

# Summary of Goals, Policies and Recommended Actions

ERIE COUNTY AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN UPDATE

September 2025

**Erie County, NY** 

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

**Topic 1: Farmland Resources**Goal 1: Keep high quality farmland in agricultural production.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support municipalities, land trusts and farmland owners in efforts to place more land under private easements or preserve farms through Purchase of Development Rights.	Provide information to municipalities and farmland owners about protection programs and encourage them to confer with the Western New York Land Conservancy.	- WNYLC - DEP	- Municipalities - NYS AGM	Medium
Encourage farmland owners to include their land in Agricultural Districts.	Provide information to municipalities and farmland owners about the Agricultural District program, including opportunities to add parcels during the annual open enrollment period	- DEP - CCE Erie - SWCD - Farmers	- WNYLC - Municipalities - Assessors - Erie County RPTS	Ongoing
Encourage participation in Agricultural Assessments to those	Provide ongoing education to local assessors about agricultural assessments.	- SWCD	- RPTS	Ongoing
who are eligible, including those who have been traditionally excluded from the program but who may qualify.	Provide information to farmland owners about the agricultural assessments and the process for applying.	- SWCD - DEP - Local Assessors	- RPTS	Ongoing

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Topic 1: Farmland Resources

Goal 1: Keep high quality farmland in agricultural production.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Advocate for responsible siting of large-scale solar facilities that avoids development on farmland.	Work with the NYS Legislature and agencies to develop and implement policies to minimize the impact of solar development on agricultural lands.	- DEP	<ul><li>Erie County</li><li>Farm Bureau</li><li>AFPB</li><li>FPC</li><li>Municipalities</li></ul>	Medium
Adopt County policies and support municipalities with the development of laws or regulations that would limit the impacts of solar energy development on agriculture.	Connect municipalities with model laws and other resources to assist in preparing and adopting provisions in local solar and other local laws and land use regulations that would limit the impact of solar and other energy projects on agricultural resources.	- DEP	- NYSERDA - NYS AGM - Municipalities	Immediate
	Establish a County PILOT policy that incentivizes solar development on brownfields and other sites that do not use active farmland. For example, offer higher host community benefit fees for developments that avoid farmland or require the creation of a mitigation fund to help preserve farmland.	- DEP - ECIDA	- WNYLC	Immediate
Advocate for mitigation when solar energy development occurs on high-quality farmland.	Provide information and guidance to local governments during review of solar energy development projects to help ensure that mitigation is incorporated into the project to minimize impacts on agricultural lands.	- DEP	- NYSERDA - NYS AGM - Municipalities	Ongoing
Assist municipalities in preparing Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and zoning updates that support farmland preservation and agriculture.	Continue to allocate funds for the municipal grant program administered to support the preparation of local Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans, Comprehensive Plans, and zoning updates that support farmland preservation and agriculture.	- DEP	- Municipalities	Ongoing

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Topic 2: Farmland Viability
Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of Erie County farms.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
	Expand the Erie Grown and the Erie Grown Passport programs.	- DEP - CCE Erie	- NYS AGM	Ongoing
Continue to promote local farm products and agritourism operations on farms.	Continue to promote local agricultural products and on-farm attractions through the Erie Grown Passport, Taste NY, and I Love New York tourism promotions and other programs.	- DEP - VBN	- CCE Erie	Ongoing
Encourage and assist farmers to incorporate direct-to-consumer sales	Provide information to farm operators on grant funding and sources of technical assistance to help them add processing packing or obtain certifications	- CCE Erie via Taste NY	- NYS AGM - Farm Credit East - USDA	Medium
and other value-added enterprises into their farm operations.	Consider adding CSAs to list of providers for Erie County wellness benefits.	- Erie County	- N/A	Medium
	Continue to provide funding for municipalities to update zoning regulations through the Erie County Municipal Planning Grant Program.	- DEP	- Municipalities	Ongoing
Support local governments in maintaining and revising farm- friendly land use regulations.	<ul> <li>Work with municipalities to revise local zoning laws to:</li> <li>Eliminate provisions in zoning and other land use regulations that unreasonably restrict standard farm practices (See local zoning evaluations in Appendix C);</li> <li>Accommodate roadside stands, on-farm markets, agritourism, and other value-added enterprises on farms, including agritourism. Ensure that permitting procedures and review criteria are not unreasonably restrictive, and;</li> <li>Accommodate secondary businesses on farms subject to appropriate safeguards.</li> </ul>	- DEP	- Municipalities	Ongoing
	Work with local code enforcement officers to interpret building code regulations to avoid unreasonable restrictions on farm operations.	- DEP	<ul><li>Municipalities</li><li>NYS AGM</li><li>CCE Erie</li></ul>	Ongoing
Encourage and support farm ransition and succession planning.	Encourage continued support for FarmNET, Farmland for a New Generation Regional Navigators, and other programs that help farmers with succession/transition planning.	- CCE Erie	- AFT - FarmNET - WNYLC	Ongoing

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Topic 2: Farmland Viability
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Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support programs to help farmers manage stress.	Provide information to farmers and their families about resources to help identify and manage stress.	- FarmNET	- CCE Erie - NYS Office of Mental Health	Ongoing
Reduce barriers for new and beginning farmers.	Provide information about existing programs and funding, including AFT's Farmland for a New Generation Regional Navigator program.	- CCE Erie	- AFT - WNYLC	Ongoing
Advocate for State and Federal policies to improve access to qualified and affordable farm labor.	Work with Erie County Farm Bureau to advocate for programs that help farms obtain suitable workers and for changes in State and Federal farm labor regulations that would benefit farms in Erie County.	- Erie County Farm Bureau	- FPC - NYFB - state and federal legislators	Medium
Prepare Erie County youth	Encourage and support programs such FFA, BOCES, and 4-H for youth to increase awareness and develop skills that would be useful in farm jobs.	- CCE Erie - BOCES - School Districts	- FPC - NYS AGM	Ongoing
for careers in agriculture and food systems.	Encourage Erie Community College and other institutions to include opportunities for agricultural careers, including internships and partnerships with other schools.	- DEP	- ECC - Erie County Farm Bureau - CCE Erie	Medium
Encourage internships or apprenticeships on farms and agriculture-related businesses.	Facilitate connections between farmers and agricultural education institutions to network and provide information for those interested in establishing internships or apprenticeships on farms and agricultural related businesses.	- DEP	- USDA (grants) - CCE Erie - NYS AGM	Ongoing
Encourage farms to consider diversifying crops in response to changing markets and climate.	Provide information to farmers about sources of funding and technical assistance to introduce new products.	- CCE Erie	- USDA (grants) - NYS AGM - SWCD	Ongoing
Support workforce development, apprenticeships, training, youth education	Continue to support organizations conducting workforce development and eduwcation in the agriculture sector and related fields, focusing on the need for locally based agriculture workers and future farmers in the county.	- BOCES	- WIB - Colleges and Universities - School Districts - CCE Erie	Ongoing

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Topic 2: Farmland Viability
Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the economic viability of Erie County farms.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Remove unreasonable land use restrictions on farming and related businesses in urban, suburban and rural municipalities.	Provide information and technical assistance to municipalities to remove unreasonable restrictions identified in the zoning evaluations.	- DEP	- Municipalities - NYS AGM	Ongoing
Connect small and mid-sized farms interested in institutional and wholesale markets to	Provide information to farms about training programs, resources, and partners that could help them market to institutions.	- DEP - CCE Erie	- NYS AGM (funding)	Ongoing
training and technical assistance to support their successful entry into these markets.	Facilitate connections and training opportunities with training providers such as CCE Harvest NY.	- DEP - CCE Erie	- NYS AGM (funding)	Medium
Support efforts to inform farm operations about sources of funding for capital investments, marketing and other needs and encourage farms to prepare in advance for opportunities.	Provide information about potential grant opportunities and encourage farms to prepare project concepts in advance for potential grant opportunities so that farms are competitive when relevant funding opportunities arise.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - Farm Credit East/ lenders	Immediate
	To the greatest extent possible, adapt existing economic development funding resources to support farm investment needs, e.g. Microenterprise funds, USDA Rural Development Revolving Loan Funds, etc.	- ECIDA	- USDA Rural Development - DEP	Long-Term

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Continue to promote agritourism, CSAs, and farm retail shops in Erie County.	Continue to administer and expand the Erie Grown, Taste NY, and Find Fresh Erie marketing efforts through Visit Buffalo Niagara, and other programs that publicize and promote sales of local farm products.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - VBN	Ongoing
Continue to develop the Frie	Support near-term, Phase I site development with funding and technical assistance.	- DEP - ECIDA	- Town of Evans	Immediate
Continue to develop the Erie County Agribusiness Park in partnership with the Erie County IDA. When the Agribusiness Park is operational, support its mission.	Further clarify and define the highest probability and highest impact activities the Agribusiness Park can support in the near-term given the anticipated state of infrastructure and site development. Once identified, develop requests for proposals and market to operators that can perform activities.	- DEP - ECIDA	- CCE Erie - Invest Buffalo Niagara - Empire State Development	Immediate
Support additional aggregation, distribution, and processing, including cooperative ventures.	Facilitate an inventory of existing capacities and operators across the supply chain to identify gaps, potential partnerships, and opportunities for expansions that support overall aggregation and distribution for producers, processors, and purchasers.	- DEP	<ul> <li>CCE Erie</li> <li>FFWNY</li> <li>ECIDA</li> <li>FeedMore WNY</li> <li>Eden Valley Growers</li> <li>University at Buffalo</li> <li>Regional Counties and Stakeholders</li> </ul>	Medium
	Support initiatives with GIS mapping, grant identification and other project support where relevant County skills and capabilities support project advancement.	- DEP	- Erie County	Ongoing
	When appropriate, provide letters of support for new aggregators/distributors seeking grant funds.	- AFPB - FPC	- DEP	Ongoing

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Leverage County food procurement to feature Erie County products to the greatest extent possible.	Develop a geographic preference bid and procurement process friendly to small and mediumsized farms for County managed food services associated with Erie County Holding Center and Correctional Facility and Meals on Wheels.	- Erie County	- Purchasing - CCE Erie - NYS AGM	Medium
	Identify supply chain supports (pick-up and delivery, storage, etc.) that the County can engage to facilitate order fulfillment and decrease the costs of entry for small and mid-sized farms.	- Erie County	- ECIDA - FeedMore WNY - Produce Peddlers - FreshFix	Medium
Support marketing initiatives for local farm products	Further develop and expand Erie Grown label by increasing prominence at farmers markets, local events, etc.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - Erie County Farm Bureau - SWCD - TasteNY	Immediate

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Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Support policies which increase purchases of local farm products by schools and institutions.	Develop and distribute educational materials to school districts, County departments, and other institutions outlining opportunities, incentives, and benefits for purchasing local food. Include information about programs such as Farm to School, USDA's Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program, and New York's 30% Initiative.	- CCE Erie - FPC	- NYS AGM - DEP	Immediate
	Organize workshops or webinars for procurement officers, school nutrition staff, and the County Bureau of Purchasing to explain how to source local products, navigate procurement guidelines, and connect with local farmers.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - NYS AGM	Immediate
	Leverage Erie Grown to improve connections between local farmers and institutions. This could include an online directory or matchmaking event and could focus on identifying farmers who meet institutional needs, such as scale, delivery capabilities, or certifications.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - FPC	Immediate
	Implement a local food procurement policy for County-run institutions, such as correctional facilities, hospitals, or senior meal programs, to demonstrate feasibility and set a precedent for other institutions	- Erie County	- DEP	Medium
	Advocate for streamlined procurement processes or additional funding at the state level to support schools and institutions in purchasing local food. This can be done through resolutions or direct advocacy by County leadership.	- FPC	- DEP - Erie County Farm Bureau - CCE - Erie County	Ongoing
	Provide technical assistance to both farmers and institutions on topics like production scaling, food safety compliance, and menu planning with local products.	- CCE Erie	- DEP - NOFA-NY	Immediate

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Leverage Workforce development programs and partners to maximize farm and food business workforce quality.  Leverage workforce development programs and partners to maximize farm and food business workforce quality.  Leverage FeedMore Western NY's new facility as a farm and food service workforce development incubator: The new facility will also offer classroom and training spaces for workforce development programs, such as the Readying Individuals for Success and Employment (RISE) program, which can help train individuals in agricultural and food-related careers.  Develop internship or apprenticeship programs for jobs that support farm and food business operations including but not limited to: meat processing, ag-tech, truck drivers, etc.	- FeedMore - WNY Workforce Center	<ul><li>Erie County</li><li>BOCES</li><li>CCE Erie</li><li>K-12 schools and colleges</li></ul>	Medium	
	for jobs that support farm and food business operations including but not limited to: meat	- BOCES - ECC - WNY Workforce Center	- CCE - K-12 schools and Colleges	Medium

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# **Topic 4: Water Resources, Environmental Protection, and Climate Resiliency** *Goal 1: Protect water and environmental quality and ensure climate resilience.*

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
	Encourage municipalities to periodically inspect and clean roadside ditches.	- EC DPW	- DEP - Municipalities - Cornell Local Roads Program	Ongoing
Support drainage policies and practices that benefit farm operations.	Encourage municipalities to undertake drainage studies and create drainage districts as needed to coordinate the construction and maintenance of drainage facilities.	- SWCD	- Municipalities - SWCD - NYS DEC - DEP	Immediate
	Provide information and technical assistance to farmers to obtain drainage easements from neighboring properties to ensure the ability to maintain drainageways downstream from farm fields.	- SWCD	- Municipalities - NYS DEC	Immediate
Support programs that provide funding and technical assistance to farms to install best management practices for water quality, environmental	Advocate for continued funding for NYS grants, including Agricultural Environmental Management and Climate Resilient Farming and USDA NRCS and Farm Bill programs, that provide technical assistance and cost sharing for farms to install best management practices.	- SWCD	- NYS AGM - USDA	Ongoing
protection, and climate resiliency.	Establish a permanent fund to assist farms and agribusinesses impacted by damage from severe storms	- Erie County Legislature	- SWCD	Medium
Reduce negative impacts of recent changes to NYS wetlands regulations on farms.	Advocate for reasonable protections and administration of NYS wetlands regulations that do not place excessive burdens on farm practices.	- NYFB - Erie County Legislature	- SWCD	Ongoing
Eliminate the risk of fire and harm	Enforce the recent ban on untethered use of sky lanterns in Erie County.	- Erie County Legislature	- AFPB	Immediate
to animals from unregulated sky lanterns and mylar balloons.	Educate the public to discourage the release of mylar balloons to reduce risk of harm to farm animals and damage to equipment.	- Erie County Legislature	- AFPB	Immediate

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Topic 5: Public Appreciation of Agriculture

Goal 1: Increase public appreciation of farming and support for agriculture and related businesses among local decision-makers.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Continue to provide information and training to local officials and decision-makers regarding farm practices and benefits of agriculture.	Continue training sessions and farm tours for local officials.	- DEP	- CCE Erie - Municipalities	Ongoing
Promote local agriculture and agritourism.	Promote farmers markets through the Erie Grown label, farmer's market online map, and Passport program.	- DEP - FPC - CCE Erie - Visit Buffalo Niagara	- Municipalities	Ongoing
and agricumsm.	Have a presence at Erie County Fair and other agriculture- related events such as festivals and conferences.	- DEP - FPC	- Erie County Agricultural Society	Ongoing
Encourage youth education through Agriculture in the Classroom curriculum, 4-H, and FFA.	Continue operation of NYS Ag in the Classroom and CCE youth education programs and demonstrate successes and impacts yearly.	- CCE Erie - FPC	- Erie County Agricultural Society - Erie County Legislature	Ongoing
	Support school districts engaged in or interested in FFA programs with information and technical assistance.	- CCE Erie - DEP - FPC	- Erie County Farm Bureau	Ongoing
Maintain support for Erie County CCE, SWCD, and Office of Agriculture.	Advocate for continued funding for CCE Erie, SWCD and Office of Agriculture in the yearly County budget.	- DEP	- Erie County Legislature - Erie County Farm Bureau	Ongoing

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Topic 6: Urban Agriculture

Goal 1: Expand opportunities for urban agriculture, including commercial growers, community and school gardens, and home gardening.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Engage in an ongoing discussion with the City of Buffalo to support urban agriculture.	Share information with and maintain communications with City of Buffalo staff and officials regarding policies and programs that affect urban agriculture in the City, including obtaining agricultural assessment for commercial growers, making land available for community and school gardens either permanently or with 5-year leases with an extended notice of termination, and supporting safe home gardening.	- DEP - CCE Erie - FPC	- City of Buffalo staff and officials	Immediate
Include organizations that represent urban agriculture interests in	Continue to have a farmer representing urban agriculture on the AFPB.	- AFPB	- Erie County Legislature - DEP	Ongoing
policies and decisions relating to agriculture and land use	Continue to involve urban growers and advocates in the FPC.	- FPC	- DEP	Ongoing
Encourage municipalities to expand opportunities for farming in villages, suburban towns and cities, including enacting reasonable zoning provisions to allow for on-site sales and building construction by right, facilitating access to public water supplies, and administering agricultural assessments.	Provide information and technical assistance to municipalities to assist with zoning changes to better accommodate urban agriculture, including reasonable provisions for raising chickens and potentially other animals, and accommodating onsite sales, processing and other related enterprises.	- DEP - FPC	- Municipalities	Ongoing
	Encourage municipalities to adopt and implement reasonable water access policies that facilitate water hookups at reasonable rates to support agricultural production and related enterprises.	- DEP - FPC	- Municipalities	Immediate
	Provide information and technical assistance to local assessors and urban growers to facilitate agricultural assessments through the NYS Agricultural Districts Law to apply for eligible farm parcels.	- SWCD - DEP - FPC	- Municipalities - RPTS - Local Assessors	Ongoing

# **SUMMARY OF GOALS, POLICIES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Topic 6: Urban Agriculture

Goal 1: Expand opportunities for urban agriculture, including commercial growers, community and school gardens, and home gardening.

Policy	Actions	Lead	Partner(s)	Timeframe
Maintain and increase support for community gardens and home gardening in urban areas.	Encourage urban and suburban municipalities to make publicly owned land available to community gardens for 5-year leases with an extended notice of termination or permanently.	- FPC	- Municipalities	Long-Term
	Provide information about sources of assistance in obtaining garden beds and soil.	- FPC	- GGWNY - CCE Erie - SWCD - Buffalo Freedom Gardens	Ongoing
	Share information on safe growing in urban soils and make soil testing kits more readily available.	- Erie County	- GGWNY - CCE Erie - SWCD - FPC	Ongoing
Support the next generation of aspiring urban growers by developing a clearinghouse of information regarding support services and technical assistance.	Coordinate with other organizations to host workshops on the topics of starting an urban agriculture business or ancillary business.	- FPC	<ul> <li>Erie County Office of Health Equity</li> <li>CCE Erie</li> <li>GGWNY</li> <li>Other agencies/ organizations</li> <li>DEP</li> </ul>	Medium
	Support the inclusion of urban agriculture relevant information in traditional agricultural education mediums.	- CCE Erie - FPC	- DEP - AFPB	Ongoing
	Investigate the feasibility of assisting urban growers with procuring equipment necessary for their operations, such as retired fire hoses from municipal Fire Departments.	- FPC	- Municipalities - Tool Library	Medium

