

ONONDAGA COUNTY

AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

VISION

Where does Onondaga County see its agriculture going? What are goals to reach that vision? This section describes the guiding vision and goals to address the existing needs and opportunities faced by Onondaga County's agriculture. This vision is based on the contributions and foresight of participants involved in the development of this plan and is the basis for the goals and recommended actions.

The state of agriculture in Onondaga County has seen significant changes over the years. Through it all, local agriculture remains a critical part of its economy, food system, and landscape. The County is gifted with highly productive agricultural soils, a legacy of farming operations and know-how, and an environment that supports a highly diverse array of agriculture and opportunities to engage with the local food system. This plan honors the strengths of Onondaga County's agriculture and reflects these strengths in a vision for the future of agriculture throughout the County:

Onondaga County is a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system.



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GOALS



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.



Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.



Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.



Continue to enhance the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Achieving the community's vision requires the development of planning goals, strategies, and tangible actions supported and embraced by public officials and the community. Achieving these goals will require commitment and collaboration between a variety of stakeholders across the County.

The following is a summary of the goals and related recommended strategies which were formulated through the planning process to inspire action and implementation of the vision for agriculture in Onondaga County.

Recommendations in bold represent strategic projects which have been identified as **Venture Proposals**. More detailed preliminary analysis has been prepared for a limited number of actions, to further brainstorm and shape proposals for quick, coordinated action by stakeholder partners. See the Venture Proposals chapter at the end of this plan for additional project scoping details and preliminary research.

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Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.

Action 1: Create a full-time dedicated Agricultural Economic Development Specialist staff position in an associated agency to spearhead and coordinate agriculture-specific partnerships and initiatives (see related [Venture Proposal](#)).

Action 2: Explore the feasibility for developing an agricultural business park and/or food hub to expand the County's agribusiness sector (see related [Venture Proposal](#)).

Action 3: Develop a re-packing facility to provide cold storage, freezing, packaging, and distribution to institutions (see related [Venture Proposal](#)).

Action 4: Host periodic trainings to educate existing and prospective producers about resource management (e.g., implementation of BMPs), certifications, value-added production, and market development.

Action 5: Improve broadband in rural communities to support high-tech ag machinery and communication.

Action 6: Train and equip local support agencies to offer agricultural unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or drone services to their constituents.

Action 7: Facilitate the development and operation of a commercial kitchen to provide operations the ability to create value-added products.

Action 8: Explore the feasibility of developing a USDA certified meat processing facility compared with utilizing regional meat processing facilities.



Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.

Action 1: Improve capacity and increase funding within the local land trust community to partner on conservation easement projects or develop new avenues to execute farmland protection easement programs.

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Action 2: Work with municipal boards and staff to understand the land use tools available to incorporate best practices in siting, construction, and monitoring of larger scale commercial solar developments to minimize impacts on farmland resources and agricultural communities.

Action 3: Follow and engage in statewide efforts to update utility-scale solar energy siting regulations, to ensure that local communities farmland protection goals and objectives are considered in site location and mitigation assessment.

Action 4: Utilize the Onondaga County Ag Mapper tool for identification of priority lands for farmland protection, including conservation easement programs, corridor protection, and local planning and zoning.

Action 5: Enable and facilitate Smart Growth development practices which encourage growth in existing built communities and compact subdivision designs, which ultimately serves to preserve agricultural lands, open spaces, and rural road frontages.

Action 6: Conduct an agritourism corridor study along NYS Routes 20 and 80. See related [Venture Proposal](#).

Action 7: Promote and maintain the Farm Friendly Municipal Toolbox as a continuing resource for local support for agricultural communities.

Action 8: Work with municipal boards and staff to update and revise their comprehensive plans and land use regulations to better support agricultural uses and accommodate new agritourism related activities

Action 9: Encourage towns to create their own agricultural protection plan that works in coordination with the Onondaga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

Action 10: Explore the feasibility of establishing a local farmland protection fund for purchasing conservation easements.

Action 11: Provide training for municipal tax assessors to conduct more accurate assessment of lands and buildings in agricultural use.



Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.

Action 1: Develop an agriculturally oriented year-round community greenhouse to host a variety of flexible programming, from agritourism events and educational programs to workforce development training space or community gardens (see related [Venture Proposal](#)).

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Action 2: Increase support for agriculture-related promotional events and marketing, particularly for agritourism (e.g., startup assistance, social media help, siting, logistics). See related **Venture Proposal**.

Action 3: Continue to promote public awareness of local agriculture through the Onondaga Agricultural Council and its Onondaga Grown Buy Local Campaign.

Action 4: Continue to grow *OnFarm Fest* programming to serve as a well-known opportunity to educate residents of Onondaga County's agriculture.

Action 5: Continue to support the CNY Regional Market and local farmer's markets, CSA programs and other similar opportunities for direct sales of farm products to consumers throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.

Action 1: Develop and expand upon New Farmer Programs that provide land, landowner connections, management training and other resources to serve the next generation of farmers or newly arrived immigrants familiar with farming.

Action 2: Develop a farm specialty labor pool by creating a program of trainings for high-tech agriculture, or link to existing programs.

Action 3: Provide training for agri-service, land use planning professionals, and the farming community to support succession planning and direct farmers to appropriate stress-related support services.

Action 4: Increase programming and partnerships with agriculture-related higher education programs.



Continue to enhance the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment.

Action 1: Develop an Agricultural Waste Stream Strategic Plan to manage overall waste in the agricultural sector, for example renewable natural gas projects for dairy waste and promoting agriculture-based paper/plastic recycling and reuse. See related **Venture Proposal**.

Action 2: Increase funding, and flexibility thereof, available to evaluate causal pathways for water quality issues and assist farmers in implementing strategic water quality management practices.

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Action 3: Increase technical assistance related to climate resiliency and natural hazard mitigation (e.g., flooding and drought), stormwater management, and other environmental management issues such as runoff nutrients, farmyard management, silage nutrient management, fertilizer application calibration, etc.

Action 4: Increase funding for marketing and technical assistance to increase farmer participation in programs that protect soil health.

Action 5: Encourage, plan for, and fund stream corridor buffering, wetland and floodplain restoration/enhancement, and bank stabilization efforts.

Action 6: Conduct viewshed analyses to preserve the most scenic and valued agricultural and open space vistas in our rural communities.