our economic program looks to increase the profitability of farming through:

- enhancement of existing marketing efforts,
- development of new marketing strategies,
- diversification and value-added initiatives,
- and the development of business tools geared to promote investment and reduce operational costs.

## RECOMMENDATION #1 CONTINUE AND ENHANCE EXISTING MARKETING EFFORTS

### **EXISTING PROGRAMS**

During its industrial history, Lewis County was in the middle of a vast transportation network of canals that connected upstate New York to urban areas across the country and enabled local industries to sell their products throughout the world. Today, the region is generally perceived as out of the way and isolated from major markets. To overcome this sense of isolation, Lewis County and the region have already made significant strides in promoting the products of local agriculture.

Below are just a few of the existing programs helping “get the word out” about Lewis County agriculture and open new markets to our products.



### Grown in Lewis County

This program, sponsored by the Lewis County Industrial Development Agency, is a promotion and marketing initiative. The program is working to bring recognition to the county’s products and encourage Lewis County residents to buy local.



### Come Farm with Us

This program (also discussed under the next goal) is founded in a four-county partnership that advocates for the region’s agricultural industry. The group promotes, educates, and encourages farmers from outside northern New York to discover Lewis County. The program’s staff visit trade shows, develop brochures and flyers, and provide information on the web ([www.comefarmwithus.org](http://www.comefarmwithus.org)).

### Fresh off the Barge

This program, sponsored by the Black River – St. Lawrence RC&D, Lewis County IDA, and Cornell Cooperative Extension, presents Lewis County producers with an opportunity to promote their products to the City of Yonkers population. The ultimate goal of this program is to establish a year-round presence in the New York City area to serve as an outlet for Lewis County products. For this summer, Lewis County producers will have the opportunity to sell their products at the Yonkers Farmers' Market from June through November.



*Providing a new sales outlet for Lewis County wood products at the farmers' market in Yonkers, NY.*

### Lewis County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) Web Site

The Lewis County IDA has been instrumental in helping many local producers gain a web presence to promote their products and services. The web site ([www.lcida.org](http://www.lcida.org) or [www.farmlewis.com](http://www.farmlewis.com)) includes an online catalogue with descriptions and contact information for a variety of local businesses.

### Farmers' Markets

The county's two largest farmers' markets, Lowville Area Farmers' Market and the Croghan Farmers' Market, provide outlets for local producers to sell directly to the public. The Lowville market, located at the Lewis County Fairgrounds, is open Saturday's from May through October. The Croghan market is open on Thursdays in July and August.

### Maple Industry

One of Lewis County's biggest agritourism attractions revolves around its vibrant maple syrup industry. Several of the county's maple producers take part in Maple Weekend and open their sugar shacks to tourists and maple syrup lovers from across the region. Lewis County is also home to the American Maple Syrup Museum (located in Croghan). The Museum, founded in 1977 with the



*American Maple Museum in Croghan*

objective to preserve the history and evolution of the North American maple syrup industry, includes three floors of exhibits depicting the history of maple syrup and sugar making.

### NYS Pride of New York

The "Pride of New York" program is a voluntary marketing initiative designed to promote food and agricultural commodities of New York State.

According to the state's web site, the "Pride of New York" program includes approximately 700 members who label and identify their products and markets with "Pride of New York" point-of-sale material. Only one Lewis County producer, Swiss'er Sweet Maple, is currently listed. <http://www.prideofny.com/>

### NYS Farmers' Direct Marketing Association

The New York State Farmers' Direct Marketing Association is an organization dedicated to educating members "to be more effective marketers, better able to make effective business decisions and to increase the overall profitability of their farm operation." Among other benefits, membership with this organization provides farmers with access to business training conferences, a quarterly newsletter, web site presence, and group health insurance.

## **NEED**

Lewis County is part of an incredibly productive and beautiful agricultural region and we must continue to celebrate and promote our products. As a good businessperson knows, marketing, one of the primary keys to economic success, must go well beyond promotion and should create an "image" (a pleasant association) and generate interest and enthusiasm in a product.

## **ACTION STEPS**

Lewis County government, our local agricultural support organizations, and so many other groups are extremely active in promoting Lewis County's products and services. Their programs are greatly responsible for narrowing the gap between producer and consumer and helping to increase farmer profits. They are opening new markets, promoting our quality, and adding value to our products. We must continue to support local organizations and programs, as well as those available state-wide and nationally.

### **A. Support local marketing programs**

Lewis County's agricultural support network is one of the keys to success to maintaining and enhancing viable farms in the area and has been directly responsible for most of the recent marketing and promotional events, activities and initiatives. When making funding decisions, those programs that best connect our producers with consumers (e.g., Fresh off the Barge) should be given the highest priority.

*Example: Marketing the Maple industry*

Maple syrup is one of Lewis County's biggest retail opportunities and has been the focus of several ongoing marketing efforts. The county should continue to provide assistance to maple producers looking to enhance their marketing capability and increase retail sales of their product through Fresh off the Barge or similar programs.

**B. Take advantage of programs from outside the county**

New York State, predominately through its Department of Agriculture and Markets, offers producers involvement in a series of marketing initiatives. In addition, several regional and statewide organizations also provide marketing assistance available to Lewis County farmers. Lewis County should ensure that accurate and up to date information on marketing grants and programs (such as Pride of New York) is available for local farmers. The county should encourage farmers to take advantage of these opportunities to the fullest extent possible and assist interested farmers with grant research and writing.

*Example: New York City Wholesale Farmers' Market*

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets is conducting a study to determine the feasibility of re-establishing a Wholesale Farmers' Market in New York City. The department is currently inviting interested persons and organizations to share their ideas on the study and direct wholesale marketing in general. Lewis County farmers should work to get involved in this effort. Contact information and a survey can be found on the program's web site at: ([www.wholesalefarmersmarketnyc.com](http://www.wholesalefarmersmarketnyc.com)).

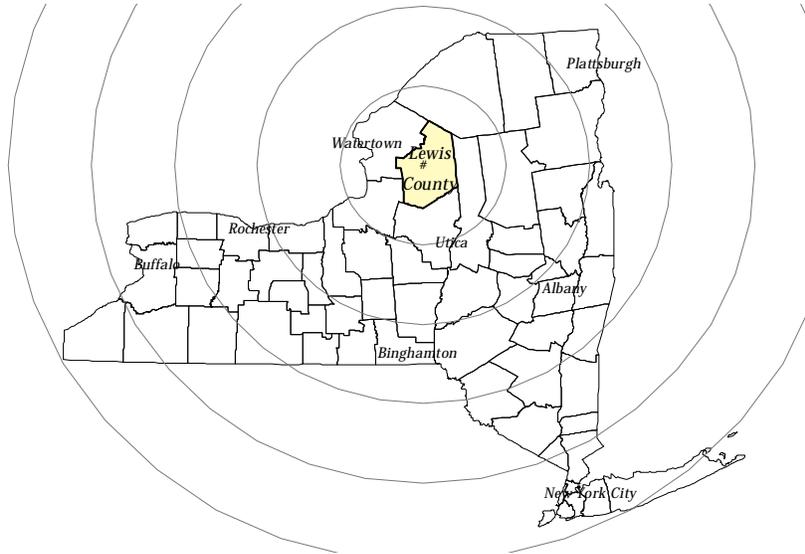
**C. Take advantage of local events**

Lewis County should work to enhance existing events and programs that already include agricultural components to promote local products and draw people to the region. Both the Lewis County fair and the annual Agri-business Field Days are excellent opportunities to encourage promotion of Lewis County agricultural products.

**RECOMMENDATION #2 IDENTIFY AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NEW MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES**

**NEED**

One of the most basic business needs is *access to markets*. True, there are no interstate highways in Lewis County and we are about five hours from the New York City metropolitan area. However, there are three major cities within only 2 hours of Lowville – Syracuse (pop. 150,000), Utica (pop. 60,000), and Watertown (pop. 25,000) – with Rochester (pop. 220,000), Albany (pop. 96,000), and Binghamton (pop. 47,000) under three hours from our county seat. These cities alone, excluding their surrounding suburbs, account for well over half a million people.



*Lewis County location map: rings represent 50 Miles*

**Ultimate Access – the world wide web:**

In theory, the internet allows businesspeople anywhere to access markets throughout the world. In practice, the process is much more difficult and complicated than it sounds. Essentially, the same principles at play regarding traditional marketing are those used on the web (e.g., gain access to market, know your audience, create an image for your product). For the most part, Lewis County producers have only scratched the surface of internet marketing and sales. Included below are a couple excellent regional examples of online marketing techniques.

**[Adirondackharvest.com](http://Adirondackharvest.com)**

This site could be considered a model for regional agricultural marketing efforts on the internet. The site has an interactive farmers' market map, allows users to find farms and venues to purchase local foods searching by product.

**[Adirondackcraft.com](http://Adirondackcraft.com)**

This site promotes and sells products of the North Country and Adirondack region through an online catalogue. Swiss'er Sweet Family Maple Syrup is the only Lewis County producer represented on this site.

### Understanding regional markets

Just behind access to markets, a smart businessperson's most important resource is having a detailed and intimate knowledge and understanding of the people within that market. For example, several farmers in New England have begun targeting the specific needs and desires of ethnic groups in urban areas (New York City, Boston, etc.) while others are working with businesses directly with the goal of providing high quality food products for specific culinary tastes.

#### *Example: Just Food*

This initiative is designed to better understand urban ethnic marketing and how northeast farmers might take advantage of these "untapped markets." The program, focusing on New York City, is working to explore the demand for ethnic agricultural products, determine the potential to expand the production of ethnic products, and create new marketing relationships linking producers with ethnic markets. [www.justfood.org](http://www.justfood.org) and [www.sare.org/bulletin/marketing/ethnic.htm](http://www.sare.org/bulletin/marketing/ethnic.htm).

#### *Example: Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty*

The Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty is a program that helps connect the region's chefs and farmers to provide fresh agricultural products to restaurants while supporting regional farming. The organization's web site and promotional materials highlight restaurants where local products are served, and agritourism opportunities (e.g., wineries) and events. The web site can be found at: [www.visitsenecany.net/Pages/PlacesToEat.cfm](http://www.visitsenecany.net/Pages/PlacesToEat.cfm).

## **ACTION STEPS**

Due to the work and effort of many dedicated individuals, entrepreneurs, and support organizations, more and more Lewis County producers are successfully getting their products out to new markets. In addition to the ongoing marketing efforts (some of which are described in the previous section), several new efforts at regional and state levels have been initiated and are open to Lewis County farmers.

### **A. Encourage use of the web to sell Lewis County products**

The internet can be an invaluable resource for sales and marketing of agricultural products. While the existing IDA web site presents important information on local farms and products, **Lewis County should support the development of a website that makes an easier connection between available products and consumers.** The website should be easy to use (perhaps map-based such as [Adironckharvest.com](http://Adironckharvest.com)), regional, and tie together as many products and initiatives as possible. If possible, the website should include an easy to use online catalogues of locally made gifts and agricultural products.

- Lewis County producers should be encouraged to participate in existing online direct marketing efforts such as Adirondackcraft.com.
- Support development of an online catalogue for Lewis County products. Users of this site should be able to order directly from their computer by selecting a product and providing credit card and address information.
- If a local online catalogue is not feasible, encourage the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop a state-wide online store promoting New York's agricultural products similar to those developed by other states (see: [www.kyagr.com/buyky/index.htm](http://www.kyagr.com/buyky/index.htm)).

**B. Gain access and generate a better understanding of local, regional, and statewide markets**

- Take advantage of selling to large regional organizations (e.g., Fort Drum) and schools.
- Establish a promotion and marketing group targeting restaurants. For example, Berkshire Grown's Business 2 Business program works to create partnerships between producers and growers and "professional food buyers" such as restaurants (see: [www.berkshiregrown.org](http://www.berkshiregrown.org) and click on buyers and producer members only).
- Conduct market research to identify what products are needed in various local area and regional markets. Talk with retailers in major urban areas (Utica, Syracuse, Watertown, and beyond) to identify needed products or underserved groups that might purchase from Lewis County farmers.
- Work to gain local producers' access to large farmers' markets in the surrounding region (e.g., Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, etc.).

**C. Take a regional approach to marketing**

Consolidation and cooperation techniques in marketing can be as successful as similar efforts in farm production. Cooperation among counties will enable a larger total investment in promotional efforts, allow us to reach a larger audience with our message, and greatly increase program effectiveness. Perhaps most importantly, through cooperation we can work to establish a memorable and effective image of our region and unique products. Throughout our marketing efforts Lewis County should always strive for development of a unified and consistent voice.

One such opportunity is the North Country Branding initiative coordinated through the Jefferson County Job Development Corporation. This program is a

sales and marketing cooperative for North Country producers and includes the development of a regional branding identity. While the program is still in its infancy, Lewis County is within the North Country region and its farmers are eligible to participate in the program. The goal of the program is to sell products under this label at a premium price in cities along the New York State Thruway, New York City, and New England. Interested producers should contact the Jefferson County Job Development Corporation at (315) 782-5865. In addition to encouraging local producers to participate in this effort, Lewis County should:

- ensure that the initiative identifies new opportunities for marketing the region's products,
- encourage wood processing businesses in particular to get involved,
- work to get a Lewis County producer on the organization's board, and
- encourage the development of a North Country online store (similar to those previously discussed).



*Logo used by permission of  
JCIDA*

#### **D. Continually Revisit Marketing Efforts**

As discussed above, a wide variety of marketing and labeling efforts are underway in Lewis County. Prior to the establishment of new programs, Lewis County should consult with marketing professionals to ensure that all existing and future branding initiatives convey the appropriate message (e.g., local, safe, great tasting food) and use terminology suitable to the target market.

**RECOMMENDATION #3 ENCOURAGE DIVERSIFICATION AND VALUE-ADDED INITIATIVES**

**EXISTING PROGRAMS**

A commonly used strategy for enhancing agriculture is to encourage diversification or value-added initiatives. Diversification is broadly defined as “giving variety to” or “to produce variety” and value-added products are defined by the USDA as:

- Those that change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam).
- The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business plan (such as organically produced products).
- The physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product (such as an identity preserved marketing system).

Considering that our agriculture is dominated by dairy, most would not consider Lewis County significantly “diverse.” However, there are ongoing efforts to encourage and assist farmers to diversify their operations and add value to their products. For example, CCE’s Fresh off the Barge program is encouraging maple syrup producers to sell their product in small bottles to a growing market in Yonkers.

**Examples of Lewis County Diversification**

In Lewis County most agricultural entrepreneurs involved in diversification are adding value to their product through direct marketing efforts and/or local packaging and bottling (vertical integration). Below is a short highlight of some of these businesses.

*Example: Croghan Meat Market:*  
Croghan Meat Market sells specialty meat and cheese products through a retail store in Croghan, NY as well as online (Adirondackcheese.com) and through the Fresh off the Barge initiative. Their website can be found at:  
[www.lcida.org/cmmarket.html](http://www.lcida.org/cmmarket.html).



*Example: Southern Cross Trading Company*

This company makes fine furniture from local wood. Their furniture is available through the company, on Adirondack craft.com, and their own web site (through the LCIDA at: <http://www.lcida.org/scross.html>).

*Example: Mercers Ice Cream*

Nine farm families from Lewis and Jefferson Counties run Mercers Ice Cream. The tasty finished product is made from local milk and is available throughout New York State (see [www.mercersdairy.com](http://www.mercersdairy.com)).

## **NEED**

There are two primary reasons to support diversification of Lewis County agriculture. First, a farm operation that is flexible enough to quickly diversify can take advantage of changing market conditions (e.g., growing interest in a new food product) and increase profits. Second, an operation (or county) that is diverse will be better protected against downturns in individual product markets.

In a recent report,<sup>5</sup> the Tug Hill Commission highlighted the issue that “the federally-regulated milk pricing system (for conventional milk) contributes to the difficulties many farms in the region face.” A follow-up report suggested that diversification is one of the primary opportunities available to farmers to help make their operations more economically viable.

Many Lewis County farmers have expressed a strong interest in diversification and value-added opportunities. However, a commonly expressed roadblock was the difficulty in diverting resources from the primary product or to a new product or initiative.

## **ACTION STEPS**

### **A. Encourage diversification in all of its forms**

For the most part, diversification in Lewis County has focused on adding value to traditional farm operations. This would include bottling maple syrup, specialty cheeses, and direct marketing efforts such as Fresh off the Barge. However, agricultural diversification can be thought of more broadly – consider these five categories of diversification:<sup>6</sup>

1. Farm-based tourism (Bed & Breakfast, Camping, etc.)
2. Farm-based recreation (Farmhouse teas, Golf course, etc.)

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<sup>5</sup> “Importance of Dairy Farming to the Tug Hill Region and Possible Role of the Proposed Northeast Dairy Compact,” 1998 Tug Hill Issue Paper

<sup>6</sup> Ilbery, B. W. (1988) Farm diversification and the restructuring of agriculture. *Outlook on agriculture* 17, 35-39

3. Adding value to conventional enterprises (Processing cheese, direct marketing, etc.)
4. Unconventional enterprises (Sheep milk, etc.)
5. Ancillary buildings/ resources (Farm woodland, redundant buildings, etc.)

These categories highlight the vast range of opportunities available through diversification – even on a single farm. Of course, individual farmers may only be able to take advantage of one or two opportunities within these categories. However, the countywide impact of broad diversification would be an agricultural economy that is less susceptible to downturns in a single sub-industry and potentially more profitable. Specific opportunities in some of these categories are discussed below. Nevertheless, the county should continue to investigate how local farmers can take advantage of a variety of diversification techniques within the five categories outlined above.



*Existing diversification: a small horse farm in Lewis County*

### **B. Take advantage of existing efforts and infrastructure**

Lewis County should promote success stories to generate enthusiasm and show what is possible in diversification and value added. The short list of local producers and entrepreneurs described above is certainly incomplete. As a first step, the county should identify as many as possible of the existing diversified and value-added operations in Lewis County and promote their success to news media and in newsletters. Secondly, producers should be encouraged to participate in CCE's farmer-to-farmer discussion groups and other programs where they can trade ideas and learn from the experiences of others.

### **C. Provide seed money for diversification of agriculture**

One of the most significant impediments to diversification is bridging the transition to a new crop or product. Initially, Lewis County should promote the variety of state and national programs that award grants and assistance to farmers looking to enhance their operations through diversification. A short list of programs is listed below. *(Note: some of these programs are ongoing, others are renewed annually.)*

- USDA Value-Added Producer Grants  
([www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm))

- Grow New York's Enterprise Program  
([www.agmkt.state.ny.us/GNYRFP.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/GNYRFP.html))
- Northeast Region SARE Farmer/Grower Grant Program  
([www.uvm.edu/~nesare/FGinfo.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare/FGinfo.html))

In addition to these sources, Lewis County should develop a new incentive program to encourage investment in agricultural diversification. This program should have a regional focus and provide grants or low-interest loans to agricultural operations working to diversify or develop new products and add value. Several states have developed diversification programs that could be used as models – two examples are described below.

*Example: Kentucky's Ag Diversification Program*

In Kentucky, reductions in the use and popularity of tobacco dramatically altered the state's plan for agricultural development. As a result, Kentucky's Department of Agriculture established the Ag-Diversification Program to assist farmers in the transition into new areas of agriculture (dairy, aquaculture, and horticulture). Participants in this program can receive up to \$5,000 in cost share assistance per farm. For more information on this program please see:  
[www.kyagpolicy.com/funds/county\\_diversification.shtml](http://www.kyagpolicy.com/funds/county_diversification.shtml).

*Example: Agricultural Development and Diversification Grant*

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection sponsors grants for projects that develop and explore new value-added products, new markets, or new technologies in agriculture. There is a \$50,000 maximum award for applicants. For more information on this program please see:  
[www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/business/marketing/val-add/add/](http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/business/marketing/val-add/add/).

In addition, Lewis County should support the development of a cooperative to encourage investment in alternative agriculture. The co-op could serve to "capitalize private innovation," encourage experimentation, and help farmers transition into diversified operations.

*Example: Vermont Community Loan Fund*

The Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF) provides loans and to low and moderate-income entrepreneurs in Vermont who are unable to obtain financing from traditional sources. One component, the Vermont Agritourism Program is a revolving loan fund for Vermont family farmers who are interested in starting or expanding an agritourism venture. Borrowers can access up to \$50,000 for advertising and marketing campaigns, improvements and expansions around farmer's markets, food festivals, bed and breakfasts, farm tours, heritage trails and other farm

tourism concepts. Another component is the VCLF's Business Loan Program which is aimed to entrepreneurs who add value to Vermont's agricultural or natural resources economy.

The funds are capitalized by investments from individuals and small organizations interested in supporting local entrepreneurs. For more information please see: <http://www.vclf.org>.

#### **D. Target Forest Products and Wood Processing**

For more than 150 years, local entrepreneurs have built wood product mills and manufacturing enterprises – primarily along the county's rivers and streams. Today's forest products industry in Lewis County is well-developed and diverse. The county is part of the larger, "northern forest" that extends from the Tug Hill and Adirondacks to northern Maine. Lewis County is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the state in forest land, with 617,000 acres and more than a thousand county residents employed directly or indirectly from the wood products industry.



*One of Lewis County's small mill owner-operators.*

Historically, Lewis county entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the natural forest resources and added value to them in many forms. In addition to the county's well-known maple syrup industry, that value-added processing also includes the following:<sup>7</sup>

- bowling products
- veneer logs, saw timber, pulpwood, firewood, and Christmas trees
- woven baskets, cabinets and furniture
- pallets, doors, windows and other millwork
- specialty papers, die-cut products, paperboard, packaging, sealing products

However, there have been a series of setbacks in the industry, including major layoffs and closings of pulp and paper product manufacturers in the Black River corridor. The recent closing of Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper and Ethan Allen has been particularly distressing and harmful to the regional economy. Bad news notwithstanding, overall seven percent (7%) of all manufacturing jobs in New York are attributable to the forest products industry – a figure that has increased by nearly two percent (2%) over the last 25 years. In Lewis County, there is an excellent opportunity and the capability to merge new technology with old fashioned hard work and entrepreneurship to bring new wealth to local residents.

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<sup>7</sup> Some of the diversity of the forest products and organizations in the county and region can be found at [www.lcida.org](http://www.lcida.org) and [www.adirondackwood.com](http://www.adirondackwood.com).

Lewis County's wood products industries are natural candidates to create expanded economic and employment opportunities. The county has a skilled workforce, a valuable natural resource base, and all of the factors of production needed – from forest land to loggers, to mills to manufacturers and fabricators to packaging firms.



Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper

Source: [www.goodmorningrealty.com/](http://www.goodmorningrealty.com/)

To enhance the wood products industry, Lewis County should identify candidates (e.g. businesses, mills, etc) for funding of a **value-added wood processing feasibility study**. The county should work with the Empire State Development Corporation/Development Authority of the North County to determine a process for identifying potential candidate firms/activities and to secure matching grant funding.

Potential projects the study should consider include:

- Small mill product marketing, job creation potential, and investment capital needs assessment
- Large mill reuse feasibility project (e.g., Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper site)
- Vertical integration feasibility project: strengthening the links between milling, marketing and manufacturing of value-added products such as custom-crafted, high end furniture. This would include research into design, niche market identification, product packaging, sales and export assistance.

#### **E. Provide farmers with state of the art information**

Lewis County's farmers must be kept apprised of relevant and changing information on diversification opportunities. As a first step, the county should promote the generous amount of information already available through the internet. Several excellent resources already exist and are highlighted below. Lewis County should create online links to these and other similar organizations and consider developing similar resources with a more local focus.

*Example: Agricultural Marketing Research Center (AMRC)*

The AMRC brings together experts from three agricultural universities (Iowa State University, Kansas State University and the University of California) to provide producers and processors with information needed to build successful value-added agricultural enterprises ([www.agmrc.org](http://www.agmrc.org)).

*Example: Alberta's Agriculture Diversification Ventures*

The Agriculture Diversification Ventures is a web-based clearinghouse that provides the region's farmers with an inventory of resources and contact people in a variety of agriculture ventures including agritourism, alternative livestock, special crops and the business planning process. ([http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa2312?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa2312?opendocument))

*Example: The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (NCFE)*

The NCFE provides assistance to entrepreneurs interested in developing specialty food products. The organization, a joint effort of the NYS Food Venture Center at Cornell University and the Center for Food Science at the University of Vermont, offers services, outreach and research development opportunities in business and product process development, product safety, process/product technology transfer and product commercialization – please see <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/necfe/index.html>.

In addition to making resources available on the internet, Lewis County should invite experts from around New York State and the nation to speak with our agricultural community on a variety of diversification-related topics. These topics could include new product development, bridging the gap to diversification, agritourism, and niche marketing (just to name a few).

**F. Support entrepreneurs interested in organic and natural food production**

The organic product industry is one of fastest-growing (if not the fastest) markets in agriculture. A recent Newsweek article<sup>8</sup> estimated that organic foods sales are growing at a rate of about 20 percent a year nationally and account for well over \$11 billion in total annual sales. Furthermore, the organic meat market, which traditionally underperformed compared to other organic products in the United States, is expected to grow at a fast rate in the coming years.<sup>9</sup> Lewis County is well positioned to take advantage of these trends and access the approximately 30 million people who are buying organic foods on a regular basis.<sup>10</sup>

Lewis County's agricultural support network should undertake a series of initiatives to support farmers looking to begin or expand organic and natural food product development. These steps include:

- Farmer to farmer discussion group on organic farming techniques, issues, etc.

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<sup>8</sup> Cowley, G., "Should you buy organic? How new rules will affect your food, your health, the planet," Newsweek Magazine. September 30, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> According to [organicmonitor.com](http://www.organicmonitor.com) – a provider of business intelligence to the organic foods industry.

<sup>10</sup> 30 million figure from a recent news article in the Charlotte Observer: <http://www.charlotte.com/mld/observer/2002/05/18/news/3287872.htm?1c>

- Organic conference or speaker series (consider establishment of annual program)
- Identify producers interested in undertaking organic or natural operations
- Work with the Tug Hill Commission to develop an ongoing organic farming newsletter and techniques report (or tie in with and make available materials from the Northeast Organic Farming Association)
- Offer incentives such as grants or low interest loans for organic farming efforts
- Apply for grants through USDA diversification and USDA Integrated Organic programs
- Encourage New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop a program to help cover organic certification costs

*Example: Organic Growers Certification Cost Share*

North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services assists organic growers with the cost of becoming certified under the National Organic Program. The financial assistance program reimburses growers for 50% of the cost of certification up to a maximum of \$500 per year ([www.buyappalachian.org](http://www.buyappalachian.org)). This type of small-scale assistance could be especially helpful in Lewis County.

### **G. Increase agritourism**

Agritourism is “the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.”<sup>11</sup> These efforts can be focused on farm-related events (e.g., an educational tour of the operation) as well as non-agricultural activities designed to attract people and promote the sales of farm produce and agricultural products (e.g., snowmobiling, development of a retail agricultural products center, hunting, petting zoos, outdoor trails, corn mazes, hay rides, etc.).



Agritourism at work: Maple Weekend on Yancey's Sugarbush

Lewis County farmers can take advantage of many agritourism opportunities that focus on the region's natural setting and

<sup>11</sup> [www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/definition.html](http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/definition.html),  
[www.thinkwestkentucky.com/agritourism/definition.html](http://www.thinkwestkentucky.com/agritourism/definition.html)

environment, products, and even our severe winter climate. The key to success is generating clusters of related activities that encourage tourists to visit the county. Some initial agritourism opportunities include:

#### New York Agritourism and Education Program

This program provides grant funds to farmers interested in providing an ag-educational experience by hosting visitors to their farm. Funds are available for signage, parking, development of rest rooms, liability insurance, and construction or improvement of bed and breakfast facilities or other accommodations. Currently, Lewis County farmers are not eligible to access the benefits of this program (pilot program includes 22 counties including Herkimer and Oneida). As such, our county government should work closely with New York State to encourage and take advantage of any future expansions. For more information please see: [www.nyagtours.com](http://www.nyagtours.com).

#### Maple Tour

Lewis County's vibrant maple syrup industry is perhaps the most obvious opportunity for enhanced agritourism activities. Of course, there are already many maple syrup-related events and activities held in Lewis County. However, as a group, and individually, maple producers should continue to develop their tourism activities including promotional events, farm tours, and brochures and maps.

##### *Example: Mohawk Valley Trail (agri-edge)*

The Agricultural Economic Development Program (CCE of Oneida County) and the Mohawk Valley Maple Producers developed the Mohawk Valley Maple Trail and a promotional brochure. Brochures are distributed to local stores, tourism agencies, and other area outlets ([www.cce.cornell.edu/oneida/cce/agecondev/projects.html](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/oneida/cce/agecondev/projects.html)).

#### Snowmobiling

Hundreds of inches of snow and an extensive trail infrastructure make snowmobiling a major tourist attraction for our region. During the winter months enthusiasts from around the state make the journey to Lewis County to enjoy some of the greatest snowmobiling in New York. Working with the existing tourism industry, Lewis County should continue to promote and enhance snowmobiling support services.

#### Other product based tours and agritourism opportunities

Many people are interested in learning how agricultural products are made and enjoy seeing the process first-hand. In addition to maple syrup, the county should investigate developing a "craft tour" that connects tourists with local wood products craftspeople. Similar to the maple tour, this initiative should include a cluster of operations, promotional materials (brochure, web, etc), and annual events. Other opportunities include a "cheese and wine tour" (focusing on the

cheese-making process) and the establishment of bed and breakfast operations along tourist corridors.

**H. Support Community Supported Agriculture**

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is a process of establishing mutually supportive agreements between local farmers and community members. In these agreements, community members pay the farmer upfront to receive a share of the harvest during the local growing season. In Lewis County, this process could be especially useful in supporting alternative agriculture and experimentation (such as organic or natural farming), keeping farms active and viable, educating the non-farm community, and promoting sustainability by keeping more dollars in the local economy. For more information please see the Robyn Van En Center ([www.csacenter.org](http://www.csacenter.org)).

**RECOMMENDATION #4 ENSURE THAT THOSE INVOLVED WITH AGRICULTURE HAVE ACCESS TO THE TOOLS NECESSARY TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN BUSINESS**

**EXISTING PROGRAMS**

Lewis County farmers have the support of a wide range of groups and organizations helping to fulfill their business and operational needs. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Farm Bureau, the Tug Hill Commission, Lewis County IDA, and the Lewis County Planning Department (just to name a few), all provide agricultural support services of some kind to local farmers. Programs range from training in computer software programs to planting techniques and farm business management to strategies for dealing with low milk prices. In addition to the formal support network, Lewis County is home to a variety of private cooperatives which serve to strengthen individual producer’s voice and increase profits.

**New York State’s Agricultural Districts Program**

New York State’s agricultural districts program is a multi-faceted initiative designed to promote the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program’s benefits include preferential real property tax treatment (agricultural assessment and special benefit assessment), and protections against overly restrictive local laws, government funded acquisition or construction projects, and private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices. The state’s agricultural assessment allows owners of farmland to receive a lower land assessment if the operation meets certain criteria. The majority of Lewis County farms are located within part of a New York State agricultural district (there are 5 in the county).

AG DIST	TOWNS AFFECTED	TOTAL ACRES	FARMED ACRES	CROPPED ACRES	ACRES OWNED	ACRES RENTED	NUMBER FARMS
1	LEWIS, WEST TURIN, LEYDEN, LYONSDALE	20,304	16,666	8,225	14,859	1,807	45
2	LOWVILLE, MARTINSBURG, HARRISBURG, TURIN, WATSON	34,581	30,471	22,620	26,330	4,141	138
3	W TURIN, LEWIS, LYONSDALE, GREIG, MARTINSBURG, LEYDEN, TURIN, HIGH MARKET	59,702	41,003	22,802	36,333	4,670	114
4	LOWVILLE, DENMARK, WATSON, CROGHAN, NEW BREMEN, GREIG	65,344	45,137	36,110	39,978	5,158	122
5	DENMARK, LOWVILLE, MONTAGUE, HARRISBURG, PINCKNEY	68,059	41,296	24,128	38,747	2,549	150
<b>Total</b>		247,990	174,573	113,885	156,247	18,325	569

Table source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, 2003

## **NEED**

The primary business tool needs for Lewis County farmers include continued business management assistance, access to financing, and improvements to the state's agricultural district program. In addition, those farmers looking to retire have had difficulty selling their land or transferring operations to younger generations and will often scale-back or cease farming for cost-savings purposes.

### Business Management

According to a recent New York State report,<sup>12</sup> the key to preserving farmland in low-growth areas such as Lewis County is encouraging good farm management. Furthermore, the report suggests building on existing programs (such as Cornell's Pro-Dairy program) as a starting point for developing more good farm managers.

As discussed above and throughout this plan, Lewis County already has a significant business management and support network. However, as one of the most significant contributors to farm profitability (and regional farm viability) we must ensure that these efforts are not only maintained but expanded and enhanced, particularly in terms of farmer participation.

### Financing

There is a common misconception among local producers that agricultural operations cannot access county-sponsored funding programs. Farmers are generally unfamiliar with the LCIDA and the services this organization can provide as well as the potential for acquiring low interest loans or grants through local and state programs. Furthermore, a backbone of Lewis County's agricultural support network – banks and lenders familiar with farming needs – are divesting themselves of agricultural portfolios and scaling back (if not completely eliminating) agricultural lending programs.

### Agricultural Districts

Most Lewis County farmers are aware of the state's program and take advantage of lower assessments. However, since there is very little development pressure in Lewis County, the benefits are less significant locally than in areas with more growth and higher land values. For example, soils in Lewis County are considered the same value as those in warmer climate areas of New York State even though the local growing season is two to three weeks shorter.

## **ACTION STEPS**

Lewis County must ensure that local farmers have access to the tools and programs that can help make their operations more profitable. We must encourage farmers to work together and inform them on local, state and national programs that target cost reduction. We must maintain and improve participation

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<sup>12</sup> A Study of Strategies for the Protection of New York Farmland in Areas not Experiencing High Development Pressure, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, 2002.

in our business management and support programs, develop new funding sources for ag-investment, and promote opportunities in state and federal purchase of development rights programs.

**A. Encourage cooperatives and farmers to work together to reduce high capital and recurring costs**

- Encourage farmers to maintain and enhance existing buying co-ops as well as develop new cooperative agreements. Through a buying co-op, farmers can share resources and equipment and purchase supplies in greater bulk (with the goal of getting a reduced price due to quantity buying).
- Explore ways to help farmers reduce costs through custom cropping and shared machinery. Develop a printed and digital clearinghouse of providers of these services.



*Example Fauquier County*

This county in Virginia maintains a database of farm services provided by agri-business and farmers. A similar tool in Lewis County could be extremely helpful (please see [www.fauquiercounty.gov](http://www.fauquiercounty.gov)<sup>13</sup>).

**B. Assist farmers in reducing operational costs**

Local farmers are already experts in techniques to reduce operational costs. However, Lewis County can continue to help these entrepreneurs realize savings. Some suggestions include:

Explore ways to reduce energy and utility costs

- Encourage participation in programs that will help reduce energy costs such as NYSERDA Agricultural Initiative and Energy Efficiency Services Program ([www.nyserda.org/agricultural.html](http://www.nyserda.org/agricultural.html)).
- Research the feasibility of establishing a methane digester in Lewis County.

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<sup>13</sup> Full link to web database:

<http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments/agdev/index.cfm?action=farmlist&sub=customservices>

### Reduce the tax burden on farming in Lewis County

- Continue to encourage farmer participation in state's agricultural district and assessment programs.
- Work with the entire region to lobby New York State to modify assessment rates for soils in the North Country. The shorter local growing season makes the land less profitable than similar soils in other areas of the state with warmer climates.
- Ensure that assessors are familiar with the state's agricultural assessment program and that all farmers who are eligible for this program receive the proper assessment and benefits. Consider requiring all assessors to receive training on programs regarding agricultural buildings and land assessment.
- Make information available to farmers on other tax exemption programs such as the farm building exemption, STAR, NYS Historic Barn Credit, and NYS Barn Rehabilitation. *(Note: Yates County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan has a good review of the tax programs available for farmers.)*
- Consider establishment of a tax abatement program for agricultural industries that are high in value-added processes. Encourage local governments to develop similar efforts.

### **C. Assist agricultural entrepreneurs with business planning, training, and education**

#### Farmer training and continuing education

- Ensure that Cornell Cooperative Extension has the resources to continue providing education on agricultural practices.
- To expand participation in existing programs, consider giving credits for participation, conduct media outreach through television, newspapers, radio and at events. Develop a clear list of available educational opportunities. The list should be printed, mailed, included in newsletters, put on the web, etc.
- Continue the farmer to farmer discussion groups (CCE's Dairy Managers Discussion Group). Work to identify new topics of interest such as natural and organic farming, co-op buying, utility cost reduction, custom cropping, etc.
- Fully investigate the potential benefits of new "broadband connectivity" to the Route 12 corridor.

### Business Education and Planning

Maintain and expand CCE's farm business education programs. Consider establishing a formal business development program that includes business consultants, small businesses development counselors and volunteers to provide technical assistance in business planning, financial management, etc.

Establish a grant fund for business planning to help farmers pay for education and management programs. Awarded funds could be very small, perhaps only a few hundred dollars, and still be very effective method to increase participation.

*Example: Massachusetts Agricultural Business Training Program (ABTP)*  
ABTP helps farmers “understand their financial situation, plan their operations, track performance and project the effects of anticipated changes.” A primary component of the program is a 10-session training course for agricultural entrepreneurs entitled "Tilling the Soil of Opportunity" (<http://www.state.ma.us/dfa/programs/abtp/index.htm>).

### **D. Develop and promote financial incentives for business development**

- Widely distribute information on existing loans and grants available for agricultural economic development. Ensure farmers know that loans and grants are available through county, state, and federal governments.
- Ensure that the county's farmers have access to funds for business development, expansion and investment at reasonable interest rates.
  - Consider establishment of a micro-enterprise program targeted at agricultural innovation. Work towards acquiring a micro-enterprise grant through the Governor's Office for Small Cities. The micro-enterprise grant could be just one component of a larger business development program.
  - Establish an entrepreneurial program where business planning courses are tied into low interest loan or grant programs (e.g., give access to funds to those who do special management training).
  - Develop a revolving loan fund for agriculture (grant funds available through NYS Empire State Development Small Cities program, and possibly many federal sources).
  - Take advantage of **Agri-business Opportunity Zones Initiative**. The New York State Legislature is expanding the state's empire zone program to include agricultural areas and

businesses. Lewis County should support this program and take advantage of potential opportunities.

### **E. Getting value out of the land**

- Educate farmers, and municipalities, on conservation easement programs and purchase of development rights programs (as well as funds available through NYS). These programs can provide farmers with money for investment, etc.
- Survey farmers along growth areas (primarily the county's highway corridors) to evaluate the need and desire for money to keep farms in production and pass them on to future generations. Promote and take advantage of state and federal purchase of development rights programs in these areas. Use these programs to maximize visual benefits along tourist corridors with high quality visual attributes.
- Consider developing a grant application for the state/federal purchase of development rights program. Note: these programs typically allow for recuperation of funds utilized for grant administration.
- Develop a presentation for local governments highlighting opportunities for innovative agricultural enhancement programs such as purchase of development rights, tax abatements, etc.

### **F. Work to Keep Farmland Active**

There are several issues facing Lewis County farmers looking to retire or get out of farming that relate to maintaining active farmland. Primarily, in Lewis County, there is currently (and historically) very little development pressure and population growth. As a consequence, retiring farmers must find a land buyer who is looking to farm – not subdivide the property for residential or commercial uses. (In areas under pressures from suburban growth, farmland is often the most aggressively sought-after and considered prime for new development.) The lack of development pressure locally is one of the key characteristics of a strong agricultural economy. However, this factor limits the options available to retiring farmers.



The Come Farm With Us has made great

*One of Lewis County's beautiful dairy farms just outside of Lowville*

strides in connecting farm buyers from outside the region with local farmers looking to sell. However, there is still a significant amount of land being taken out of production and disinvestment in agricultural land occurring as farmers cut back or cease operations. The result is a landscape of unproductive farms and deteriorating structures.

Lewis County should **support the creation of a land buying co-operative** (perhaps run through one of the existing co-operatives in the county) to assist retiring farmers transition out of agriculture and ensure that farmland remains productive. The co-operative could purchase land from farmers and then work closely with the *Come Farm With Us* program and other organizations such as New York Farm Link to actively market the land for farm uses. In the meantime, the property could be leased or rented to farmers interested in short-term expansion of operations.

## **SECTION D: INCREASE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE COUNTY AND REGION IN FUTURE FARMING INITIATIVES**

This is a remarkable time for those involved in agriculture. The American agricultural industry has reached unprecedented levels of productivity while American consumers enjoy some of the lowest food prices in the world. These benefits are greatly a result of the “industrialization” of US agriculture. While we refer to our agricultural industry here in Lewis County – it is important to remember that our farming operations are predominately locally owned and their profits typically to stay (and are spent) within the county.



The questions remain: How should Lewis County compete in this economic system? What type of farms do we foresee making up our landscape? Do we envision an industry that is flexible so as to meet changes in spending and eating habits? Or do we focus our energies on increases in productivity and other industrialization strategies?

The answers to these questions will tell us a lot about where we are headed, what we might need to change to be competitive, and help guide our future agricultural enhancement initiatives.

### **Goal 3: Increase the competitiveness of the county and region in future farming initiatives**

#### Tri-fold Agricultural Strategy

This plan has highlighted and discussed many existing programs and recommendations aimed at enhancing Lewis County agriculture. However, finding ways to increase our future competitiveness may be the plan’s most important (if ambiguous) goal. The three main components to our “future initiatives” strategy are **regional cooperation, agricultural research and development, and promotion and maintenance of the natural environment**. Through these efforts, we will be better positioned to take on new challenges and ensure that agriculture remains a viable and profitable industry in Lewis County and the region.

## RECOMMENDATION #1 INCREASE REGIONAL COOPERATION

### **EXISTING PROGRAMS**

Regional cooperation is one of the primary themes of this plan and its recommendations. Perhaps the model program for future regional initiatives is the four-county **Come Farm With Us program**. This initiative includes Lewis, Jefferson, Oneida, and St. Lawrence Counties and is one of the most successful and promising regional programs in the state. Come Farm With Us is a marketing initiative designed to promote, educate, and encourage farmers from outside the region to discover this area's farmland.

The **North Country Dairy Viability Initiative** is an effort to have producers, manufacturers, education institutions, cooperatives, Lewis County Industrial Development Agency, and county individuals meet, plan and work together on issues that affect the dairy value chain in northern New York.

### **NEED**

Issues, needs, and opportunities do not end at municipal or county borders. In almost every type of agricultural enhancement project or program, a large and diverse participation effort will significantly increase beneficial impacts and influence. For example, both the Come Farm With Us and North Country Branding initiatives would be much less effective if they targeted a smaller geographic area or product base. Certainly, Lewis County is part of a region that, when banded together, is stronger than the sum of its parts.

### **ACTION STEPS**

#### **A. Encourage broad-based regional support for Agricultural Enhancement implementation**

Lewis County is an important part of a larger region. This association should be the focal point for the agricultural enhancement programs outlined in this plan. In general, we should encourage more communication and idea-sharing between agricultural support professionals, regional entrepreneurs, and the community.

In general, **Lewis County should pursue the widest possible cooperation for each ag-related initiative**. Furthermore, rather than defining a specific area, we should continually look for opportunities to integrate communities that share our concerns and goals into our projects.

#### **B. Establish a process for continued investment**

Implementation of the agricultural enhancement plan should not focus solely on individual projects and events. Rather, a process should be established to ensure for continued investment and support for agricultural initiatives. County staff

should work with the local support network (Cornell, Tug Hill, etc.) to establish a long-term enhancement procedure that includes monitoring implementation steps, critiquing existing efforts, funding, and identifying new opportunities.

The primary responsibility for implementation, in part, depends on the level of county investment in staff and matching grant funds. However, opportunities for a lead role are present for all of the county's agricultural support groups such as Lewis County Planning, Lewis County Local Development Corporation (specifically for funding initiatives and grants), Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, the Tug Hill Commission, existing cooperatives, or an agricultural economic development coordinator (potential future staff position).

As a first step, the county should designate an "implementation committee" to begin prioritizing activities and setting the plan in motion. This committee should include members from as many of the aforementioned groups as possible as well as representatives from the farm community (farmers, farm bureau, wood products, etc.).

### **C. Encourage cooperatives to foster innovation**

Lewis County cooperatives should be encouraged to establish programs, incentives, and funds to help farmers transition into diversification.

Cooperatives are well-positioned to identify investors and investment opportunities and should be encouraged to move enhancement initiatives forward. For example, these efforts could include assistance with the development and testing of products, marketing, transitioning lands to new farmers, assisting with research and development (e.g., grant assistance), and help to take some of the risk out of transitioning to new product development and/or technologies. (Note: these activities could be undertaken by existing or newly formed cooperatives.)

#### **Cooperatives helping to enhance local agriculture**

As an outcome of a prior agricultural planning effort, the Lowville Producers Dairy Cooperative, with the support of the Lewis County Legislature, Lewis County Planning Department, the IDA, the Chamber of Commerce, a USDA Rural Development grant, and member investment, established a state-of-the-art Milk Component Testing Lab in Lowville.

The lab, the only one of its kind in the area, increased the accuracy and turnaround time of milk testing for dairy farmers (the lab screens for Antibiotics, Bacteria, Water Content, Butterfat Protein Solids and SCC).

### **D. Continue support for the regional "Come Farm with Us" program**

As previously mentioned, this program is one of the region's most successful agricultural initiatives. Currently, Lewis County supports this program with a budget of \$7,500. Additional support for the Come Farm with Us program is provided by grants, member items, private companies, and in-kind support from

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County staff and volunteers. If only one farmer is attracted to our community and can keep farmland operational and viable, this investment is already paying positive dividends. Lewis County should continue to support this important promotional and attraction program.

**E. Support regional ag-economic development**

Explore formal partnerships with Jefferson County's Agricultural Development Corporation. The primary purpose of this regional entity should remain the advancement of agricultural economic development opportunities. This group could also be responsible for establishing and monitoring an agricultural economic development specialist staff position to and setting up the business development/entrepreneurial programs outlined in this plan. In general, every effort should be made to share resources with surrounding counties.

**F. Establish an agricultural economic development specialist position**

Lewis County's primary industry needs the support and attention of government. An economic development specialist's role would be to help implement the recommendations outlined in this plan and act as a champion of Lewis County agriculture. The position could be shared with other local counties or set up locally. In either scenario, the specialist should take advantage of the vast knowledge and resources already available and work to tie these efforts together into a comprehensive program.

**G. Work to conquer insular attitudes**

Since Lewis County has a smaller population base than surrounding counties, a common concern regarding regional initiatives is that our needs will be lost and we will not reap benefits of cooperation. However, it is more likely that the opposite is true. By teaming with larger counties, we will be able to tap into larger professional and knowledge base and have a louder political voice for lobbying locally, through the state, and nationally. If we choose to be isolated, our voice is more easily silenced or ignored.

We should start by highlighting the benefits and success stories of existing cooperative efforts to our community through various available media outlets (radio, newspaper, etc.). Further, we should highlight the accomplishments of other regions whose entrepreneurs and agricultural professionals worked outside of traditional boundaries to achieve economic success to speak with our community.

## RECOMMENDATION #2 TARGET AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

### **EXISTING PROGRAMS**

Lewis County and the region have been actively working to bring research and development facilities to the area. For example, the **Town of Lowville** recently sponsored a grant application to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for funding to support the planning and coordination of a regional Agricultural Business Park Model. Requested funds would help realize the physical development of an ag-business park designed to promote ag-economic development, research, education and tourism.

In a similar effort, **Jefferson County Community College** has been leading an initiative to establish the Agricultural Research Institute (ARI), a regional research and educational program looking to “create new knowledge in production and processing of Northern New York agricultural products.” Senator Jim Wright recently announced a \$50,000 allocation to support start-up of the ARI program.

In an attempt to encourage Lewis County producers to add value to raw products, an effort is underway with the support of Lewis County government, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County, and the Town of Lowville to establish a **community kitchen/incubator**. The facility would encourage cooperative buying power and distribution among and enable small-scale producers to develop finished products.

### **NEED**

Municipalities and counties interested in economic development and growth are constantly targeting R&D facilities and high-tech businesses. The general theory is that along with R&D, an influx of high paying jobs will follow and quality of life in the region will improve. Furthermore, the establishment of research and development facilities will often generate a clustering effect establishing an area or region as “specialists” in a certain industry or process. The City of Austin, Texas, for example, became a high-tech hub when the region was seen as the leader in chip fabrication research and development (microprocessors for computers).

### **ACTION STEPS**

Our vision for agriculture, discussed in the plan’s introduction section, calls for Lewis County to be at the “forefront of agricultural innovation.” To realize this vision we must continue to promote entrepreneurialism and ensure that the tools needed to be successful are available to farm operators and agri-business.

#### **A. Maintain regional focus for Agricultural Research and Development**

As with most efforts discussed in this chapter (and plan), regional cooperation is the key to advancing research and development initiatives. Whatever the focus of

future initiatives, all effort should be made to integrate the participation of farmers, businesspeople and staff from surrounding counties and agricultural support agencies.

Lewis County should continue to tie in efforts with Jefferson County and regional groups to establish incubator space for new businesses, conduct high-tech agriculture-related research, deal with (and take advantage of) globalization and global markets, and establish a community kitchen for new product testing and bridging the gap to diversification. The county should lobby for and take advantage of opportunities available with universities looking to conduct applied local research. In general, these initiatives should strive to develop a closer connection between research and local production.

**B. Support development of an agricultural business park**

Lewis County should work closely with Jefferson County's Agricultural Research Initiative to establish a Research and Development facility. It is not imperative that the structure be located in Lewis County, but rather that its facilities and resources are available to our farmers. To ensure this type of regional cooperation, Lewis County farmers should be encouraged to participate on any advisory or review boards.

**C. Support development of facilities for new product development and testing**

Lewis County should continue to tie in efforts with Jefferson County and regional groups to establish incubator space for new businesses, high-tech agriculture-related research, and a community kitchen for new product testing and bridging the gap to diversification. The county should take advantage of opportunities available with universities looking to conduct applied local research.

## RECOMMENDATION #3 MAINTAIN OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### **EXISTING PROGRAMS**

#### Soil and Water Conservation District

A significant amount of the environmental planning support for farmers is provided by Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District. In addition to helping farmers with their agricultural assessment data, Soil and Water works on a variety of environmental and land-based issues including nutrient management plans, streambed stabilization, habitat restoration, and soil mapping. One of Soil and Water's most important services is helping farmers work through environmental problems. Until recently, funding had only been available to conduct Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)<sup>14</sup> in the Mill Creek Watershed – a relatively small portion of the county. The district was recently awarded an Agricultural Non-Point Source Abatement and Control grant for providing AEM in the Black River watershed (over half the county). The \$36,540 grant will allow the district to work with producers and review a series of farm management practices including barnyard management, manure storage, nutrient management, distance to stream, erosion potentials, etc. This data will be used to locate potential environmental concerns and leverage funding for future mitigation efforts.



*Wildlife Plot Hydro Seeding: Soil and Water Conservation District staff seeding and stabilizing an abandoned log landing.*

#### USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The USDA NRCS works in a close partnership with the Soil and Water Conservation District in a shared office. Through this partnership NRCS assists the district with bringing USDA conservation cost-sharing programs into the county and provides additional technical support to landowners.

### **NEED**

Dairy farming can be a land-intensive activity. As such, farming can sometimes result in adverse environmental impacts on water quality. Furthermore, New

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<sup>14</sup> New York State's Agricultural Environmental Management program is designed to help agricultural operations identify and address farm related non-point source pollution.

York State is now requiring State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permits for medium and large-sized Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).<sup>15</sup> For many Lewis County farmers, this level of environmental regulation is new and may result in a significant financial burden due to insufficient staff and funding for AEM programs.

## **ACTION STEPS**

### **A. Maintain and enhance support for farmers dealing with environmental issues**

In Lewis County, the land itself is our economy. We must work to develop a comprehensive understanding of these resources to better address the issues facing our economic base.

#### Continue to develop and make state-of-the-art digital data available

Lewis County should continue to maintain digital tax parcel data and ensure it is available for use by our agricultural support network. As a first step, the county could apply for a grant through the New York State Department of Archives and Records Administration to conduct a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) needs assessment. This study would identify precise users, tasks, and opportunities for expanded GIS use in the county. In addition, the county should work to advance the digitization of all soil data in the county (digitization work is ongoing). Tax parcel data, combined with detailed soil information is a strong farmland planning tool for use in dealing with environmental issues, tax assessments, purchase of development rights programs, and land use planning.

#### Support Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District

Lewis County should continue to support staff and the office to complete comply with state and federal water pollution regulations. At existing funding levels, only 1/3 of the county will be completed in the next three years. Lewis County should work with Soil and Water and apply for grants to help fund and maintain their Agricultural Environmental Management program. In addition, local funding is needed as a match for awarded grants.

#### Develop incentives to promote Best Management Practices

To encourage broad-based participation in environmental management programs, Lewis County should develop an incentive program that rewards farmers for pro-actively addressing environmental issues. Incentives could include full cost-sharing for development of management plans and recognition of success through awards or a special designations. Furthermore, farms following an approved management plan could receive special access to county grants and loan funding.

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<sup>15</sup> For more information on the New York State's CAFO program please see: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/cafohome.html>

*Example: New York City Watershed Agricultural Program*

New York City's Watershed Agricultural Program was developed to reduce the potential adverse environmental impacts from agriculture and to protect water quality in its watersheds. In addition to aiming to protect drinking water, the voluntary program promotes agriculture (farming and forestry) as the primary land use in the watershed. Farmers are encouraged to participate through incentives including cost-sharing for Best Management Practices and assistance in the development of "Whole Farm Plans" that address a series of environmental-related issues. The plans include recommendations for soil erosion control, animal waste management, plant nutrient management, domestic animal pathogen management and chemical and pesticide management.<sup>16</sup> For more information please see [www.nycwatershed.org](http://www.nycwatershed.org).

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.mtnforum.org/resources/library/nywac96a.htm>



## SECTION E: CONCLUSION

This plan provides a strategy for enhancing Lewis County Agriculture. The recommendations and ideas presented here range from addressing the education of youth and the community to improving the business management techniques of individual farmers to encouraging government investment and support for agriculture. In an effort to coordinate these activities, the county should **establish an implementation committee** to begin the process of prioritization and moving action steps to reality.

The Agricultural Enhancement Plan Committee's first effort at prioritization is found in Section A: Introduction and Primary Recommendations. This section includes a review of activities that should be the focus of initial

implementation steps. Within this section and where appropriate, approximate costs and potential roles have been assigned. It is our hope that upon adoption of this plan, Lewis County will move forward with as many of these actions as possible. Furthermore, to be successful, implementation of the ideas presented in this plan will need widespread support and investment. We encourage broad-based participation from the many agricultural support organizations, residents, businesspeople, and government officials and leaders throughout the region to help to ensure that agriculture remains a viable and vital component of our community and way of life.





## **SECTION F: APPENDIX**

### Included Resources:

Implementation Summary

Municipal Zoning Regulations Summary

Map 1: Farm Locations in Lewis County

**IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY**

The following includes a summary of the recommendations and action steps outlined within this plan. While the Primary Recommendations (Section A) discuss possible priorities from various sections of the plan, this table presents a chapter by chapter list of strategies with page references.

<b>Goal/Recommendation/Action Step</b>	<b>Page</b>
Goal: Improve the Community’s Understanding of Agriculture and its Importance to the County’s Economy and Quality of Life	14
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B. Agricultural Investment Program	17
C. Public Relations	17
D. Promote Agricultural Land Uses	18
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A. Enhance the presence of agriculture in schools	21
B. Continue and expand efforts to educate youth who are interested in agriculture to acquire hands-on, practical experience.	21
<u>Recommendation #3</u> : Enhance the general community’s understanding and appreciation of agriculture	22
A. Take advantage of all opportunities for advertising and promotion of agriculture	22
B. Celebrate success	23
C. Encourage the “non-farm public” to interact with agriculture	24
D. Address and resolve conflicts between agriculture and non-farm community	24

<b>Goal/Recommendation/Action Step</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Goal: Increase the Profitability of Agriculture in Lewis County</b>	<b>27</b>
<u>Recommendation #1</u> : Continue and enhance existing marketing efforts	28
A. Support local marketing programs	30
B. Take advantage of programs from outside the county	31
C. Take advantage of local events	31
<u>Recommendation #2</u> : Identify and take advantage of new marketing opportunities	32
A. Encourage use of the web to sell Lewis County products	33
B. Gain access and generate a better understanding of local, regional, and statewide markets	34
C. Take a regional approach to marketing	34
D. Continually Revisit Marketing Efforts	35
<u>Recommendation #3</u> : Encourage diversification and value-added initiatives	36
A. Encourage diversification in all of its forms	37
B. Take advantage of existing efforts and infrastructure	38
C. Provide seed money for diversification of agriculture	38
D. Target Forest Products and Wood Processing	40
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F. Support entrepreneurs interested in organic and natural food production	42
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<u>Recommendation #4</u> : Ensure that those involved with agriculture have access to the tools necessary to be successful in business	46
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E. Getting value out of the land	51
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<b>Goal/Recommendation/Action Step</b>	<b>Page</b>
Goal: Increase the Competitiveness of the County and Region in Future Farming Initiatives	53
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A. Encourage broad-based regional support for Agricultural Enhancement implementation	54
B. Establish a process for continued investment	54
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<u>Recommendation #3: Maintain our Natural Environment</u>	59
A. Maintain and enhance support for farmers dealing with environmental issues	60

## Municipal Zoning Regulations

Source: Lewis County Planning Department

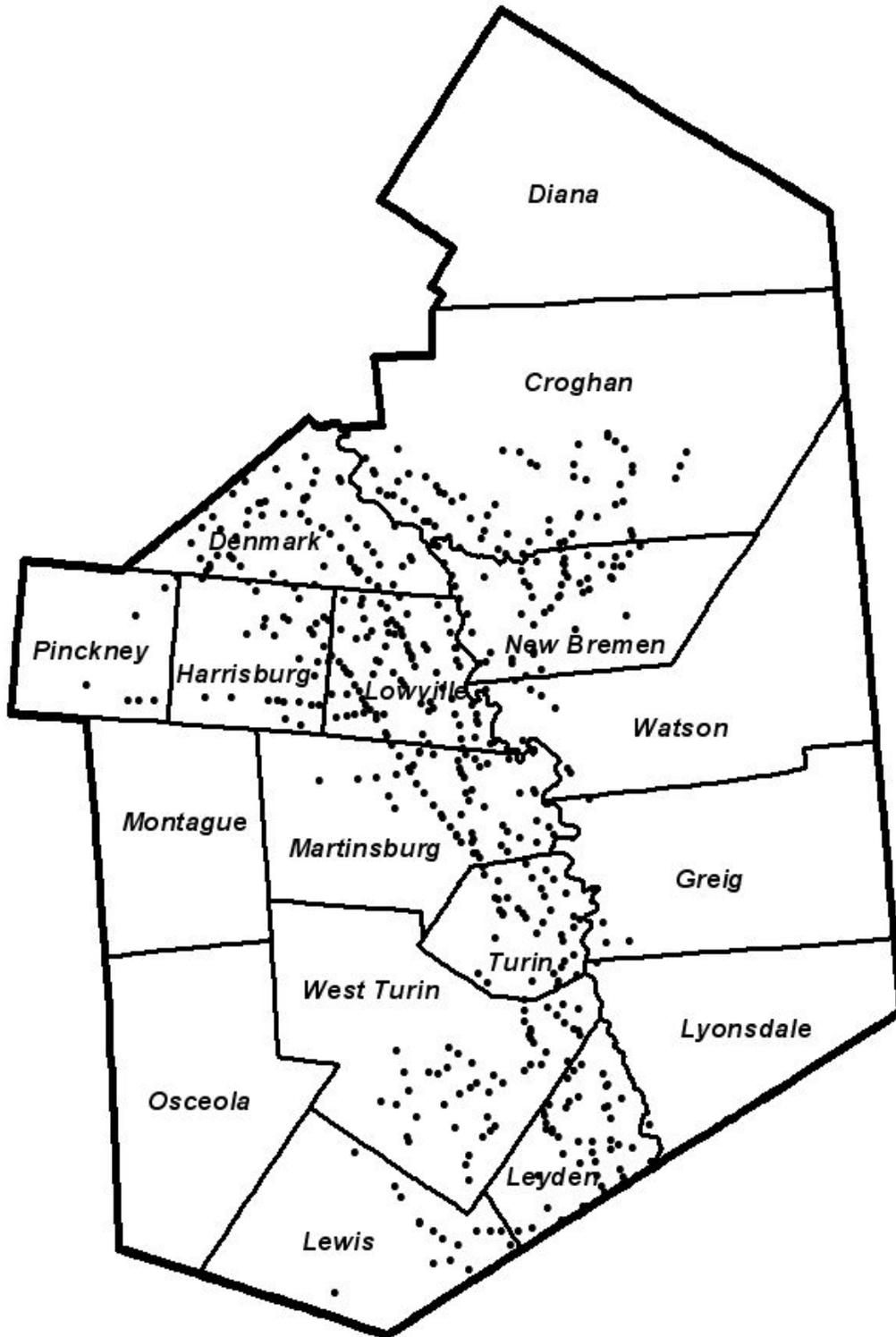
	Ag-related Zoning Regulations*	No Ag-specific Zoning **	Not Applicable***
<b>TOWNS</b>			
Croghan		X	
Denmark	X		
Diana			X
Greig	X		
Harrisburg			X
Lewis	X		
Leyden			X
Lowville	X		
Lyonsdale			X
Martinsburg	X		
Montague		X	
New Bremen	X		
Osceola	X		
Pinckney	X		
Turin	X		
Watson			X
West Turin	X		
<b>VILLAGES</b>			
Castorland			X
Constableville	Same as T/West Turin		
Copenhagen			X
Croghan		X	
Harrisville			X
Lowville	X		
Lyons Falls		X	
Port Leyden		X	
Turin	X		

\* Municipality has zoning that includes special regulations or districts pertaining to agriculture

\*\* Municipality has zoning that does not include any special regulations or districts pertaining to agriculture.

\*\*\* Municipality either has no zoning or the information was not available at this time

**Map: Location of Farms in Lewis County**



Source: Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District, 2004