



County of Onondaga
Office of the County Executive

J. Ryan McMahon II
County Executive

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Media Release

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Contact: Mark Nicotra (315) 435-3516

County Executive Ryan McMahon & New York Agricultural Land Trust Celebrate Permanent Protection of 1,295 Acres of Agricultural Land

Onondaga County Now Accepting New Applications

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – County Executive J. Ryan McMahon, II and the New York Agricultural Land Trust (NYALT) celebrated a \$3.1 million investment by New York State for the permanent protection of 1,295 acres of local agricultural land as well as to assist local dairy farmers who are facing economic challenges.

Funding is provided by the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets under the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program (FPIG). Since 1998, agricultural land in Onondaga County has been preserved by the farming community through the purchase or donation of conservation easements to restrict non-agricultural development on important farmland. The current awards will protect 1,295 acres of land in three Onondaga County towns.

NYALT has also partnered with landowners and the Onondaga County Agriculture Council and Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to protect and conserve over 5,300 acres of critical and threatened farmland in Onondaga County to date. Upon completion of these new projects, over 10,000 acres of farmland will be permanently protected in Onondaga County.

County Executive McMahon said, “The agriculture industry is an important part of our diverse economy in Onondaga County. By permanently preserving this land, we will also ensure that our community will continue to enjoy the wonderful diversity of our landscape that makes Central New York such an appealing place to live.” McMahon continued, “Thank you to our partners at New York State and New York Agricultural Land Trust for their support of our local farmers.”

This round of FPIG funding targets dairy farms in New York State, which have been affected by prolonged historic low milk prices. Eligible projects include farm operations transitioning to non-dairy farming, diversifying a farm operation in dairy, or transitioning ownership in dairy, with modified operations to increase viability.

Awarded projects in Onondaga County include:

Pastureland Farm: Owned by the Mapstone family, the farm includes 796 acres of land in the Town of Pompey. Pastureland Dairy is investing in a number of additions to the physical infrastructure at the farm, and will use the funds to purchase additional grazing land to support their organic transition, and diversifying through the addition of blueberries and Christmas trees for sale on site. Ownership is also transitioning to their son, Jeremy, who is Dairy Manager on the farm. (\$1,993,723)

CBG-Farm: Owned by Charles and Rebecca Griskauskas, third generation farmers, the project protects 200 acres in the Town of Onondaga. The operation has already begun a transition from traditional dairy to an expanding Angus beef cattle operation, with an on-site retail store. (\$500,194)

Fesko Farms: The project covers 299 acres of the Fesko Farms operation in the Town of Spafford. Fesko Farms also received funding for an additional 164 acres of nearby lands in Cortland County. The owners plan to expand their operation by developing a custom cropping business to supplement their 680-cow dairy operation. (\$637,219)

Each of the farms has partnered with the New York Agricultural Land Trust (NYALT) to execute the projects and ultimately hold and monitor the conservation easement placed on the land to limit non-agricultural development. NYALT is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to conserve working farmland and promote greater appreciation for New York's agricultural and forested lands and their associated natural resources.

The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board is currently accepting applications for both dairy and non-dairy projects. Interested farm owners are encouraged to contact the New York Agricultural Land Trust or the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency for more information.

The attached map shows the location of the three awarded farms.

Following the success of Round 1 of the dairy-operation focused easement program, New York State has also launched a second round of the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant dairy transition program.

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