Is Your Town Planning for Agriculture?

Establishing and Implementing Local Public Policy to Support and Protect Agriculture

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“Agriculture: If you ignore it, it will go away.”

Rockland County Agriculture
1950 - 1997

- 406 Farms
- 17,360 acres in Farms

- 21 Farms
- 569 acres in Farms

< 10 Farms
~ 250 acres
17 parcels

Today
NYS Ag Districts
Agricultural Districts

How do Ag Districts help local planners make good land use decisions to protect agriculture?

• Identifies concentrations of agricultural resources

• Helps Towns craft zoning to accommodate agricultural practices and activities

• Where to limit sewer/water (Lateral Restrictions)
How Do Agricultural Districts Work?

Ag. & Markets can protect sound agricultural practices from
• Unreasonably Restrictive Local Laws
• Private Nuisance Complaints

If…

• Landowner voluntarily applies to be in Ag District
• Parcel passes a “viability test by County Legislature
• Part of a Farm Operation
• Practices are safe, legal and commonly accepted
• LO must exhaust resources locally

Then AML 25AA applies on a case-by-case basis.
Is your Town Planning for Agriculture?

Does your Town have a vision for agriculture?

…identify areas where it wants to protect agriculture? (AD parcels, prime & unique soils, gateway, UGB)

…have a strategy for protecting its best farmland? (What LU tools in your toolbox?)

… understand the economic benefits of agriculture?

(Cost of Community Services, Agritourism, Multiplier Effect $1 » $1.42 (typically local) GDP = $0.89)
Does your Town…

…allow agriculture uses in more than one zoning district?

…allow Ag Support Services in your Ag Zone?
   (farm stands, equipment dealers, home businesses)

…have an Ag Zoning that limits the impacts of new developments on farms?
   (buffers/ screening, mitigation options, ID prime soils)
Priority Farmland

Clusters of Parcels with High Agricultural Soils Values

ASA Farmland Conservation Plan Priority Areas and Special Areas

Legend
- Priority Area
- Special Area
- ASA Conserved Land

Priority Areas
1. Hudson River Corridor (along Route 40) [Extends into Rensselaer County]
2. White Creek Valley (along Route 165)
3. Button Kill (along Route 313)
4. Hoosic River Watershed [Extends into Rensselaer County]

Special Areas
A. Kingsbury-Fort Ann Flats
B. Champlain Canal Corridor
C. Granville / Hebron
D. Black Creek Valley (along Routes 32 and 31)
E. Historic Route 22 Corridor
F. Greenwhich-Cambridge Corridor (along Route 372)

Independent Project Sites
A project not falling into any of the Priority Areas or Special Areas may still be undertaken as an Independent Project Site at the discretion of ASA’s Board.

Ranking Criteria Total
1 - 2 Lowest Priority
3 - 4
5 - 6
7 - 8
9 - 10
11 - 13 (Highest Priority)

Ranking Criteria
- Parcels in current agricultural production (3 points)
- Prime soils (4 points)
- Statewide important or Unique soils (2 points)
- Within 1/4 mile of conserved land (3 points)
- Within 1/8 mile of current agricultural parcels (2 points)
- Within 100 feet of water resource (1 point)

Generalized boundaries adapted from ESHI Hot Spot Analysis

Figure 2: Map of Farmlands Ranking Criteria
Is Your Town Concerned About…

• Agritourism  
  *(Tourism initiatives that promote agriculture)*

• Industrial Scale Solar Arrays  
  *(NYS Solar Guidebook: NYSERDA.ny.gov)*

• Farm Brewery/Distillery/Winery  
  *(State Liquor Authority: ABC Laws)*

• Community Character/ Open Space
Ag & Farmland Protection Plan

All Towns Eligible!

• Up to $25K per Town
  $1,700 Cash Match
  $6,700 In-Kind contributions from...
  AFPB, SWCD, CCE, NRCS, Your County, Land Trusts, Farm Bureau, Ag Schools...

WNY Ag. Plans in process:
North Collins, Amherst, Grand island
Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, & Wyoming Co.’s
“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

- Poor or minimal planning has led to a significant loss of active farmland.
- Traditional zoning tools do not protect agriculture.
- Multiple mechanisms needed to protect Ag. (toolbox)
- Sewer/water extensions into productive farmland are a major threat to farm viability. (Smart Growth, concurrency)
- Ag protection is most effective locally... How?
Simple Local Actions

• Update Agriculture Related Definitions
• Adopt a Right to Farm Law (*local conflict mediation*)
• Agricultural Zoning (*limit growth inducing land uses*)
• Ag Vision Statement
• Include Ag in Comp Plan
• Lateral Restrictions
• Ag Data/ Ag Disclosure
• Draft an Ag Plan!
Ag Protection Planning Tools

- Ag Protection Overlay District *(see below, Warwick, NY)*
- Purchase/ Transfer/ Lease of Development Rights
- Cluster Development/ Conservation Design for Agriculture
- Infill Development / Smart Growth / Form Based Code?
Emerging Topics in Ag Protection

- Farm Friendly Local Laws
- Solar Siting Off Prime Soils
- Agritourism
- New and Beginning Farmers
- Land Access/ Affordability
- Urban Agriculture/ Specialty Crops (Grand Island)
- Farm to Schools/ Institutions (www.finys.com)
Ag. Protection Success Stories

How has your town supported agriculture in the last 12 months?

• Erie County!
  (Eden, Clarence, N. Collins, Grand Island, Amherst)

• Town of Cazenovia: Amended Local Laws
• Town of Warwick: Ag. Protection Overlay District
• Oneida County – Farm Friendly Initiative
• Ag Navigators (Schoharie, Dutchess, Otsego)
• Town of Ballston- TDR Law (in process)
• Town of Wallkill- PDR/ CE held by Town
• Land Trusts Grants: Outreach/ Appraisals
• Solar Siting laws avoid Soils Group 1-IV: Farmington
NYSDAM Funding Opportunities

• Implementation Grants up to $2,000,000
  • Dairy Transitions, PDR’s, Donation of Development Rights
  • Option Agreements, Farm Friendly Initiatives

County Ag & Farmland Protection Planning Grants up to $50,000
  • Ag Economic Development Recommendations
  • Resource Guides for Municipalities, Solar Siting on Farmland

• Town Ag & Farmland Protection Planning Grants up to $25,000
  • Ag Planning Tools in the Toolbox, Farm Friendly Audits
  • Comprehensive Planning, Lands To be Protected

• Land Trust Grants up to $50,000
  • Collaborate with Land Trusts to implement farmland protection strategies via Outreach Activities, Land Inventories and Screening Tools

• Implementation Grants 2020?... Stay Tuned
  • What are your Thoughts?
Thank You! Any Questions?

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