



2001 Annual Report

April 2001

GRASSTRAVAGANZA 2000

Gives Producers Information They Are Looking For

By Maureen Knapp, Cobblestone Valley Farm, Cortland County

“Our elders tell us we have to do more than save what is left of traditional homelands. We need to contribute to an overall change of mind so that human kind can begin to initiate strategies which will preserve and sustain the environment that all cultures and nations share.”

Ruby Dunstan of the Lytton Indian Band

Over 200 people attended Grasstravaganza 2000 from as far away as Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas. The event was held at the Wyndham Hotel in Syracuse on October 27 & 28, 2000. Presenters included a veritable who’s who of eco-agriculture in the Northeast and throughout the country. Nationally known speaker’s Jo Robinson, author of Why Grassfed is Best, and co-author of The Omega Diet; Joel Salatin, author of Pastured Poultry Profits, Salad Bar Beef and You Can Farm; as well as Woody Lane, a livestock nutritionist and columnist for “The Shepherd” magazine, were highlighted presenters. On the local and regional level, speakers included Darrell Emmick from USDA-NRCS and author of several pasturing publications; Jeff Mattocks of the Fertrell Co. from Bainbridge PA, Adele and Jim Hayes of Sap Bush Hollow Farm, Pat Kane of NOFA-NY, and Diane Eggert of NYS Farmers Direct Marketing Association and Farmers Market Federation of NY. These are just a sample of the informative and entertaining list of presenters at the conference. Grasstravaganza had information for everyone and then some, by running concurrent sessions over the two-day event for Dairy, Non-Dairy Livestock, Marketing, and Pastured Poultry. A full day bus tour of two farms rounded out the conference offerings.

Author Jo Robinson was the highlight of the conference on Friday evening. She spoke with humor about her continuing efforts to explore how and why animals allowed to live a humane life while growing and thriving on the food that nature intended yield nutritionally superior products.

The two day conference also offered a bus tour, which visited two of our successful farms. Hosts of the farm tour session were Nature’s Way Farm in Cortland, NY and Northland Sheep Dairy in Marathon, NY. At Nature’s Way, Mike Carroll and Donna Jenney who were named Conservation Farmers of the Year in 1999 by Cortland County SWCD, showed visitors around their farm. Nature’s Way sells 700-800 broiler chickens and 90 turkeys per year, plus brown eggs from their laying hens which range in the beef pastures out of their egg mobile. The farm also has approximately 45 beef animals used as both stockers and for their direct market beef enterprise. In addition they have a small herd of about 40 goats, which are sold as meat animals.

Karl and Jane North were hosts for the second tour at their Northland Sheep Dairy. The design and development of their farm began with long-abandoned farmland without buildings in 1980, and today combines a number of features not often found together on organic farms. Strong concern with energy efficiency is expressed not only in solar building design but also in general farmstead layout. An equally strong focus on resource self sufficiency has led them to a dairy operation that aims to minimize off-farm inputs of fuel, fertilizer, feed, and machinery. Features of their system now becoming more widely adopted include seasonal grass-based dairying, intensive rotational grazing, animal breeding for hardy, 100% grass diet efficiency, the use of animal traction power where appropriate, and a shift in perspective to see the primary function of animals as soil builders. As such, farm animals have come to represent for them the driving engine of a sustainable agriculture; consequently they pay close attention to every step of their carbon and other soil nutrient cycling function from maximizing manure production per acre, to efficient aerobic composting.

Food for the event came from local sources including: chickens from Cobblestone Valley Farm and Nature’s Way Farm, Cortland, NY; fresh rolls from Green Pastures Farm & Bakery Bainbridge, NY; potatoes from Catskill Family Farm; goat cheese from Vanderburg Goat Dairy. Butternut Farms Organic Coop provided various cheeses while Lamb Pepperoni came from Shadeyside Farm in Greene, NY and Evans Dairy in Norwich, NY, provided yogurt. The magnificent food was prepared by Executive Chef Paul Gusst and Chef Jason Lee, sous chef at the Wyndham Syracuse Hotel.



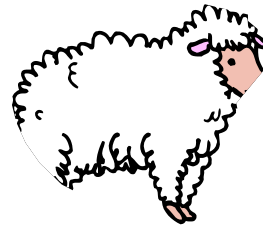
SoCNY RC&D Learns & Adapts

SoCNY RC&D is an organization that continues to learn and adapt as it seeks to conserve our region's precious natural resources (soil, water & air) and improve the quality of the lives of our rural population. One of those adaptations is thinking strategically, based on the premise that "if you always do what you've always done—you'll always get what you've always got." Most of us in public service appreciate that it's difficult to have significant impact on the land and people we serve. SoCNY RC&D must focus on showcasing and piloting promising ideas and opportunities while realizing that public funds are not going to solve inherent regional or national problems. Private investment by committed land users is necessary to establish a different way of utilizing our resources so that there is both profitability and environmental sustainability. The responsibility of nonprofit and publicly funded organizations is to search out innovative ideas and solutions and support the entrepreneurs implementing these new ways of producing farm and other products. The failure to do this allows the downward spiral of short term profit chasing, which spoils the natural resources that we and future generations depend on.

None of us are powerless in affecting what will happen to the earth that sustains us. Ruby Dunstan of the Lytton Indian Band said, *"I feel pain and anger that in your rush toward development, the fabric of this globe has been rent. What you call biosphere or ecosphere...my people more simply call Mother."* There is no powerlessness or lack of vision in Ruby's statement, *"Our elders tell us we have to do more than save what is left of traditional homelands. We need to contribute to an overall change of mind so that human kind can begin to initiate strategies which will preserve and sustain the environment that all cultures and nations share."*

SoCNY RC&D is doing its part by embracing low input, high profit enterprises such as pastured poultry, meadow raised livestock and local product development and marketing. Beginning in 2001 SoCNY RC&D will be partnering with the Allan Savory Center for Holistic Management, Albuquerque, NM, and the Northeast SARE Professional Development Program to begin certifying professional educators in the skills and techniques of Holistic Management. These educators will be linking with their organizations to integrate this system along with identifying farms to apply this innovative decision making process. It is our aim to continue to expose the region to potential solutions to low profitability and environmental degradation and attain some of the wisdom exhibited by Ruby Dunstan of the Lytton Indian Band.

Livestock Program

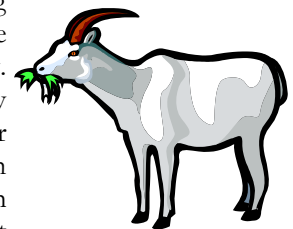


For over 20 years, our Livestock Program has provided on-farm, technical, and marketing assistance to sheep and goat producers. Our program is recognized as one of the few that can provide assistance to all areas of livestock production, from assisting the beginning farmer with contacts for their initial livestock purchase to working with experienced producers in selling their products.

Funding from a USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service Underserved Groups grant paid for half of a Livestock Specialists salary; the remainder was paid for by a grant from the O'Conner Foundation. This ensured the continuation of our successful Livestock Program and continued assistance to sheep and goat producers in the Region.

As in the past, education played an important role in the Livestock Program. Over 1,000 people were reached through field days, marketing seminars and workshops. Several producers also served as moderators and/or presenters at conferences.

In March 2001, the Livestock Specialist Nancy Morey and HPI Meat Goat Partnership Producer June Baker will be traveling to the Mary region of Turkmenistan on an assignment for Winrock International. "This assignment mirrors what I do with goat producers in New York State; the challenge will be working in a very different culture and climate" said Nancy. "We will be helping new producers to set up their herds, teach health management, assist them in product development and in developing their business plans."



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

MPU Use Increases



The Mobile Processing Unit “MPU” was used by more than 20 producers who processed over 2,400 chickens and 150 turkeys. Staff also provided slaughter and processing training for 7 new users. Several improvements were

made to the unit to simplify use. There have been over 100 requests for information on the unit and design plans have been requested from all over the world including Turkey, Canary Islands, Spain and Canada. Requests for further information on pastured poultry and processing are received weekly by the SoCNY RC&D Office.

Sustainable Small Farm Grant

As a result of the efforts of Senator Nancy Lorraine Hoffmann, Jim Seward and others, SoCNY RC&D received a grant to support sustainable small farms in the amount of \$95,000. This grant provided funding for personnel, equipment and supplies that assisted over 800 farmers in the 12 county RC&D area. Funding also allowed for the presentation of two successful conferences, the 2000 Farm Diversity Conference and Grasstravaganza 2000. Funds also provided for the purchase of a ¾ ton pickup truck that is used for staff transportation and to pull the various equipment to producer farms.

Assistance to producers included delivery and setup of the Mobile Processing Unit, Mobile Refrigeration Trailer, cattle scales and also delivery of calves, sheep, steers and cows for producers. This kind of assistance is not provided by any other agency in the area. Typical farm visits are to new and small farm startups that need direction for production, grazing systems, watering systems and general management concerns. Producers are also referred to the county Soil and Water Conservation Districts where they can receive additional assistance.

MRT — A Cooperative Success

The Mobile Refrigerator Trailer or “MRT” was used successfully during the 2000 farmers’ market season. One producer reported sales of \$400 on the first day of using the unit at a local farmers market in Cooperstown and Oneonta. Subsequent days, sales increased to over \$500 per day and has lead to the establishment of a cooperative of farmers that are now selling at other markets and will be selling direct from their farms this winter As a result the producer joined with others and have begun to pool their products to



increase sales from other farms. That group is now in the process of becoming a formal cooperative. The Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship, Inc. “CADE”, a partnering organization, was able to secure a grant to help this Meadow Raised Meats group get up and running.

The staff has received requests for information on the MRT from other states as they see the tremendous potential of this unit in helping producers market their meat, poultry and dairy products in a safe, convenient and appealing manner.

The unit is available for use at a nominal rental fee of \$25 per day. The unit is available to producers interested in trying it out at their local farmers’ markets and producers can contact Nancy Morey or Jim McLaughlin at the SoCNY RC&D Office at 607-334-3231, ext. 4

SoCNY RC&D Receives National Award



The South Central NY RC&D Council, it’s staff and volunteers were presented with the *Real Chicken* award from the American Pastured Poultry Producers

Association. The award, a handsome framed original wood cut print of a chicken, was given with thanks and appreciation for the many contributions SoCNY RC&D has made to the growth and development of Pastured Poultry in New York State.

The award read in part: “During the past decade you have provided valuable training, technical support and encouragement to those in your area who wanted to learn about Pastured Poultry and begin their own Pastured Poultry enterprises. Throughout your history you have strengthened the agricultural economy of your region and New York State by encouraging diversification, innovation, creative thinking, and the pursuit of sustainability in all types of agricultural enterprises.”

APPPA Board Chair Skip Polson of Honolulu, HI presented the award at the Grasstravangza 2000 Conference held at the Wyndam Syracuse Hotel in Syracuse, NY.

Willow Biomass Project



The Willow Biomass Project aims to establish willow biomass crops as a locally grown, renewable resource in New York and the Northeast. SoCNY RC&D, one of many

members of the Salix Consortium, has been working to increase willow acreage, establish markets for willow biomass, increase awareness through outreach and education activities and explore business structures that could support a willow biomass industry.

500 acres of willow have been established in western NY since 1998. The first planting of 100 acres is scheduled for harvest in the winter of 2001-2002. This will be done with the new Bender, a tractor mounted harvester that cuts and chips the willow in the field. State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) is importing this harvester from Sweden where willow biomass farming has a 25-year history. In May, SoCNY RC&D staff assisted the project's first Farmer Grower plant 25 acres of willow in Gerry, NY. This site had some of the best survival rates for the 2000 planting season. Biomass Field Representative, Stacie Edick, completed an economic data collection sheet which was given to the Farmer Grower for record keeping purposes. This spreadsheet was later used as a model for other project partners' data collection.

SoCNY RC&D staff has been involved in many outreach and education activities this year. Presentations about Willow Biomass have been made at the Chautauqua and Cortland County Conservation Field Days, the National RC&D Conference in Utah, the Farm Diversity Expo in Norwich, NY, at Empire State College, and to the Science and Society class at SUNY Morrisville, Norwich campus. The Step Planter and the Willow Bioenergy display were on view at the NY Farm Show in February and at Empire Farm Days in August. The Willow Bioenergy display was also brought to the Northeast Agroforestry Conference in Portland, ME in March, the Arbor Day Festival in Syracuse, NY in April, and the Sustainable

Energy Fair in Canton, NY in April.

The Willow Biomass Project was put on the world stage by a lecture at the Chautauqua Institute. SoCNY RC&D arranged for a biomass lecture by Ralph Overend, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, at the Chautauqua Institute on July 6. The lecture, which was attended by about 2000 people, was followed by a tour of the Dunkirk Steam Station and nearby willow fields.

The Willow Markets Research Report-Preliminary, by Stacie Edick, was submitted to the U.S. Department of Energy in April. Stacie Edick presented a paper at BioEnergy 2000 in Buffalo, NY, October 15-19. The paper, "Biomass Producers: Key Partners in Development of Bioenergy Enterprises," was co-authored by Albert Brown, one of the participating landowners in the project. Stacie Edick also authored a report on cooperative business structures as a deliverable to the U.S. Department of Energy. The Cooperative Business Structure Report will be posted on the project's web site (www.esf.edu/willow) and was also submitted to the 5th Biomass Conference of the Americas in Orlando, FL, September 2001. This report explores the advantages of a cooperative business structure as it applies specifically to a willow crop enterprise. Resources for forming a cooperative are cited, as well as examples of other cooperatives and business practices used by other energy crop groups.

On March 21, 2001, the U.S.D.A. announced that the New York Willow Biomass Project was one of four nationally approved pilot projects to harvest biomass from Conservation Reserve Program lands. This will allow for USDA cost-share to plant willow on new CRP sign-ups, greatly improving production economics for willow growers. It also indicates the recognition by USDA that willow crops provide real conservation and other environmental benefits and that these benefits are valuable.

For more information about the Willow Biomass Project please contact Stacie Edick, Biomass Field Representative at 607-334-3231, ext 117. stacie.edick@ny.usda.gov

Rural Small Business & Community Development Agri-cluster—Not for the Conventional Rural Entrepreneur

The South Central NY RC&D Agri-cluster Project has assisted more than 25 rural farm and non-farm business owners in Tioga County since its inception in 1997. The Agri-cluster concept, developed by Linda LaRosa-Mosner, Marketing Education Coordinator for South Central NY RC&D and funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission concludes it's second and final phase in October 2001.

The Agri-cluster concept was designed to inspire 'out of the box' thinking, strategic business management, and dynamic and cost effective product development among rural entrepreneurs located within close proximity of each other. Another goal was to create a more congenial working relationship between small farm & non-farm business owners and local, state and federal resources through communication and program collaboration. *The overall goal was to assist rural farm and non-farm enterprises in attaining national consumer standards, thus enhancing both the individual businesses and the business community.*

In urban areas, the culture dictates competition and profit. Many entrepreneurs learn and play by the same rules as the "big business" community. The results are products and services designed to meet consumer needs and expectations for profit taking in national and global markets. Rural entrepreneurs often live in a tradition of lower profit expectations, less exposure to current trends and fewer affordable business development services. Consumers in rural communities often respond by shopping in communities where products and services are applicable to their needs and by even relocating.

Through special programs, designed specifically for the South Central NY RC&D Agri-cluster participants by Brower Communications, Inc., located in Norwich, NY, Agri-cluster participants developed formal business plans and financial projections. They also learned both the psychological reasons why customers buy products and how to market and merchandise in order to appeal to a greater consumer base. Field trips to Wegman's and participating as a "cyber customer" allowed participants hands-on experience with commercial merchandising. Individually, participants were assisted in applying learned techniques and skills in their own business as business plans were implemented.

Agri-cluster – Only Adventurers Need Apply

The Agri-cluster project focused on making money, and making profits by making products that correspond to specifically targeted consumer groups. It also focused on strategic planning and business management for cost effective production and distribution. For some participating rural entrepreneurs and supporting government and community groups, whose traditional focus has been *'to do for the good of the cause and community and/or the lifestyle, but not for making money,* learning a new set of rules and game plan proved challenging.

The Agri-cluster project did make a dynamic difference in the opinions of local, state, and federal agencies as well as micro-business owners. Livestock herds did increase, as did profits, by 20-75%. Three Agri-cluster participants are currently selling their products, that range from personal care products and deer hunting lures to organic cheese, locally, regionally, and nationally.

The first group of Agri-cluster participants, located in Candor, NY, celebrated its' first year as a NY State incorporated association and adopted the name, Catatonk Valley Association (CVA). The CVA is currently seeking 501-C-6 tax-exempt status after holding their first annual meeting in January 2001. The second group of Agri-cluster participants, which includes the Owego Farmer's Market, and farm & non-farm enterprises located in Owego and Catatonk, NY, will join the CVA, therefore expanding the CVA to include 23 businesses and a trade corridor of approximately 23 miles. Through future stages of the project the CVA will begin marketing regionally on a collaborative basis with Fingerlakes Agri-tourism efforts.

Tioga County Tourism, Economic Development, Planning Department and Cornell Cooperative Extension will continue to support the Catatonk Valley Association as the group continues to grow and collaboratively market as a rural entity.

The Catatonk Valley Association, an incorporated marketing organization, was formed in 2000 at the conclusion of Phase I of the SoCNY RC&D Agri-cluster program.

NEW VISION Ag and Environmental Science Delaware, Chenango, Madison, Otsego BOCES

SoCNY RC&D has been working for the past two years with the New Vision Agriculture and Environmental Science Program through DCMO BOCES. New Vision is a class designed for high school seniors interested in pursuing careers in agriculture or environmental science after graduation. The course incorporates the students' senior-year English, Economics, and Civics courses with an exploration of possible careers in the fields of agriculture and environmental science. Students spend most of their time in rotating internships throughout the community, shadowing professional mentors in the field.

The classroom for the program is located across the hall from the SoCNY RC&D office. Each student in the New Vision program spends at least four half days with the SoCNY RC&D staff. Students might sit in on a marketing meeting, help deliver the Mobile Processing Unit, input data on livestock loans, or attend Chenango County Agriculture Development Council meetings. Students use this experience to see real-life applications of the concepts that they have learned in Economics and Civics.

According to New Vision instructor Maureen Bartlett, "The week students spend at SoCNY RC&D provides them with an opportunity to see the work being done on the regional level to encourage the profitability of agriculture enterprises and the wide stewardship of natural resources. They also have an opportunity to see a not-for-profit collaborate with a federal agency as it operates in our area of NY."

SoCNY RC&D Staff

Phil Metzger NRCs	Project Coordinator/USDA-
Kim Handy	Secretary (OA)/USDA-NRCS
Jim McLaughlin Technician	Farm Management
Nancy Morey	Livestock Specialist
Linda Mosner	Marketing Coordinator
Stacie Edick	Biomass Field Representative
Cindy Mullins	Marketing Assistant
Jacki Kays	Account Clerk

SoCNY RC&D Officers

Robert Banta, Otsego County, Chair

ON THE WEB!
www.norwich.net/socnyrcd
www.sunsite.unc.edu/farming-connection/grazing/astpoul/mpu.htm
www.people.delphi.com/dvdw/ppa.htm
grit@apppa.org

*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!

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