

**Erie County will promote agriculture and food system solutions that advance farmland and environmental protection; strengthen ecosystem health; improve equitable access to healthy, local food; mitigate the impacts of climate change; and increase climate resiliency.**

Agriculture is necessary for human survival and is a major contributor to Erie County's economy, contributing over \$130 million in 2017. Of course, the history of agriculture in the County long predates these economic metrics, spanning thousands of years into the past to when Indigenous peoples first recognized the value of Erie County's fertile soils and microclimate found along the shores of Lake Erie.

Today, Erie County's agricultural resources are threatened by a variety of environmental and economic factors, and these threats are exacerbated by climate change. Generations of unchecked development have resulted in a massive loss of farmland, and contributed to the fragmentation of agricultural and natural lands, resulting in degraded habitat and land management challenges. Climate change is already impacting agriculture through increases in temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events.

The future of Erie County's agricultural land is uncertain. Our region's farmers are aging and most of our farmland will transfer into new hands in the coming years. As we look to the future, farming will need to be more inclusive to serve our whole community. Erie County will need to provide access and support to new and beginning farmers, especially farmers from Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee communities for their cultural farming practices.

Through the implementation of targeted actions, Erie County will be able to mitigate the impacts of climate change, strengthen our farms and food systems, increase climate resiliency, and improve access to locally grown, nutritious food for Erie County residents. As the impacts of climate change become more pronounced, the ways in which we farm and support the food system will be paramount in determining how resilient Erie County will be.