



2000 Annual Report

April 2000

"It puzzles me why a majority of our brightest scientists are not working on finding ways of production that enhance the environment, instead of always focusing on short term gain and high maintenance systems that seek to maximize production at any cost."
~~Phil Metzger
USDA-NRCS/
SoCNY RC&D



"Providing the link between a healthy environment and a sound economy"
~~Allan Savory
Albuquerque, NM

Farm Diversity Conference 2000



CHANGE CONTINUES

Phil Metzger, Project Coordinator

If I were to describe the past year at SoCNY RC&D I would say, "change continues". Our new rural business assistance program is being integrated into all of our other programs as "the way we do business". Recently, when describing how we provide assistance to rural enterprises, I stressed the importance of looking at the whole picture. After all, how can an agricultural or other rural entrepreneur succeed if all they are focusing on is how to produce a quality product alone. We came to realize that successful entrepreneurs consider the "business" side as well.

We have always had very capable technical assistance available for small farm operators interested in a walk on the alternative side. We have tried not to encourage exotic animals, crops or whatever, and instead encourage reducing risk by looking at the current market and realistic potential growth of any new markets. Look, if it were a "sure thing", then anyone and everyone would get rich at it. The fact is, there is always going to be risk, but we try to make sure it's a calculated risk. Anyone interested in Chinchillas?

The other side of what SoCNY RC&D does, the non-economic development side, is natural resource conservation. The two are, however, inseparable. If the resources aren't suitable for the enterprise, why does anyone think it's going to be

profitable over the long run? It makes sense that the less you have to adapt, "improve", or fight against the natural systems the more efficient and productive you are going to be. It's important to consider the environmental cost in any enterprise and pick suitable ventures for the land and water resources you have available. Even minor damage to your resources has a cost and eventually will doom an enterprise to failure. The challenge is to discover ways to sustain the enterprise by not only avoiding damage to the resource but to enhance and improve it.

It puzzles me why a majority of our brightest scientists are not working on finding ways of production that enhance the environment, instead of always focusing on short term gain and high maintenance systems that seek to maximize production at any cost. Fighting against the natural systems and stretching a resource beyond its capability doesn't have just an environmental cost. A classic example of this is growing corn on hillsides with marginal soils instead of managing high quality pasture, which is well suited to our soils and climate. We must ask ourselves, if competitively our yields are lower and costs are higher, is there a better option for utilizing that resource? As "change continues", I expect we'll learn more Holistic Management principles, such as working in concert with natural systems and considering the business side, in our pursuit of producing high quality local products.

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Livestock Program

Nancy Morey,
Livestock Specialist

Providing on-farm assistance to sheep and goat producers continues as the priority for the Livestock Program. This year, with the added funding from the Southern Tier Appalachia Regional Commission Agriculture Enterprise Grant, we were able to spend more time working with producers who are interested in direct marketing their products.

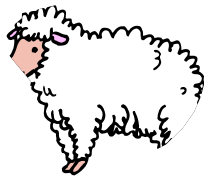
A new funding source for half of the Livestock Specialist's salary came from a USDA/NRCS Underserved Groups Grant awarded for the calendar year 2000. This grant was one of 3 awarded within the entire Northeast Region, and assures that services will be continued to our sheep and goat producers.

With the drought conditions we experienced last summer, our electronet fencing loan package was important to many producers to sustain their grazing season. Having a portable fence that can easily be moved daily, and which can conform to the shape of any area, helped many producers graze through the summer and fall without having to purchase additional hay.

Education is also another important component of our Livestock Program. With Heifer Project International funds, we were able to provide scholarships to selected program producers to attend seminars, conferences, and hands-on workshops. Many of these producers were then able to pass on the information they learned at programs sponsored by HPI or the RC&D.



*The Livestock
Program
has been
the
backbone
of the
SoCNY
RC&D
for 20 years.*



Central NY Pastured Livestock Project

Jim McLaughlin,
Farm Management Technician



Senator Nancy Lorraine Hoffman, Chair of the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee, recently announced NYS funding of \$95,000 to the SoCNY RC&D for a Sustainable Small Farm Pasture Raised Livestock Project. The focus of the grant is management intensive grazing for livestock, raising poultry on pasture, and direct marketing of these livestock and poultry products.

MPU

The Mobile Processing Unit was very busy during the 1999 processing season. Twelve (12) producers used the unit to process over 2400 chickens. The 2000 season already is filling up with June, July and part of August booked. The unit is continuing to be used by both start up producers as well as seasoned producers who can not afford the cost of their own processing equipment. A special thank you is given to Bob Banta who provides repair and upgrading of the equipment on the unit.

MRT

In our continuing efforts to assist livestock producers with direct marketing their products, SoCNY RC&D has designed and built a self-contained refrigerator/freezer trailer MRT (Mobile Refrigerator Trailer) which can be towed by a pickup truck.



To insure compliance with state regulations, RC&D staff met with representatives from NYS Ag & Markets for approval before the unit was built. The 16 foot trailer has: a refrigerated display case; two freezer units; stainless steel table; weighing scale; and a generator to power the equipment at a market or area where there is no electricity.

The unit was introduced at several Farmers Markets last fall and was well received by both market managers and market patrons.

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PASTURED POULTRY WEB SITES:

www.sunsite.unc.edu/farming-connection/grazing/pastpoul/mpu.htm
www.people.delphi.com/dvdw/ppa.htm
grit@apppa.org

Willow Biomass Project

Stacie Edick

Biomass Field Representative

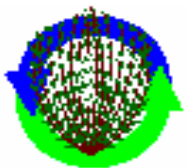
The Willow Biomass Project continues to grow. SoCNY RC&D is a member of the Salix Consortium, a group of organizations working to develop willow energy crops as a commercially viable, locally grown, renewable energy resource. One hundred acres of willow were planted in western New York in the Spring of 1998. An additional 200 acres were planted in the Spring of 1999 and 225 acres are scheduled for Spring of 2000.

This year the project will include the first independent Farmer Grower. A farmer in Chautauqua County will plant 25 acres of willow in the Spring of 2000. He will be responsible for all aspects of production including site preparation, weed control, planting and maintenance. Willow cuttings, specialized planting machinery, technical supervision and harvesting will be provided by the Consortium. This level of participation will be beneficial to the development of accurate economic models and improve future efforts of outreach to the local farming community. Other participants in the project have leased land to the Consortium, and all the work on that acreage is completed by Consortium partners and sub-contractors.

The Dunkirk Generating Station is the intended market for the willow biomass. Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation sold this plant to NRG Energy Inc., a subsidiary of Northern States Power, in 1999. NRG Energy Inc. has completed the retrofits to a pulverized coal boiler and installed the wood biomass handling system. If test burns are successful, the plant will be able to generate electricity with a fuel supply of 90% coal and 10% biomass. Half of this biomass could eventually be supplied by willow energy crops. Other sources of biomass could include manufacturing waste, forestry residues and other wood wastes.

SoCNY RC&D has worked on identification of potential landowners and farmers and the development of Grower Contracts and leases. SoCNY RC&D has also been closely involved in outreach and education activities. Stacie Edick is available to speak with various groups and brings the Willow Biomass informational display to events such as fairs and conferences. SoCNY RC&D is also exploring supplemental markets for willow crops such as basketry, pussy willow for the floral industry, and rustic furniture. Other potential energy related markets include institutional heating and pellet fuel for residential stoves. Potential fiber markets include paper and particle board.

For further information contact Stacie Edick at 607-334-3231, ext.117. stacie.edick@ny.usda.gov



Agri-Cluster NOT JUST A FARM VISIT

Linda LaRosa-Mosner,
Marketing Coordinator

Adopted 1999: Catatonk Valley Association (The 1st Agri-cluster Group)

The Agri-cluster is a rural 'back roads' economic development plan designed to create an economically viable trade area through development, expansions, and enhancement, of pre-existing farm and non-farm enterprises. Rural business owners located within close proximity of each other receive VIP support and assistance to develop a vibrant 'cluster' of 15 to 20 individual enterprises to maximize their potential and to meet national consumer standards. The enhanced products and services of 'cluster' businesses are then marketed cooperatively as a single entity.

In order to achieve and maintain this cluster, farm and non-farm local, state, federal and private sector agencies and organizations cooperatively support and assist the group. The results are an economically viable trade area that benefits individual rural businesses, the local community and region.

The Agri-cluster was developed by Linda LaRosa-Mosner, after four years of research that included over two hundred interviews with rural "back roads" business owners and case studies performed by the following: Cornell University, Farming Alternatives Program; Pennsylvania State University; Michigan State University and the University of Southern Illinois.

Tioga County agencies and the Candor Agri-cluster business participants have proven that pre-existing, farm and non-farm, family owned and operated enterprises can reach optimum levels of economic success if the support, time skills, and motivation are available. The resulting success is benefiting both the individual business and the County as a whole.

LIVESTOCK MARKET REPORT

Martha Goodsell, Market Report Coordinator

The Market Report compiled by South Central New York Resource Conservation and Development has seen many changes this year. John Mann, who took over the job from Linda LaRosa-Mosner, reported early in the 1999-2000 fiscal year. John focused on local events and businesses in his reporting. In July of 1999 the RC&D welcomed me, Martha Goodsell, to the position. My reports focus on marketing. I have addressed such issues as product packaging, on farm promotion, off farm promotion, and trends in the marketplace. I come to the agricultural arena from a small scale, diversified, alternative farming operation that is often reflected by my writings. Occasionally, I share my on-farm experiences with my audience. It helps the reader to relate to me, and my writings.

The Market Report has many readers through the Country Folks Newspaper. Some follow the articles, while others follow the auction reporting, which is a component of the report, along with the National Feedstuffs Market Review. SoCNY RC&D and I have been seeking ways to change the format of the Market Report to provide more useful information to the readers. This was a direct request from both the farmers and the auction houses that participate in the reporting program.

In the last decade, New York has seen the passing of many farms, auction houses and agriculture in general. I know that it will take many voices to change the current direction agriculture is headed in America. We believe that the Market Report is just one small voice that encourages farmers, offers realistic solutions, provides useful information for decision making purposes, and consistently speaks out on the farmer's behalf.

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www.norwich.net/~socnyrcd/rcd.htm

The SoCNY RC&D Project, Inc. mission is to improve the regions economic vitality through the wiser use of available human and natural resources.

Long Range Plan—2000-2004

GOALS:

- 1) Improve the Economic Viability for Agricultural and Other Rural Enterprises in Central New York State.
- 2) Increase the Utilization of and Knowledge about Forest Resources in Central New York State.
- 3) Strengthen the Working Relationships among Conservation & Development Agencies and Organizations in Central New York State.
- 4) Begin a Dialogue on Defining an Ideal Future Rural Landscape for Central New York State.

South Central New York Resource Conservation and Development Project, Inc., is a 501-C-3 not-for-profit organization, located in Norwich, New York. The SoCNY RC&D region covers twelve counties; Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Onondaga, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, and Tompkins.

SoCNY RC&D is a leader in natural resource conservation and rural economic development activities in the Central and Southern Tier regions of rural New York State. The partnership of federal, state, local and private organizations/agencies results in dollars brought into the region and the empowerment of rural residents.

The RC&D is a National Program

Making Things Happen!



**SOUTH CENTRAL NEW YORK
RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT, INC.**