



Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board

BRIAN REEVES, Chairman
JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk

401 Montgomery Street • Court House • Room 407 • Syracuse, New York, 13202

Date: December 1, 2025
To: Agricultural District 1 Property Owners
From: Jamie McNamara, Clerk of the Onondaga County Legislature
Re: Agricultural District 1 - 2026 Eight-Year Review and Recertification

Why did I receive this mailing?

Onondaga County records indicate that you own property enrolled in Agricultural District 1 as listed on the enclosed Removal and Addition Request Form. New York State Agricultural Districts Law requires that State certified agricultural districts be reviewed and recertified every eight years. Agricultural District 1, in the Onondaga County Towns of Onondaga and Otisco, and LaFayette and Tully west of I-81, is scheduled for review and recertification in 2026. The district currently encompasses approximately 38,726 acres.

Property owners can request that their property:

- **REMAIN** in the District – **no further action required**; and/or
- Be **REMOVED** from the district – **complete and return the enclosed form by January 30th, 2026**; and/or
- Be **ADDED** to the district – **complete and return the enclosed form by January 30th, 2026**.

What is an Agricultural District?

New York's Agricultural Districts Law, Article 25-AA PDF of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Law (AML), was enacted in 1971 to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural land for production of food and other agricultural products, and as valued natural and ecological resources which provide needed open spaces for clean air sheds and aesthetic purposes. Responsibility for the creation, review, and management of the State's agricultural districts lies within the authority of the county's legislative bodies.

Agricultural Districts Law provides agricultural property owners within an agricultural district with the following benefits and protections:

- requires state agencies to modify administrative regulations and procedures to encourage the maintenance of viable farming;
- limits the exercise of eminent domain and other public acquisitions, and the advance of public funds for certain construction activities;
- limits the power to impose benefit assessments, special ad valorem levies, or other rates or fees in certain benefit areas or improvement districts including water, sewer, and non-farm drainage;
- limits unreasonable local restrictions and regulations of farm operations;
- requires agricultural data statement review for certain planning and zoning actions that impact a farm operation;
- provides for Right to Farm protection from nuisance lawsuits;
- requires agricultural district disclosure notice for real estate transactions involving property within an agricultural district; and
- provides for a five-year rather than eight-year conversion penalty period for property owners who receive an agricultural assessment.

Being within an agricultural district does not:

- restrict the use of property for agricultural production, or otherwise prohibit other uses;
- change the local municipal zoning designation; or
- restrict the sale or lease of property.

Why is my property in Agricultural District 1?

When first formed in the 1970's, agricultural districts were contiguous and all properties within an area of predominantly viable agricultural land were included, regardless of their use. Properties typically remain in the district unless the owner at the time of review specifically requests that it be removed.

What kind of property should be added to Agricultural District 1?

Property owners are encouraged to add viable agricultural land that is currently not in the district. Viable agricultural land is defined as "...land highly suitable for a farm operation..." and a farm operation is defined as "...the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise..."

What kind of property should be removed from Agricultural District 1?

Owners of non-agricultural land within the district can request that it be removed. The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board and local municipal officials can also recommend that certain properties be removed.

How do property owners add or remove property from Agricultural District 1?

A Removal and Addition Request Form, which lists tax parcels owned by you within the district, is enclosed for your convenience. If you choose to remove and/or add new parcels, please complete and return the enclosed form by **January 30, 2026**. Blank forms are available at <http://ongov.net/planning/review.html>.

Can I get a reduction in my property taxes if my property is within an agricultural district?

Owners of viable agricultural lands both within and outside of the district may be eligible for an agricultural assessment. Contact your local assessor for more information on agricultural assessments. For additional information visit: www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/valuation/agindex.htm.

What is the enclosed Farm Questionnaire, and should I complete it?

The Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board requests feedback on the state of agriculture in the district and asks how the County and partnering agricultural service providers can be of assistance to the farming community. Thank you for your participation.

What should I expect next?

A review report will be prepared by Onondaga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board and presented to the County Legislature for their consideration. The County Legislature will hold a public hearing and determine if the district should be continued, terminated, or modified. Their findings and required documentation are then submitted to the Commissioner of Agriculture & Markets for certification. Property owners who have requested the removal or addition of parcels will receive written notification of the hearing and the Department's final action. The entire process typically takes eight to ten months.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

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315-435-2611 / agriculture@ongov.net
<https://ongov.net/planning/agdist.html>
<https://agriculture.ongov.net/>