



## **PRESS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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March 2005

### **Dairy Viability Project Launched**

A project to grow the milk supply in Northern New York is launched with the formation of committees in Clinton, Essex, Franklin Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties.

The project, "Thriving Dairy Farms; The Cornerstone of a Strong Dairy Value Chain," is funded through grants from the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research Education and Education Service and Cornell University's Economic Development Administration and the US Department of Commerce. The county committees will identify and rank by importance barriers to success of dairy farms in the region, consolidate and analyze current census data and relevant information on farm profitability and milk supply, and implement action plans.

“It is imperative that critical, core issues around dairy farm profitability and the milk supply need to be aggressively addressed immediately to prevent irreparable damage to a core component of the region’s economic and social fabric, its rich natural resource base, including its attractive working landscape, which is important to its lucrative tourism industry,” according to Dairy Viability project manager Peggy Murray, who is coordinating the efforts of the county teams.

Previous suggestions collected by other projects of the Dairy Viability Initiative have focused on the success of farms as the key to ensuring long-term strength of the region’s dairy value chain. Several the eight cheese manufacturers in the region, which currently utilize over 5 million pounds of milk each day, have indicated concern about locating enough milk to meet growing product demand.

This project is intended to stabilize the dairy value chain, which directly and indirectly supports at least 6,000 jobs and \$800 million in economic activity. The project will specifically focus on the profitability of the region’s 1,630 dairy farms, which produce 2.2 billion pounds of milk annually and 19 percent of the state’s total milk supply.

The project has five expected outcomes:

- Identification of impediments to, and opportunities for, growth of the milk supply in northern New York and to meet the seasonal demands and quality standards of milk markets within and outside the region.
- Identification of interventions and actions that will result in farmers taking action to increase production of milk and to address other milk supply issues in Northern New York.

- Creation of educational and technical assistance programs that will assist farmers in their efforts to increase milk production in Northern New York.
- Increased success of families who depend on dairy farming for their livelihood.
- Establishment of a milk supply that is sufficient to the demands of all markets accessible, including those for fluid milk, manufacturing, new products and niche markets.

County committee teams are chaired by Peggy Murray in Lewis County, Jay Matteson in Jefferson County, Madeline Pennington in St. Lawrence County and Carl Tillinghast in Franklin County, Amy Ivy in Clinton County and Anita Deming in Essex County. For more information, contact Peggy Murray at 315-376-5270.

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