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Capital Area Ag Report
November 2016

“When all think alike, no one is thinking very much.”
— Walter Lippmann

Announcements

December 5 & 17, 2016,
Basic Farm Business Management Planning: A Quick Overview for Success
A 2 ½ hour class on business planning and farm business management designed to help your agricultural business achieve success. We will teach you how to avoid some of the pitfalls that strike many small businesses and connect you with helpful resources, help you find out about regulations and build a business plan to attract financing. FSA Borrower Training Financial Credits available. $25.00 for first person, $10 for each additional person from the same business. Register online at https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event_registration/main/events.cfm, or with Tove Ford, 518-765-3518, tff24@cornell.edu, CCE 24 Martin Rd., Voorheesville, NY 12186. For more information, please contact Sandy Buxton at 518-380-1498 or sab22@cornell.edu

Current dates and locations (but please check with us as we may add additional ones):
- December 5, 2016 6:00-8:30 pm at CCE-Rensselaer, 61 State St, Troy, NY
- December 17, 2016 9:30-noon at CCE-Washington, 411 Lower Main St, Hudson Falls, NY

December 2016
Farmer Discussion Groups – “Growing Crops Profitably: Inputs That Make Dollars & Sense” Margins and cash

The Ag Report is produced by: Aaron Gabriel
flow are tight. Aaron Gabriel (CCE-CAAHP) will lead a discussion on selecting crop inputs for your farm and introduce some Excel spreadsheets for crop management. **Noon to 2 pm. Pizza lunch. Please RSVP to Tove Ford, 518-765-3518, tf24@cornell.edu or online at [https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event_registration/main/events.cfm](https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event_registration/main/events.cfm).**

Questions to Aaron Gabriel, 518-380-1496, adg12@cornell.edu.

- **December 6th** @ Brunswick Family Community Center, Keyes Ln (off rte &), Center Brunswick, Rensselaer County.
- **December 7th** @ Knox Town Hall, 2191 Berne-Altamont Rd., Knox, Albany County
- **December 8th** @ Agroforestry Resource Center, 6055 State Route 23, Acra, Greene County.
- **December 13th** @ Cornell Cooperative Extension Meeting Hall, 479 Route 66, Hudson, Columbia County
- **December 14th** @ Proudfit Hall, 181 Main St., Salem, Washington County

**January 12, 2017**

"**Strategizing the Future: The Future of Milk Markets and How to Develop an Economic Plan**". Andy Novakovic (Cornell Dairy Economist) and Jason Karszes (ProDairy Farm Business Management) will discuss what will be affecting milk markets in the next few years and how to develop an economic plan. Take this time to stop, and thoughtfully plan the next few years. *Held at CCE Saratoga meeting room, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa.* Pre-registration of $18 includes lunch. RSVP by Jan 9th, 4 pm by contacting Tove Ford, 518-765-3518, tf24@cornell.edu. Late registration & walk-ins $25 and no guarantee of lunch or printed materials.

Program questions to Aaron Gabriel, 518-380-1496, adg12@cornell.edu.

Brought to you by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CAAHP, CCE Saratoga, & Central NY DFC Team).

*New York Certified Organic meeting flyer at the end of this issue.*

**FYI**

**Guide Helps Farmers Use Food Waste as Livestock Feed**

The Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic and the Food Recovery Project at the University of Arkansas have released *Leftovers for Livestock: A Legal Guide for Using Excess Food as Animal Feed*. The publication, available free online, will help both businesses with food scraps, and livestock farms hoping to feed their animals more sustainably, navigate the complex patchwork of Federal and State regulations. (from ATTRA News)

**The Cornell Nutrient Management Spear Program website has new resources:**

- Factsheet #91: [The Carbon Cycle and Soil Organic Carbon](http://smallfarms.cornell.edu)
- Factsheet #90: [Nitrous Oxide Emission from Crop Fields](http://smallfarms.cornell.edu).

**The Cornell Small Farms Program** ([http://smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://smallfarms.cornell.edu)) is a great resource for new farmers, as well as farmers of small (and large) operations.

Cornell Law School is pleased to announce the return of our Estate Planning Clinic in the Spring of 2017. Like last year, the Clinic will assist those who do not have access to an estate planning attorney and will provide clients with a basic estate plan that includes a last will and testament, a living will, a healthcare proxy and power of attorney, tailored according to the client’s wishes. Law students will prepare and finalize these documents under the supervision of attorneys who specialize in trusts and estates.

Clients must meet income eligibility guidelines as this service is free of charge. The income limits are as follows: Single - less than $30k annually, Family - less than $50k annually.

Clients should be aware that this service requires at least two visits to meet with students at the Law School (on the Ithaca campus). In addition, once chosen to participate, clients will be expected to sign a written commitment to follow through with appointments, giving at least 24 hour notice if an appointment will be missed. Spots are limited so if you are interested and meet the income guidelines, please email Susan Tosto at sjt29@cornell.edu and you will be placed on a list. Notification of client selection will go out in early January of 2017.

View upcoming and past ProDairy webinars online at: http://prodairy.cals.cornell.edu/production-management/dairy-webinars


October’s Dairy Market Watch is now available. The Word Version is attached, and the pdf version can be viewed or downloaded here: http://chautauqua.cce.cornell.edu/resources/dairy-market-watch-2016-10-october-2016.


Report Guides Organic Soybean Growers in Combating Pathogens and Pests

A new University of Illinois report, published in Agronomy, summarizes disease and pest problems faced by organic soybean growers in the United States and details organic products and practices to combat them. The researchers hope their work will help more growers take advantage of strong profit margins for organic feed and edamame.

New Publications from Purdue Extension Help Protect Pollinators

Purdue Extension has released Protecting Pollinators, a series of free online publications. Protecting Pollinators in Fruit and Vegetable Production explains what commercial growers can do to protect pollinators in their cropping systems. Another eight-page publication, Tips for Commercial Agricultural Pesticide Applicators, describes management practices commercial applicators can follow to minimize any potential harm to pollinators.
**Profitable Crop Production: Inputs that Make Dollars and Sense**

Our winter Farmer Discussion Group meetings will focus on how to determine which crop inputs are worthwhile and which are not. Cash flow is tight. Profit margins are small. The number of crop inputs you can use gets larger all the time. How do you decide what to invest in and how do you know if something worked? We will discuss these topics along with whatever research I can find to better understand a variety of crop inputs. I have also developed some Excel spreadsheets to help record crop rotations, manure spreading history, soil sampling history, and balancing the three main parts of a livestock farm: the amount of forage animals need; the amount of forage grown; and the amount of storage available for forages. I will introduce these tools, which are free.

**I hope you will join us for our Farmer Discussion Group meeting this December.**

**Soil Health in Pastures**

Last September, we had a pasture health field day at Sheffer’s Grassland Dairy. (The weather was really nice.) Fay Benson, Cornell Cooperative Extension, used the mobile Soil Health Trailer to demonstrate how soil health affect water infiltration and runoff. He also did the “slake test”, where you suspend a 1/2” size clump of soil in water (place it on a screen) and see how long it takes to fall apart. Healthy soil holds together much longer than over-worked, low organic matter soil. This shows how soil structure is remains true during wet periods, so that water will infiltrate rather than seal the soil surface and run off.
I conducted a pasture walk where we evaluated and discussed the three aspects of soil health (the chemical, physical, and biological aspects) and how pasture management affects them. Listed below are the main points that we discussed:

**Chemical soil properties**
- Soil pH must be correct for the rest of the nutrients to be available and soil microbes to be healthy
- Nitrogen management will depend on the proportion of legumes in the pasture – no N if >50% legumes

**Physical soil properties – affected by tillage, plant roots, animal hooves**
- Keyline plowing may not be appropriate for our region
- Paraplow can be effective to break soil compaction, but then you need to some roots to grow down to keep it open
- Aeration tillage seems to be effective to break surface compaction
- Subsurface drainage is often a good investment to lower the water table
- Plant roots can do a lot to create soil structure: letting plants grow tall at least once each year; mowing and grazing to no less than 4” stubble; have a diversity of plants with different root structure;
- Having a strategic crop rotation to use appropriate tillage and plant types improves soil

**Biological soil properties**
- Use fertilizer to feed plants and organic matter to feed the soil: manure, crop residues, compost, organic soil amendments (paper fiber)
- Having animals trample waste hay into the soil is effective but can be costly.
- Keeping the soil covered and protected from a beating rain and sun are important to protect all three aspects of soil health
- To improve a compacted heavy soil, a combination of tillage to physically break compaction and planting species with both vigorous taproots (red clover, alfalfa, chicory) and extensive fibrous roots (annual ryegrass, winter rye, perennial grasses) will open the soil and keep it open.

Which soil do you want for your pasture and crops?

Photo courtesy of Rodale Institute
Bob Quinn of Big Sandy, Montana will be the opening speaker for our 23rd season of NYCO. He leads the Quinn Organic Research Center which includes a 2,800 acre farm. They transitioned their 4th generation farm to organic production in 1986. His work on organic grain varieties led to the redevelopment of Kamut, an ancient grain grown by the Egyptians. In addition they grow soft white wheat, durum wheat, buckwheat, lentils, peas, sweet clover, and flax. Bob is a sought after speaker on marketing and development of organic grains. He will present his vision of where organic markets are going and how New York’s producers can prepare for the future.

Sandra Wayman is a research technician with the Cornell Sustainable Cropping System Lab. She will review their work with the newly developed perennial grain, Kernza.

Tim Christensen farms with his father, Guy in Penn Yan, NY. He has been experimenting with different cover crops in his corn and small grain rotation. His decisions are based on multi-layered objectives of; protecting soil health, adding green manures and qualifying for annual Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) payments. Tim will share some of the success and failures he has had on his farm.

Mark Sorels, PhD. is the chair for the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future at Cornell University. He was part of a team of researchers at Cornell who worked on the “Accelerating Production of Organic Grains in Western NY” sponsored by the Genesee Valley Regional Market Authority and Wegmans. Mark will review the results of this study done at the Cornell University’s Musgrave Research Farm.

The popularity of the NYCO winter meetings has grown from a gathering of six organic grain producers in the Martens Farms’ farmhouse kitchen in 1994 to the auditorium in Geneva. Last year we had more than 300 farmers attending the 3 meetings.

The Winter NYCO meetings will be held in Jordan Hall, Geneva Experimental Station. They will be held January 10th, February 14th and March 13th. This years topics will include the use of Alternative Forages, Expanding to Poultry and Nutrient Balancing.

There is no cost or need to register to attend the meetings, which start promptly at 10:00am. Participants are asked to bring a dish to pass at the potluck lunch. The New York Crop Insurance Education Team and Cornell Cooperative Extension provide support for these meetings. There will be a brief description of how Crop Insurance can benefit organic farmers at each of the meetings.

For more information contact Fay Benson at 607-391-2669 or at afb3@cornell.edu