

FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN SURVEY for FARMERS Bethel

Agriculture is the #1 year-round business in Sullivan County. Because it is so important, several Sullivan County towns have partnered to develop agricultural enhancement plans. Callicoon together with Delaware, and Bethel together with Liberty have received funding from New York State to support development of these plans and have formed committees to start work. This survey is our first step toward a complete understanding of the many issues, concerns and opportunities related to agriculture. The committees will use this information and other public input to establish goals for the future of agriculture, so that the final plans can help towns better enhance and promote this valuable industry. You have been identified as a person involved with agriculture because you own land with either an agricultural assessment or an agricultural exemption. We need your input in order to make this planning effort a success. **This survey is completely anonymous.** We hope you will take 15 minutes to complete it and return it to the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management in the postage paid envelope by **November 18, 2008.** If you are no longer connected with agriculture in any way, please fill out the last page and return. **Thank you!**

1. What is your farm's primary enterprise?

(Please choose one and indicate type or other relevant details.)

- 11 Dairy
- 8 Livestock horses
- 0 Horticulture
- 1 Christmas Trees
- 2 Cash Crops
- 1 Vegetables
- 0 Fruits
- 1 Forestry
- 0 Beekeeping
- 0 Maple Products
- 6 Other

2. What secondary farm and non-farm activities are you engaged in, to diversify your farm? (For example, farmstands, lodging, alternative energy, agri-tourism, etc.)

Eggs, racehorses, alpaca, horse boarding, custom field-work, compost, topsoil, beef, logging, riding lessons, kosher slaughter, sales, lodging, farm stand, solar panels, cell tower

3. Do you sell goods or services at local farmers markets?

4 Yes 25 No

If so, which ones?

Barryville, Harvest Market, Kauneonga Lake, Bethel

4. Please list the number of parcels and the number of acres that you farm in each town, including both land that you own and land that you rent. (# of farms) Total/Average

| Town | Total Acres Owned | Total Acres Rented |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Bethel | <u>(28) 3,185/114</u> | <u>(15) 2,503/167</u> |
| Callicoon | <u>(1) 140/140</u> | <u>(0)</u> |
| Delaware | <u>(3) 572/191</u> | <u>(2) 600/300</u> |
| Liberty | <u>(2) 950/475</u> | <u>(2) 450/225</u> |

5. How many acres of your land are used for each of the following? (Do not include land that you rent.)

Total/Average

Farmstead Complex
 (house, barns, roads, etc.): 816/37 acres
 Actively farmed: 2,204/96 acres
 Wooded: 1,468/67 acres
 Open, idle land: 258/32 acres
 Rural residence: 58/5 acres

6. How many workers (including family) does your farm employ? Total/Average

| | Year-Round | Seasonal |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Full-Time Workers | <u>132/6.6</u> | <u>4/0.4</u> |
| Part-Time Workers | <u>29/1.8</u> | <u>17/1.5</u> |

7. How many households does your farm support? (Do not include hired help.)

Average 1.24

8. How many years have you owned your farm?

Average 32

9. How long has your land been in farm production?

Average 80

in your family?

Average 44

10. Please rate your level of support for the following farmland protection strategies on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being STRONGLY SUPPORT and 4 being STRONGLY OPPOSE (circle the appropriate number).

| | STRONGLY SUPPORT | | | STRONGLY OPPOSE |
|--|------------------|------------|----------|-----------------|
| A. Conservation Easements | <u>1</u> 2 | <u>1</u> 1 | <u>1</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <i>A legal document that restricts the use of land to farming, open space, or wildlife habitat. A landowner may voluntarily sell, lease, or donate an easement to a government agency or private land trust and as a result may be eligible for federal tax and NY property tax benefits.</i> | | | | |
| B. Purchase of Development Rights | <u>1</u> 4 | <u>8</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <i>The voluntary sale of the rights to develop a piece of property by the landowner to a government agency or land trust. The sale price is determined by an appraisal. The land is permanently restricted to farming or open space.</i> | | | | |
| C. Transfer of Development Rights | <u>7</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> |
| <i>Property rights that are not used on the land from which they come. These may be sold to be used on another designated site in a growth area in order to allow the farm or open space to remain undeveloped. It allows landowners to receive the full equity of the property.</i> | | | | |
| D. Lease of Development Rights | <u>8</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <i>When the development rights of a property are leased to a municipality through a contractual agreement for a specified period of time in return for tax benefits or other monetary transaction. This results in land being restricted to farming or open space for that specified time period.</i> | | | | |
| E. Farm Friendly Zoning | <u>2</u> 4 | <u>4</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |
| <i>Local regulations that do not restrict agricultural activities. Zoning laws that are farm friendly allow agriculture in more than one zoning district, simplify regulations and standards for farms and agricultural businesses, and allow flexibility in agriculture related businesses on the farm.</i> | | | | |
| F. Conservation Subdivisions | <u>9</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>2</u> |
| <i>A development design technique that concentrates buildings on a portion of the site to allow the remaining land to be used for recreation, open space, or farming.</i> | | | | |
| G. Loan Programs | <u>1</u> 5 | <u>10</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> |
| <i>Dedicated funding stream to disburse loan funds to farms and agricultural businesses to start new businesses, expand operations and/or diversify.</i> | | | | |
| H. Differential Assessments | <u>2</u> 5 | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> |
| <i>When land is assessed for tax purposes as farmland, it is based on its use-value for farming rather than on its "highest and best" use for potential development. New York State offers an agricultural exemption program which lowers the assessment of lands devoted to farming.</i> | | | | |
| I. Growing New Farmers | <u>2</u> 2 | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>0</u> |
| <i>Promotes and encourages new farmers to locate in the town by offering information, incentives and programs to help them get started.</i> | | | | |
| J. Ag-Enterprise Zones | <u>1</u> 3 | <u>7</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>0</u> |
| <i>Designated areas that satisfy income or employment criteria that benefit businesses. For example: 100% exemption from the General Excise Tax (GET), income tax credits, and exemptions from the GET for licensed contractors.</i> | | | | |
| K. Overlay Zoning District | <u>2</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>2</u> |
| <i>An area where certain additional requirements are superimposed upon a base zoning district or underlying district and where the requirements of the base or underlying district may or may not be altered.</i> | | | | |
| L. Exclusive Agricultural Zones | <u>1</u> 2 | <u>4</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <i>Zoning districts that only allow agricultural uses and prohibit any other uses unless they are related to farm use.</i> | | | | |
| M. Sullivan County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan | <u>1</u> 7 | <u>8</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> |
| <i>A plan created in 1999 to specifically address the development and preservation of farmland in Sullivan County.</i> | | | | |
| N. Town Comprehensive Plan | <u>1</u> 0 | <u>9</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>0</u> |
| <i>A plan created at the town level that summarizes the current condition of the community, projects future needs, and develops general policy goals and objectives. The comprehensive plan is the legal basis for zoning and other land use laws.</i> | | | | |
| O. Other please explain: _____ | <u>3</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |

11. Please list your top 3 strategies, either from the above list or others, that you feel the town should pursue to help keep farming viable. Top Strategies, (Number of times picked)

B (7), E (7), H (6), A (5), C (2), G (2), I (2), L (2)

12. What information do you feel the local planning & zoning boards need to ensure that agriculture is considered during project review? (See Attached Notes)

13. Which of the following programs do you currently participate in or have you taken advantage of?

(Check all that apply.)

- 15 Enrolled in a State certified Agricultural District
- 21 Agricultural Value Assessment on your property
- 11 Agricultural Exemptions on agricultural structures
- 0 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Programs
- 2 Industrial Development Agency (IDA) Agricultural Tax Abatement
- 5 New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Programs
- 3 Watershed Agricultural Council Programs
- 18 School Tax Relief (STAR) Program
- 2 Other: Value added prod., cons. easement
- 1 None

14. Please rate the following challenges on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being VERY CHALLENGING and 4 being NOT CHALLENGING AT ALL to the future success of your farm (circle the appropriate number).

| | VERY CHALLENGING | | NOT CHALLENGING AT ALL | NOT APPLICABLE | |
|--|------------------|----------|------------------------|----------------|----------|
| A. Availability of farm labor | <u>9</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>4</u> |
| B. Property taxes | <u>22</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |
| C. Land prices | <u>15</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> |
| D. Loss of productive farmland | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <u>A.</u> E. Rental costs | <u>1</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> |
| F. Availability of rental land | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>3</u> |
| G. Fuel cost | <u>21</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> |
| H. Residential encroachment/ nuisance complaints | <u>9</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>1</u> |
| I. Limited succession plans for the farm (few new farmers) | <u>5</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>3</u> |
| J. Estate taxes | <u>11</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> |
| K. Environmental regulations | <u>12</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>2</u> |
| L. Land use regulations (zoning & permitting) | <u>8</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>0</u> |
| M. Water availability (quality & quantity) | <u>5</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>1</u> |
| N. Global climate change | <u>2</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>10</u> | <u>1</u> |
| O. Access to adequate financing | <u>5</u> | <u>9</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>2</u> |
| P. P. Access to agri-services | <u>7</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>2</u> |
| Q. Access to marketing or business support | <u>9</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>2</u> |
| R. Lack of local consumers/ clients | <u>4</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>1</u> |
| S. Lack of processing facilities | <u>7</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>3</u> |
| T. Lack of local dairy processing | <u>6</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>4</u> |
| U. Lack of community kitchen | <u>3</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>5</u> |
| V. Machinery costs | <u>15</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>1</u> |
| W. Production costs | <u>13</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>2</u> |
| X. Other: _____ | <u>11</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> |

15. Of the above challenges, what are the top three greatest challenges facing you individually?

Top Challenges, (Number of times picked) B (15), G (10), V (6), H (5), C (4), A (3), D (3), W (3)

16. What percentage of materials/ equipment/ supplies for your farm do you buy from outside the County?

15 Less than 25% 4 25-49% 3 50-74% 3 75-100%

17. What were your gross annual sales last year from your farm?

2 \$0 (personal use only) 4 \$25,000 – \$49,999 5 \$200,000 – \$499,999
4 \$1- \$9,999 2 \$50,000 – \$99,999 4 \$500,000 +
4 \$10,000 – \$24,999 0 \$100,000 – \$199,999

18. About how much of your net family income came from your farm last year?

10 Less than 25% 6 25-49% 1 50-74% 7 75-100%

19. What attracted you to farm in Sullivan County?

(See Attached Notes)

20. What trends do you see in agriculture in Sullivan County? (Please check all that apply.)

- 15 A smaller number of large farms 18 Movement of farms out of Sullivan County
10 Farm diversification 0 No significant change
10 A larger number of small operations 1 Other: lot of hobby farms

21. Indicate which of the following you plan to do, and within which timeframe. (Check all that apply.)

Within 1 year ... 5 years 10 years or more

| | | | |
|---|----------|----------|-----------|
| Increase your farming operation | <u>5</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>2</u> |
| Decrease your farming operation | <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>3</u> |
| Diversify your farming operation | <u>3</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>4</u> |
| Stay the same | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>4</u> |
| Sell all or a portion of your land to another farmer for farm use | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> |
| Sell a portion of your land for non-farm purposes | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>4</u> |
| Sell all of your land for non-farm purposes | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>3</u> |
| Relocate and continue to farm elsewhere | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> |
| Transfer the farm to a family member | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>10</u> |
| Begin a farming operation on your land | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>0</u> |
| Stop renting your land for farm use | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |
| Increase agricultural sales | <u>6</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>1</u> |
| Decrease agricultural sales | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |
| Eliminate agricultural sales | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |
| Sign a gas lease | <u>3</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>1</u> |
| Other, please explain: _____ | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> |

22. How concerned are you about the loss of farmland in your town?

- 22 Very concerned 6 Somewhat concerned 0 Not very concerned 1 Not concerned at all

Why? (See Attached Notes)

23. Do you feel there is a negative relationship between local farms and non-farm neighbors?

- 12 Yes 14 No **Why or why not?** (See Attached Notes)

24. What can be done to improve/strengthen the relationship between local farms and non-farm neighbors? (See Attached Notes)

25. Do you think natural gas drilling will help or impede agriculture in your town?

- 16 Help 7 Impede 6 No opinion

Explain. (See Attached Notes)

26. How old are you?

- 0 Under 25 6 45 - 54 5 65 - 74
0 25 - 34 4 55 - 59 7 75 or older
3 35 - 44 6 60 - 64

27. How long have you lived in Sullivan County?

- 1 5 years or less 2 6-10 years 3 11-20 years 23 more than 20 years

28. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 0 Less than 9th grade 11 Some college, no degree 3 Masters Degree
0 9th to 12th grade, no diploma 3 Associates degree 0 Ph.D.
7 High school graduate or GED 7 Bachelors degree

29. Please provide any additional comments on preserving local farms and farmlands, below or on a separate sheet of paper. If you have comments specific to a particular town, please be sure to indicate the town's name.

(See Attached Notes)

12. What information do you feel the local planning & zoning boards need to ensure that agriculture is considered during project review?

Farmers feed the world.

Farmers feed the world.

Speak to farmers, get their input about certain plans first

Obviously they need to know the value of local produce to the local economy.

Stop all the small acre building; have homes on 5 acres or better.

Agriculture as an economically viable enterprise, local employer, and its consequential environmental stewardship, need to be protected socially and legally from housing and recreational subdivisions and developments.

zoning

The rights of developing land should be left to the landowner. If the farm is supporting a living so be it. If not that owner should be able to subdivide his land, sell his land, as he pleases. If there are funds to help him improve farming operations they should be made available.

An understanding of all conservation tools available as well as a greater sense of the importance and value of farming as a sustainable industry.

Talk to all farmers- large and small- for points of view.

Do not increase residential lot size; it disrupts farms.

Financially important of farming to local economic

become involved in town politics

Make sure and tell new home or land owners they are in an ag zone.

Farming keeps the Catskills open and scenic.

Farming supports the economy year-round.

19. What attracted you to farm in Sullivan County?

lack of people (rural), open space

very rural setting- open space

land availability

New York State, only state to live in

I don't farm. I rent my land to Herman Hubert.

Rent land to a local farmer

the beauty

husband born in Monticello

My ancestors who have been here and farmed since 1809

My ancestors lived here 200 years.

lived here all my life

passed down from family

good grazing land, open space, wild space, close to our markets and cultural needs.

land WAS available, taxes WERE reasonable

Land and taxes were cheap 9 years ago. Everything has gone up, still the services and management of same remain bad. The county is beautiful but badly managed and not well promoted. There is too much land tax exempt!!!

land prices- the people here

family life long resident-farmers

It's where we owned property

low cost of land

close to market NYC and land price was lower than Orange County

farm was in the family

I was born here - I love Sullivan County.

family owned farm for many years

We got the land cheap from the Indians years ago. They didn't want to farm here.

22. How concerned are you about the loss of farmland in your town?

Land taxes are so high people want to sell land for development.
Because land prices and taxes are so high people want to sell for development.
some properties are in families for years and this is their livelihood
esthetic
Loss of farmland is always to high impact developers who have no interest inn the community other than a source of \$
beauty, character of area, diversified economy
Less land to lease, decrease in local ag services, decrease in sharing of equipment, advice, and help between local farmers.
It's my living.
The local farmers pay the majority of tax in the county. But the Town of Bethel has 30% tax exempt non-farm land. WHY???
Changes the rural community- farms do not increase cost of services like residents/homes.
the Town of Bethel is becoming suburban
Town plans to increase lot (residential) to 3 or 4 acres that will eat up farms. Now 1 acre. (BETHEL)
keep farming in Sullivan, not a NYC backyard
Faming isn't profitable, so farms will be sold.

23. Do you feel there is a negative relationship between local farms and non-farm neighbors?

Yes ignorance
Not consistently negative, but some don't appreciate farm machinery on roads or agricultural smells.
They want this to be a city.
They do not understand farming.
Because they don't understand farming.
City people do not understand.
some neighbbors do not understand farming
impatient with farming odors
No We try to be neighbor friendly.
Because we are neighbor friendly.
non-farmers move here because we like farmers
Because new residents are mostl seasonal and enjoy a more rural quiet community
We pay the taxes on the woods and land they hunt on! The non-farmers don't understand who pays for their woods!!!
Our farm is low-tech and eco-friendly.

24. What can be done to improve/strengthen the relationship between local farms and non-farm neighbors?

What we do is farming and we should be able to work together from there.
Neighbors have to realize what farmign involves (noise, odor, hours) and we all have to work together.
non-farm neighbors should buy product from farm neighbors
non-farm neighbors need to be educated about the area they are moving into
open forums
Maintain rural quiet community which both groups want
communication, compromise
communication
more meetings
Talk.
Education, discussion, sensitivity on the part of the farmer not to unnecessarily agitate neighbors with their activities.
keep zoning over 3-5 acres
The non farm neighbors should pay their taxes on their tax exempt props.
Education
People need to realize that the green fields are here because of farming.

Make it clear when they come that farms were here first.
educated to the neighbors about farming
Good communication.

25. Do you think natural gas drilling will help or impede agriculture in your town?

It will help the business revenue.
For those that want to stay in farming it will help immensely the business revenue.
I don't know how much land gas drilling takes up
no opinion at this time
Drilling uses hydrochloric and sulfuric acids-- runoff to soil and water.
provide income to landowners
Promise of big fast money will encourage farmers to opt out of farming. I have seen other areas developed in this way, greatly disrupting ag.
It will give much needed cash to farmers, our sources of income are limited.
There are few farms already.
It will poison the water, our greatest natural advantage.
cash for the needed farmer
\$\$

29. Please provide any additional comments

Town of Delaware: Buildings in agriculture use should have some type of exception while in agriculture use, as well as land and house. Even if you protect the land the farmers won't be able to afford to keep the land if the County and Town taxes aren't set to support agriculture. Noted on survey #20: the word "large" is crossed out from the choice "A smaller number of large farms." This choice is checked.

Town of Delaware: buildings in agricultural use should have some kind of exemption like the land does and the house should. Even if you protect the land the farmers won't be able to afford to keep the land if the County and Town taxes aren't set to support agriculture. Note on Survey #20: the word "large" is crossed out from the choice "A smaller number of large farms." This choice is checked.

Bethel & Liberty: purchasing produce from neighbors- a good start to a better neighborhood (Noted on survey: checked seasonal part-time workers but didn't indicate how many)

Noted on survey: didn't answer many of the specific farm questions because land is rented to a farmer (the farmer, Herm Hubert, would know more info)

Noted on survey: #10 strategies for town to pursue- (1) fund school programs, (2) decrease taxes, (3) develop preservation properties for horse trails and trail ride insurance; #15 greatest challenges- (1) energy costs, (2) insurance cost, (3) taxes, also lack of a state trail riding insurance program.

I rent my land to a farmer and will estimate what he does.

Noted 2 parcels/ 60 acres in Bethel

Noted on survey: #15 greatest challenges- (2) taxes (but not specific)

Noted on survey: #11 (1) more tax break of land owners; #15 (1) taxes (not specific)

Noted on survey: #11 - indicated next to choice "N" "if the board is supportive of ag enterprises"

Noted on survey: #11 zoning (not specific which type)

The tax burden on local farms should be lessened. One way would be to tax all properties in the county.
Why should a farmer bust his butt while next door they are tax free! (Noted on survey: #10 strategies for town to pursue- (1) give incentives to local stores to sell local produce, (2) have markets available for local products, (3) advertise the local products to businesses in nearby NYC. #15 greatest challenges- (1) fuel costs, (2) high prop/school tax (too many tax exempt properties!!), (3) promotion of area is very bad.

I do not currently farm this land, but I do have a farmer who utilizes 4+ acres for corn. I am very much in favor of preserving this land; Noted on survey: Segar family farmed the land through 40s; noted that majority of the land is wooded

Noted on Survey #8: has owned farm 17 years partly, 10 years solely

Noted on survey: #10 (L) wrote in "zone size?"

Noted on survey: #11 (1) keep 1 acre zoning for residential- do not increase.

strategies town should pursue to help keep farming viable: lower property tax and support Cornell Extension

Noted on survey #21: Sign a gas lease-- maybe.

Summary of Bethel Farmer Survey

- Q 1 and 2. There is a moderate variety of farms represented in the survey with the prevalent farms being dairy, (11 farms) and livestock (including horses). Other farms were less prevalent but included one Christmas tree, two cash crop, one vegetable, one forestry, and six other kinds of farms. Secondary farming operations included eggs, racehorses, horse boarding, custom fieldwork, compost, beef, kosher slaughter, farm stand, cell tower, and solar panels.
- Q 3. Of the four towns, Bethel had the most that participated in farmers markets. Four sell at Barryville, Harvest Market, Kauneonga, or Bethel markets.
- Q4. Within Bethel, 3,185 acres are owned by the farmers who participated in the survey and 2,503 additional acres are rented. The average size of owned land is 114 acres and rented lands average slightly larger (167 acres).
- Q5. Participants categorized about 4,800 acres of the total land into farmsteads, actively farmed land, wooded, idle, and rural residential acres. About 46% of the land is actively farmed and 31% is wooded. Less than 6% is considered idle.
- Q6. 182 people are employed by the farms that participated in the survey. This included 132 full time workers, 29 part time workers employed year-round, 4 full time seasonal and 17 part time seasonal workers.
- Q 7 – 9. These farms typically support one household. Almost all farms have been in existence for a long time: the average number of years the farmer owned the farm was 32, with an average of 44 years in the family.
- Q10. This question explored the level of support for various farmland protection strategies. There was support for most of these techniques from most farmers. However, there was less support for overlay zoning districts, exclusive agricultural zones, conservation subdivisions, lease of development rights, and transfer of development rights. Those techniques that were strongly supported by more than half the participants included farm friendly zoning, differential assessments, Loan programs, the Sullivan County Ag and Farmland Protection Plan, and growing new farmers.
- Q11. The participants ranked the farmland protection strategies and in order, chose: farm friendly zoning, purchase of development rights, differential assessments and conservation easements as preferred methods for the Town to pursue.
- Q12. In order to ensure that agriculture is reviewed adequately by local planning boards, participants felt that they needed to have a better understanding of agriculture, and of the role agriculture plays in the community. Further, several people indicated they felt that small subdivisions of farmland should not be allowed. There were also expressions of concern that the farmer should be able to subdivide their land if they

desire.

- Q13. A majority of farmers participated in ag value assessments on their property and structures, the STAR tax program, and were enrolled in a State certified Agricultural District. There was very little participation (5 maximum) in the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, IDA tax abatement programs, NYSERDA programs, and Watershed Ag Council programs.
- Q14. Farmers were asked to identify what their challenges were. Top challenges included fuel cost, property taxes, land prices, machinery and production costs. All these issues were challenges for some farmers however. Factors that were not as challenging or not applicable to area farmers were loss of productive farmland, rental costs, limited succession plans for the farm, global climate change, access to agri-services, lack of clients, and residential encroachment. Many of these had about half feeling they were some level of challenge while the other felt they were less challenging. Opinions were very mixed. Farmers in Bethel, compared to the other three towns, had more challenges over lack of local processing facilities and a community kitchen.
- Q15. Farmers felt that property taxes, fuel costs, machinery costs, and residential encroachments were the top challenges facing them personally.
- Q16. About 60% buy less than 25% of their supplies and equipment from within Sullivan County. Three farmers buy over 75% of their supplies locally. Seven farms buy between 25% and 74% of their supplies locally.
- Q17 - 18. 25 farms answered these questions. Of these, 40% of participants earn less than \$25,000 in gross sales from their farming operations. Two famers considered their farm personal use only and earned no income from it. About 36% (9 farms) earn over \$200,000 in gross farm income. Ten or about 40% (24 farmers answered this question) consider their farm to contribute less than 25% of their family net income. Seven farms considered themselves to have the farm contribute greater than 75% of their family net income.
- Q19. Most farmers indicated they were in Sullivan County because they had family roots and the farm was a family farm. Other factors that attracted people to the area included the beauty, open space, and proximity to markets – especially in New York City.
- Q20. There were mixed opinions about this question. The only consensus was that no farmer felt that there would be no significant change to agriculture in Sullivan County. A smaller number of large farms and movement of farms out of Sullivan County were the more dominant opinions on trends facing farms.
- Q21. This question explored farmers' future plans. 15 farms indicated they would be staying the same over the next ten years. Some were optimistic about the future: 10

farms plan on increasing their ag operations, nine will increase their agricultural sales, 13 will be diversifying their operations, 12 will be transferring farm to a family member, and 5 will be beginning a farming operation on their land. Nine indicated they would be selling all or part of their land for non-farm purposes over the next ten years.

Q22. Farmers were very concerned (97%) or somewhat concerned about loss of farmland in town. One was not concerned at all. The reasons for this concern included lack of profitability of farming, high land prices and taxes, loss of ag services and the agricultural infrastructure, small lots that use farmland, and suburban encroachment.

Q23 - 24. Slightly more farmers feel that there is no negative relationship with non-farmers. About 46% (of 26 who answered this question) do feel there are negative relationships. Most of the reasons given for the negative relationships revolved around the lack of awareness and information non-farmers have about farming. To improve these relationships, farmers felt there needed to be more education of non-farmers.

Q25. Many more Bethel farmers feel that gas leasing will help agricultural activities (16 out of 29). 55% felt that it would help farmers and 6 participants had no opinion. Reasons were that the added income would be very helpful to keep farmers going from an economic point of view.

Q26. There were no young farmers that were included in the survey. Three farmers were between the ages of 35 and 44. Six were between 45 and 54, 10 between 55 and 64, and 12 were over 65 years.

Q27. One participant has lived in Sullivan County for less than 5 years. Two have been here for 6 to 10 years, 3 between 11 and 20 years, and 79% have lived in Sullivan County for more than 20 years.

Q28. All participants had at least a high school degree. Almost 77% have some college or a college degree and 3 have a master's degree.

Q29. See notes on survey.

What the Survey Tells Us

- There are a wide variety of farms, but dominated by dairy and livestock. Many farmers have secondary operations that further diversify farming in the town.
- Not many farms participate in farmers markets – probably due to the nature of the farm.
- Some Delaware farmers actively own or rent farmland in surrounding towns to support their businesses. A small percentage of farmers have rental lands not owned by the farmer out of the town. However, 67% rely on non-farmer owned/rented lands within town. There is potential that this loss could be very negative on Callicoon farmers.
- The 239 farms who participated in the survey contribute to the employment of the area by employing a total of 60 people for at least part of the year. This is not an unsubstantial contribution to the economy.
- Farms typically support one household and have mostly been in the family for many years. There is a lot of history and experience in the community as a result.
- There is support for many ag protection methods. Overlay zoning techniques would probably not be acceptable. Programs that attracted new farmers, farm friendly zoning, PDR and use of conservation easements, and continued tax benefits for farming are all priority solutions. However, other innovative ideas do have support such as conservation subdivisions, TDR, ag enterprise zones, and even exclusive agricultural zones.
- Overall, participants felt that more education and awareness of the role agriculture plays in the town as well as the potential negative impacts to agriculture need more attention by the local planning board.
- Farmers are taking advantage of some of the tax programs, but not all. This might indicate the need for more education of the farmers about these programs.
- Taxes and operations costs (fuel, machinery, production) were among the top challenges of farmers. They feel that rental land and its cost, water, and access to marketing and business support were not problems. Some farmers who concentrate on fresh produce felt that lack of local processing facilities were a challenge to them.
- Farmers are going out of the area to purchase many of their supplies and equipment. This might indicate that not all services are available locally. It also may indicate that there may be business opportunities for some of these services to be provided locally.
- Unfortunately, the overall economic picture of Delaware farms is not strong, but is

perhaps stronger than in Callicoon. About 50% of the farmers have small gross sales (less than \$25,000) and many have their farms contributing less than 25% of their family income. That means that off-farm income is required and that much of the farms in Town do not contribute to a large degree to the owners income. Compared to Callicoon however, there is more income generated from the farm in Delaware.

- Farmers feel that there will be a loss of farms resulting in fewer farms (some moving out of the county) and farmland being incorporated into other farms. This would result in fewer, but larger farms. They also feel that some farm diversification will occur. Even so, many farmers hope to increase their sales, increase their agricultural operations, and maintain the farms in their families. Three indicated that they would be selling all or part of their farm, but that means that most will be staying the same or attempting to expand.
- There is concern about loss of farmland both from an economic point of view as well as from a community character point of view. Increased development and continued loss of income were reasons why so many were concerned.
- Some farmers are clearly having difficulties with their non-farm relationships. There are still many farmers who have not had that problem, but given that 44% do have issues, it is a problem that needs addressing. Education was the key tactic felt to improve relationships.
- Although there were mixed feelings about the role gas drilling can play in maintaining farms, slightly more people felt it would be good for farmers because they would earn additional income that could keep the farm going and the land in agriculture. Some were clearly concerned about possible negative environmental impacts.
- The farming community is aging and that means that in the next decade or two, there might be significant changes in farm and land ownership. Lack of young farmers is a potential large problem.