

Agricultural Issues Committee Meeting  
4/5/22, 1 PM at the Hamden Office

In Attendance:

Fred Kuhn, Chair, Carolyn Scobie, Recording Secretary, Brad Taggart, Ben Hepler, Joyce Gray, Janet Beken Smith, Jeanne Darling, Andrew Hinckley, Dr. Chris Camann, Paul Cerosaletti, Dale Dewing, James Romack

Attending via Zoom: Carla Crim, Rich Toebe, Corrine Tompkins

Absent: April Wright Lucas who was attending the Herd Health and Nutrition Conference, Syracuse, NY.

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 PM

Meeting Minutes from the January meeting were briefly discussed. Carolyn thanked Carla for taking such thorough notes. Janet made the motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Joyce

Jeanne reported on the Farm Business Management position - The Community Educator (Bachelor degree level) interviews will start this week. There are 3 candidates with Master's degrees and would want to hire at the Resource Educator (Master's degree level) if possible. Paul stated that there are some really good candidates.

**Educational Programming update:**

Carla Crim- Horticulture and Master Gardener programming - The Community Garden at Birdsong is in its 5<sup>th</sup> year with many volunteers. Weekend workshops will be offered. Richard Lamson, owner, is building a new BBQ pit and Ag Learning Center. Master Gardeners are meeting regularly each month and taking trips to gardens within the region.

Events to include Meredith Dairy Fest and Kid-Stock, which is a music festival for kids at West Kortright Center. Master Gardeners will be tabling and offering a terrarium hands-on activity.

Homegrown National Park initiative, "grass-roots" initiative to get homeowners interested in growing native plants and protecting pollinators. Started in Delhi and expanding throughout the county.

Cut Flower programming is "exploding". We had two Zooms recently - one on events and one on focal flowers.

Carla attended a conference in Omaha with educators around the country, funding provided by the NE Risk Management Center

Growing for Fall Farmer Education (pumpkins and more) is in the planning stages and will be offered in late April or early May.

Birdsong was selected to be an AAS display garden, and we received over 100 packets of seeds to show off the latest and greatest winning varieties of flowers and vegetables. CCE will co-host Family Farm Day with Otsego and Schoharie Counties and will have a booth at Birdsong Farm on Family Farm Day.

Delaware County Economic Development provided us a \$3000 TPD grant for Family Farm Day.

Richard Lamson purchased a Dairy Fest Booth and is donating it to CCE to adjoin our booth so we will have a larger space and can have a horticulture display.

Chobani generally donates yogurt for us to sample at the Dairy Fest and the Walton Farmers' market.

Dale Dewing reported on the Catskill Regional Agriculture Conference -There were 550 attendees, with distribution similar to previous years. With the Omicron surge the Conference was virtual, with 18 different sessions. Most 2021 attendees were Delaware County and vicinity, although there were some from the West Coast, etc. The 2020 Conference had many international participants. We have done okay with those who are comfortable with Zoom, but there is "Zoom fatigue". About 20 Watershed farms

participated, which is about half of what was previously expected. Wished we had done better to track and reach local farms.

Some of the traditional crop school programming hasn't been done yet, waiting to do in-person. We might be getting close to being able to offer field tours and shop meetings again.

The flower track is growing, as is a non-traditional audience. Carla has secured funding to reach out for the next conference.

There is WAC Funding available for WAC farmer attendance. Dairy is decreasing but other farms are increasing. There are opportunities to build relationships with new farmers.

Rich Toebe gave an overview of Livestock programming - He has been working with a Program Work Team with livestock educators from several counties on beef webinars and a commercial sheep producers group and small ruminant nutrition. Ag Mondays- provided updates on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and on beef market reports.

The Delhi Fire Hall will be available for events this year: Harvesting Forage from a producer's perspective/ Hay and Forage (beef/sheep/goat). Date not available yet (end of April). Will follow up with participants and monitor 1 hayfield through the season.

Discussed spring cow/calf feed costs, management of pasture, weight gain of beef, sheep minerals. Scissor cuts will be starting soon.

Dung beetle studies are planned. Will focus on 2 farms, study species in Delaware County and the effect of feed through pesticides. Still looking to ID specific beef farms, 1 that uses rapid rotations in grazing (to better monitor dung pats) of 4 days- 1 week per section and a farm that utilizes Rabon/ivermectin feed through.

Dale reported that the Ag Mondays will be scaling back -It has been a small, faithful group and informal conversations. It filled a purpose during the pandemic. Now the growing season is coming on and days are longer. Thinking that conversations may start back up during the poor weather months.

Paul reported that although it's been a long, cold Spring, soil temperatures should warm mid-April to mid-May. Scissors cuts begin in May. There's about 15 years of data on file. The area is transitioning from Dairy to Beef herds and the forage needs are different. Scissors cuts will be extended to June. TDN is expected to drop around Father's Day. Concerns include low digestibility, over conditioned cows, harder to get change in farming practices. With low TDN before the middle of July, focus on inventory and allocation, guide farmers on storage for access.

State-wide Zoom programming for field crops January- March were the most robust offerings in a while, including opportunities for Pesticide applicators.

Delaware County Farmers Grants- ARPA approved proposals. Corrine put a good proposal together (half million dollars). Details aren't completely finished. Based on the Southern Tier Grant Model. Focused on Delaware County Farms with a roll-out in the next 6 months. Board of Supervisors approved, good support, farmers have demonstrable impacts from Covid. The County hasn't done a lot of these so a contract would need to be drawn up since we are not a "County entity".

Dairy Strategic Plan Grant - the money is tied to NYS Ag and Markets- difficulties due to their lack of staffing. NYSA&M hasn't put forward a contract yet. We would develop a strategic plan to continue to support the Dairy industry with a consultant, engage farms to ID opportunities and threats. Jen Metzger wanted to include Sullivan and Orange Counties. They have similar markets and farm size. A great opportunity for local Dairy Industry, bringing resources in.

Last summer Antonio Delgado was at a meeting at Don's Dairy Supply and suggested branding our milk "Pure Catskills". Dale noted that the problem/barrier is that currently everyone's milk goes to different places. What would it take to solve the problem?

Dale presented Watershed Ag Program updates - it's been a long time working on the WAC situation. The NYC Department investigation determined that funds were used for the wrong contracts ("rob Peter to pay Paul"). NYC oversight continues beyond DEP, not engaged in the purpose of WAC/DEP. The sorting out of what-goes-where is basically done. Budget money from DEP should flow better. Working on funding for the new fiscal year and waiting on money in the bank. The Fiscal Year runs from July to June. Several years of projects are ready and waiting to go. For Filtration Avoidance a certain percent of BMP's are designed in time and ready to implement.

PFM is in a good place. Funding comes from sub-contracts, on schedule. Significant phosphorous reductions to report. Allowed to work with up to 60 farms, currently have about 50-58 farms, not enough staffing to do more. In the last 2 weeks working on the budget for renewal with WAC (a portion for administrative costs). 3 years, 9 months to go to the end of current WAC contract. Continue business as usual.

Paul noted that regarding the contract, the 2011 PFM budget estimate wasn't part of the Filtration Avoidance. Signals for the next round of contracts to expand beyond 60 farms and look 5+ years down the road.

Enhanced Manure Management- NRCS grants include storage, distribution, injection. The Soil and Water District submits on WAC's behalf, Federal, 2023. This is county wide, not just Watershed. A question is can we have an effective, custom manure spreading service in the county? There are narrow windows for optimal spreading.

Cornell Research Collaborations with the Animal Science Department (Paul, Dale, Jim)- 2021 PFM Annual Report distributed. 4 success stories, second best year so far (2020 was the best) Phosphorus levels showed a 36% reduction in manure phosphorus, 3,000 kilos less phosphorus excreted per dairy cow. Phosphorus and nitrogen are quantified. \$/Kg of phosphorus is integral to fund allocation.

Jim- Beef PFM Benchmarks have been established. Quantifying diets, beef versus dairy. Ration setups are different and have come a long way. WAC is working on a mineral blend through CFD (Cooperative Feed Dealers)

Janet- Delaware County is the largest beef county in the state. The channel is already there to get specific mineral blends to farmers. Beef farmers are looking to get a bag of minerals off the shelf.

Dr. Camann- regarding measures of performance/ product testing- in dairy, the product is milk and can be tested daily with adjustments made regularly, with beef, the product is the calf which will not be evaluated until a year or two. Need measures of performance before the slaughterhouse.

Dale- "The best way to get there is to start"

Jim- Mature plants drive down phosphorus. Goal in 2022 is to convince beef farmers to not put in "dairy" hay. Segregate nursing cow/calf group from steers. Need something for steers to grow on.

Jeanne- PFM has saved Dairy farmers money and can do the same for beef if you are not paying for phosphorus or other minerals that are not needed.

Ben- Nutrient Management may get stricter based on soil types using new software

Dairy Tour – discussion-

Paul- opportunity to ask about regions, consider a different site visit (crops?) Last year was in Franklin, open to input

Dale- calf raising, breeding-repro, housing, grazing, see nice cows?

Brad- Calf raising facilities

Jackie- intergenerational transitions, what's keeping them in Delaware County, How to do it?

Jackie- 2023- robotics

Janet- how to survive increased fertilizer prices. "Pay me now, pay me later" Forage vs Fertilizer. Specific applications, soil samples precision fertilizer management.

Dairy Fest- Rich- Planning on being there. It is a way to introduce farming to those who don't Family-owned focus, Stewardship, Well cared for (on call Vet, nutritionist, etc)

Janet- Vast trickle-up effect. Rural America affected, foundation of our economy

Dr. Camann- we take care of the animals, and the animals take care of us

Farm Field Days- with the Dairy Tour

Livestock programming- let Rich know if there are particular needs

Family Farm Day August 27th- Delaware County Economic Development grant to keep it going, hundreds of people come out, a new tourism map is being created. Richard Lamson will provide space for CCE at Birdsong Farm

Rich addressed the ongoing concern of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Presented fact sheets. Biosecurity considerations must be made for on-farm events and tours. All Poultry shows are closed until further notice. USDA APHIS give daily updates. Producers should report unexpected deaths and decreases in egg production. In 2015 there were 200 flocks affected.

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/2022-hpai>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/defend-the-flock-program>

Solar Farms- this county is targeted for downstate transmission lines. High pressure, high dollar solar companies are contacting people. Solar grazing sites article in the May Extension Connection. Cheryl Starcher Ceresna is available for assistance.

Meeting business concluded at 3:36 PM

All present attended the Sexual Harassment Awareness Training

Meeting adjourned at 3:45

Next meeting dates: July 11 at 7:30 PM, October 17 at 7:30 PM