

Purchasing New York Farm Foods for School Meals

A Report to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Farm-to-School Meetings Spring 2003

May 15 Central New York
May 28 Capitol District – Cohoes High School
May 29 Finger Lakes
June 3 Long Island
June 11 Western New York
June 17 New York City Department of Education

prepared by:
Glenda Neff
NY Farms!
125 Williams Rd.
Candor, NY 13743
(607)-659-3710

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Spring 2003

Executive Summary

In February, 2002, Governor George Pataki signed legislation establishing a Farm-To-School Program to facilitate and promote the purchase of New York State farm products by schools, universities and other educational institutions. This program builds on a solid foundation of Farm-to-School efforts by NYS School Food Service Association, NY Farms!, NYS Assembly Task Force on Farm, Food & Nutrition Policy, Cornell University, and many other partners since 1996.

In early 2003, the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets contracted with NY Farms! to organize regional Farm-to-School meetings across New York State. The purpose of these meetings was to identify how to increase purchases of NY-grown farm products for school meal programs. Buyers (food service and distributors) and suppliers (distributors and farmers) were invited, as well as ag commodity organizations and Extension. The NYS School Food Service Association provided contact information for Food Service Directors in the targeted regions. Those FSDs who responded to the initial meeting announcement were asked to identify their produce suppliers (distributors and farmers) and invite them. NY Farms! contacted those suppliers, as well as other distributors, grower associations, co-ops, fruit and vegetable farmers. Pride of New York, NYS Vegetable Growers Association, NY Apple Association, and other trade directories were used.

The discussion focused on fresh and minimally-processed fruits and vegetables, as schools are particularly interested in increasing healthy and tasty food items on their menus. Topics included: what specific fruits and vegetables are currently offered and preferred by children; requirements for grading, processing and packaging; what communication is needed between farmers and distributors, between distributors and food service buyers, and the timing of that communication re: availability.

During May and June, five regional meetings were held in school cafeterias of Depew (Buffalo area), Geneva (Rochester & Finger Lakes), Cohoes (Capitol District), Huntington Station (Long Island), and Jamesville-Dewitt (Central NY). A sixth meeting took place with the New York City Department of Education Office of School Food and Nutrition Services, the second largest institutional buyer in the nation.

Outcomes

Building a team of buyers, suppliers, and farmers with a "let's figure out how to do this" attitude was a prime desired outcome. These meetings laid that foundation. Distributors clearly heard from their school customers that they want to purchase NY-grown, and that they can provide a valuable service by offering NY farm products.

Important to the success of each meeting's give-and-take was the diversity of participants in the food distribution chain, and the presence of new ventures such as Upstate NY Growers & Packers. Attendance lists with contact info were distributed at each meeting and to interested parties afterwards.

Growers learned about the range of fresh fruits and vegetables schools are buying, what form and packaging schools prefer, and the importance of streamlined ordering and fulfillment.

In Western NY and on Long Island, the role of purchasing cooperatives was discussed as an avenue for negotiating prices and building volume.

Follow-up communications with schools and businesses document that school buyers requested prices and menued NY-grown items for NY Harvest for NY Kids Week because of what they learned at these meetings.

In New York City, the meeting established a common ground and a working relationship with the Department of Education's purchasing, food technology (nutrition standards) and nutrition education divisions. During the 2003-04 school year, NY City schools will receive \$3.2 million of fresh produce through a pilot project of the USDA and Department of Defense (DoD). The DoD procurement division purchases fresh fruit and vegetables for the USDA School Meals Program. The program specifically encourages sourcing from regional agricultural producers when possible.

Contents of this Report

- A summary of the discussions and ideas shared at the six meetings
- Recommendations for next steps to facilitate purchasing of NY farm products
- Acknowledgement and appreciation of the partners who contributed to the success of these meetings
- Sample invitation and agenda
- Specific notes and attendance list for each meeting
- A list of the hand-outs which all attendees received
- *Suggestions*, a flier which communicates the recommendations for schools, distributors, and farmers, summarized from the discussion at these meetings

Next Steps

- Encourage ongoing communication between buyers and suppliers about NY-grown items by disseminating the *Suggestions* to schools, distributors, farmers/packers, processors, agricultural groups.
- Target specific food items and develop a "push and pull" strategy through distribution pipelines. Pears, potatoes, and cut carrots have been suggested.
- Hold additional meetings to include school districts not reached during Spring 2003. Use what has been learned in the first round to facilitate a discussion at the next level (e.g. focus on specific products and joint menu planning and orders from a geographic cluster of school districts).
- Facilitate joint orders by school food service buyers in regions which have motivated Farm-to-School leaders and mechanisms in place for cooperative purchasing.

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NY State Farm-to-School Program - Background

In February, 2002, Governor George Pataki signed legislation establishing a Farm-To-School Program to facilitate and promote the purchase of New York State farm products by schools, universities and other educational institutions. This program builds on a solid foundation of accomplishments during the past five years. The NYS Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm, & Nutrition Policy sponsored NY Harvest for NY Kids Week, an annual school cafeteria promotion, since 1996. The NYS School Food Service Association joined with NY Farms! and established their own Task Force. Cornell University developed a Farm-to-School Program. The NY Apple Association targeted schools with special marketing promotions for fresh apples. Beginning in 2003, the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and NYS Department of Education are working with these and other groups through the NYS Farm-to-School Coordinating Committee.

Since 1998, NY Farms! and the NYS School Food Service Association (NYSSFSA) have helped Food Service Directors make a special effort to plan activities and feature NY-grown foods during NY Harvest for NY Kids. Some schools continue to order NY farm products throughout the year, particularly fresh apples. Most, however, find it is time-consuming and often impossible to get locally- or NY-grown.

Goals of Farm-to-School Regional Meetings

The more successful growth in purchases of NY-grown have occurred when the distributors, growers, and Food Service Directors have sat down to communicate, identify obstacles, and work out solutions. The experience of Broome and Tioga county school districts procuring NY fresh apple cider is an example of this team effort. To duplicate this model, the NYSSFSA NY Farms! Task Force recommended setting up regional meetings of food service, farmers, and distributors. Bringing these players together would establish what information is needed when and by whom. Growers and packers/processors would learn what foods the schools are most interested in, the preferences for processing and packaging, the opportunities for value-added products. Most importantly, relationships between buyers and suppliers would be built for follow-up and ongoing communication. With these goals in mind, NY Farms! was contracted by the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets to organize and facilitate meetings for Food Service Directors, growers, wholesalers and food distributors across New York State during 2003.

Six regional meetings were organized and held during May and June, 2003 (attendance lists for each meeting are included in the appendix):

May 15 Central New York – Jamesville-Dewitt High School

22 participants – 8 school districts, 2 produce distributors, 6 farmers/ag businesses

May 28 Capitol District – Cohoes High School

20 participants – 8 school districts, 2 produce distributors, 2 farmers/ag businesses,
8 Extension and NYS Dept of Health

May 29 Finger Lakes/Rochester – Geneva Middle School
18 participants – 8 school districts, 1 produce distributor, 1 farmer, 6 Extension and community organizations

June 3 Long Island – South Huntington School District
18 participants – 10 public school districts, 1 private school, 1 food service distributor, 1 produce broker, 2 farms, 1 Extension

June 11 Western New York – Depew High School
31 participants – 14 public school districts, 1 Catholic high school, 1 food service management company, 2 produce distributors, 3 farms/ag businesses, 1 farm/distributor, 5 Extension and NYS Department of Health

June 17 New York City Department of Education
16 participants

The meetings were very well attended by School Food Service Directors in spite of tight end-of-school-year schedules. Important to the success of each meeting's give-and-take was the participation of produce distributors, food service companies, individual farmers, and grower associations (e.g. Upstate NY Growers & Packers, Empire Produce Processors, Nelson Farms at SUNY Morrisville). These new ventures have the potential for bringing NY-grown, minimally-processed foods to the school food service market. Ag economic development specialists and nutrition educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension, as well as NYS Department of Health staff, came to listen and offer their support services.

Distributors were acknowledged at each meeting for the important role they can play to efficiently source and deliver NY-grown. Many smaller purveyors could not attend, but communicated by phone that they want to service their customers with NY farm products. It was evident that a distributor who offers local and NY-grown farm products through-out the year has a competitive advantage. Service and quality are a priority over price, although prices for NY-grown need to be "fair" and within a reasonable range.

Format of Meetings

The agenda of the meetings was the same for all the meetings except in NY City. (See sample agenda in appendix.) After a brief background on Farm-to-School in NYS, the experiences of Cornell's pilot projects, and the potato pilots, we used a "roundtable" format to hear from Food Service Directors, distributors and brokers, farmers and farmer businesses. The printed agenda offered guiding questions, and the facilitator actively summed up salient points and kept the discussion flowing.

Cornell Farm-to-School Pilot Projects

Experiences and data were shared from two Cornell pilot projects, at Hannibal CSD in Oswego County and Johnson City SD in Broome County. The goals of these pilots are to help the school districts serve more NY-grown fruits, vegetables, and dried beans. Information on the types of products, prices and volume comparisons from the month of September 2001 and 2002 at both pilots was presented. Fliers featuring a "NY Food of the Month" (potatoes, onions, pears) on the menu send information home to the families about NY agriculture, nutrition, and recipes.

NY Roasted Potatoes

An important and delectable part of each meeting was a tasting of roasted potato wedges, and information about the availability of fresh-cut NY potatoes. In the Spring of 2003, four school districts (Hannibal, Jamesville-Dewitt, Owego-Apalachin, and Geneva) participated in a pilot project to test potato as well as squash products from Martens Country Kitchen. The participating schools purchased and prepared various Martens potato products (diced, mashed, wedges), developed recipes, and gathered staff and student feedback. Cooks at each of the schools reported that they liked the product in all its forms. Martens has had to revamp its product line to assure quality levels, particularly in terms of shelf-life. Fresh mashed and par-boiled potatoes were discontinued; fresh whole, peeled, diced and wedges are all available

Of all the forms and recipes, roasted wedges received the widest acclaim from the students based on taste, and from the kitchen staff based on ease of use.

A brochure for the school food service market, including some of the recipes, has been produced by Cornell Farm-to-School Program and Martens. At each meeting, a report was given on the pilot; representatives from Martens described their potato and butternut squash products.

A Healthier French Fry

A mention in the Martens brochure of a “healthier french fry” product elicited interest at almost every meeting. How large is the market for french fries currently served in New York state schools? According to data collected by Bill Jordan, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, the consumption of french fries and similar potato products in New York schools represents between \$11.5 and \$13.2 million in sales. Most of this product is currently sourced outside of New York state. This is also reflected in the general trend: in 1955, it is estimated that New York growers produced 79% of the potatoes consumed in the state; in 1999, that percentage had fallen to 59.4%.

A frozen, lower-fat french fry is definitely desired by school food service market.

The Roundtable Discussion

The majority of the time in each meeting was an exchange of information, discussion, and ideas among the participants – primarily purchasers and suppliers – about what could help them increase purchases of New York-grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

The focus was on *fresh* fruits and vegetables for several reasons. The milk purchased by schools is, for the most part, from New York dairy producers. Meat, as well as frozen and canned fruits and vegetables, are obtained through the USDA donated foods program. Increasing children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables is a component of new initiatives that address children’s health. New York is a major producer of several food items already on the school menu – EG apples and potatoes – and others have the potential to be, as cafeterias add more fresh fruits and vegetables to the menu and a la carte offerings.

At every meeting, we reassured Food Service Directors that the NYS Farm-School initiative does not expect schools to pay more for NY-grown products. The issues of cost, efficiency, and labor were brought up in each meeting and cannot be underestimated.

We acknowledged that the produce distributors and food-service companies play an important role in the distribution system. They offer valued services that save schools time and money. Most school districts are not interested or able to buy direct from multiple farmers. One Food Service Director explained “I have 10 minutes each week to take care of the produce order.”

Prices

What does school food service budget for sides of fruit and vegetable on the lunch menu? The short answer is approx. \$.15 per fruit/meal and \$.15 per vegetable/meal. However, as one Food Service Director described, if she is getting USDA Donated Foods for “center of the plate” items, she can afford to pay a little more for the fruits and vegetables.

There are initiatives in the 2003 Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization for assisting with the costs of fresh fruits and vegetables and purchasing from local farms. One provides an extra two to ten cents reimbursement for schools that “improve the accessibility, presentation, positioning, or promotion of fluid milk, fruits, and vegetables.” Other proposals would expand the Free Fruit and Vegetable (snack) Program which was piloted in five states last year, and increase the appropriation for Department of Defense Fresh program.

What Foods

At each meeting, we asked the Food Service Directors to tell us what vegetable and fruit products they are using, any special uses such as in salad bars, and what they are looking for re: cut, sliced, shredded. Schools are not all alike in what they offer on the menu, in what they say their students prefer, or how much they can deal with prepping whole products in their kitchen. However, labor costs are a very real and serious barrier to schools buying whole products that need peeling or cutting.

The following comments about food items were heard at all the meetings:

- Two products are definitely at the top of the list at all schools – apples and potatoes. Some schools offer fresh apples every day in every cafeteria.
- Fresh potatoes are used less often than frozen, which are provided to schools by USDA donated foods. Interest in a “low-fat french-fry” was high. The potato wedges, oven-roasted for the tasting, were met with very positive feedback at the pilot schools and at these meetings.
- Baked potato is seldom on the menu, once per month on average. They need small-sized whole potatoes, EG 90-120 ct. per case.
- “Salt potatoes” are popular with students. These are small potatoes, cooked whole.
- Fresh apples are preferred at smaller sizes.
- Sliced fresh apples are an ideal product for elementary school children. There is also a desire to offer them in vending machines. The current price of packaged fresh sliced apples is too high, about double the cost of fresh whole apples. Shelf life is also sometimes a problem. Some schools will do the apple slicing in their kitchens, with peel left on. Then, inconsistent size of apples is not a problem.
- Apple cider in 4 oz. portion size for meals; 8 oz. containers for a la carte, is desired.
- Pears are popular with students. Schools would like to get fresh, ripe pears from NY growers.
- Seedless grapes are well-liked by students. As with the apple slices, the preferred packaging is single portions. We need to get information about seedless varieties being grown in NY State to distributors and school food service.
- After potatoes, carrots are the next big volume item, with most all schools saying they buy baby-cut carrots, some in single portion bags. Carrot and celery sticks are also purchased.
- Cauliflower and broccoli are being served raw, with ranch dressing dip. Some schools will cut up whole heads, but florets are preferred by many. One Food Service Director said he would like to get mixed cauliflower and broccoli florets.

- Lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, and green peppers are used in salads, subs and sandwiches, taco bars. Some schools buy whole heads of iceberg lettuce, others prefer salad mix.

Information about specific food items

- At the Central NY meeting, Marty Broccoli reported that Upstate NY Growers and Packers are selling shucked corn on the cob to NY State prisons. The Food Service Directors in attendance said they would be interested in corn on the cob. Elementary schools serve “cobbettes” to children – a half ear of corn. This is a product that could be available into late September, or as a frozen product during the winter.
- Squash, particularly butternut and acorn, was mentioned at a few meetings. If it is to be an accepted item by children, it needs to be offered often and in various recipes. The labor with cutting winter squash is a big barrier. Martens Farms in Port Byron and Martin Farms in Brockport offer cut-up squash. At the Western NY meeting, Food Service Directors discussed recipes they have for squash, and suggested they feature squash items during NY Harvest for NY Kids. Williamsville CSD did a “squash tasting” using butternut, spaghetti, and acorn during NYH NYK 2002.
- At the Eastern NY meeting in Cohoes, apple grower Nate Darrow, Saratoga Apples, described his fresh sliced apple product, which he sells to restaurants for apple pies and other baked items. No type of preservative on the slices, so they brown. He could offer it to schools for apple crisp and baked goods. Several Food Service Directors spoke with him after the meeting about his products.

Distributors

All the produce distributors who attended the meetings say they buy and offer NY-grown “when it is available”. But it was not clear what they do when the prices from outside NY are cheaper. Several distributors mentioned that when NY crops are being harvested, the prices are competitive with West Coast-grown because of shipping costs.

One distributor asked “wouldn’t you want to know the cheapest price I can give you, even if it’s from Canada?” The answer was “yes, of course. But I’d like to know both prices, so I can decide what to purchase.”

At another meeting, a Food Service Director commented about the big price difference she found between buying direct from an apple farmer and buying from distributors. The local, medium-size distributor responded that his business operates with very narrow margins, and is teetering on the edge of survival. To remain competitive with larger, full-service food service businesses, they are broadening their offering of items, such as dry goods. To increase efficiency (decrease costs), many produce distributors have a minimum order policy or limited delivery schedule to smaller or more rural schools. The result: some schools have very little choice of vendors for bids. It was at this point in the discussion that some Food Service Directors brought up the idea of “cluster orders” and cooperative purchasing of school districts as a possible solution.

Farmers

Most farmers selling into wholesale channels are not interested or able to service schools because they offer only a limited selection of items. The volume and sales total per delivery from most individual farms is not profitable. In two different meetings, Food Service Directors came up with this suggestion: Could farmers organize themselves to offer a broad range of products to schools with a centralized order and fulfillment system? Many schools currently order items (particularly dry

goods) co-operatively on a county or regional level, often through BOCES. They would be willing to look at buying locally- and NY-grown, especially if it resulted in better prices. The Upstate NY Growers and Packers is one growers' association that could possibly do this.

Next Steps

Disseminate the ideas heard at these regional meetings for increasing communication among schools, distributors and farmers. Included with this report are specific suggestions to schools, distributors, and farmers. Disseminate the document *Suggestions* to schools, distributors, farmers/packers, processors, agricultural groups. Broadcast the list of suggestions electronically; encourage reproduction by Extension and local farm-to-school projects; post on web sites.

Target specific food items and develop a “push and pull” strategy through distribution pipelines. Pears, potatoes, and cut carrots have been suggested. Work with the Department of Defense pilot in NYC, OGS Donated Foods, growers, packers and processors, and clusters of food service buyers.

The Spring 2003 meetings covered the urban “thruway belt” cities from Buffalo to Albany. Food Service Directors and growers in other regions, e.g. lower Hudson Valley; Mohawk Valley, Catskills, Southern Tier, and the North Country have requested similar “roundtables”. School districts in these rural regions have greater challenges in purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables but many are personally more motivated to support local agriculture. Additional meetings would give us the opportunity to build on what we learned in the first round, e.g. how could orders from a cluster of schools for specific products from area growers work?

Work with specific regions to facilitate the development of cooperative purchasing and distribution mechanisms. Erie County and Long Island are two regions that have buying co-ops in place, and expressed interest at the meetings in exploring how to use them for purchasing from farmers.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the NYS School Food Service Association and the individual Food Service Directors who generously contributed with planning and hosting the meetings:

Barbara Albi, Depew Union Free School District

JoEllen Martino, Geneva City School District

Judy Yacavone and Deborah Chynoweth, Jamesville-Dewitt Central School District

Dona Barth, Cohoes Central School District

Charles McTiernan, South Huntington Union Free School District

Our appreciation also to their staff who prepared potatoes from product supplied by Martens Farms for a tasting at every meeting.

We are grateful to the Art Institute of New York for hosting the meeting with the New York City Department of Education. Thank you to Chefs Kyle Shadix and Mark Hellermann for their help with logistics, preparing roasted potatoes and other tasty New York foods.

The following partners gave valuable time and assistance to make these meetings productive and beneficial for all:

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets Farm-to-School Program

- NYS Pride of New York Program
- NYS School Food Service Association
- NY Farms!
- Cornell University Farm-to-School Program
- NY Apple Association
- NYS Vegetable Growers Association
- Martens Farm and Country Kitchen Products

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS
Nathan L. Rudgers, Commissioner

CONTACT: FOR RELEASE:

Jessica Chittenden Immediately, Thursday
518-457-3136 May 15, 2003

SIX MEETINGS TO GROW STATE'S FARM-TO-SCHOOL EFFORTS
State Works to Better Link Farmers and School Food Service Directors

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has organized six regional meetings throughout the State to help further advance the State's Farm-to-School efforts. The intent of these meetings is to strengthen the link between New York farmers and food distributors and school food service directors, who are prioritizing the purchase of New York produced foods in school menus.

State Agriculture Commissioner Nathan Rudgers said, "Since Governor Pataki signed the Farm-to-School law last year, New York has been able to develop a stronger working relationship between farmers and school food service directors. These meetings will further advance that partnership, leading to greater New York food sales and healthier school children."

The meetings will involve school food service directors, local farmers and food producers, processors and distributors, as well as State representatives, all of whom will share their experiences and challenges, while discussing ways to get more New York State products into school cafeterias and on school menus. The six meetings will be held in the following regions:

May 15 Central New York - Jamesville/Dewitt
May 28 Capital District - Cohoes
May 29 Finger Lakes - Geneva
June 3 Long Island - South Huntington
June 4 New York City
June 11 Western New York - Depew

Betsey Bacelli, Food Service Director for the Owego Apalachin Central School District, and a statewide leader in Farm-to-School efforts explains, "We have worked diligently to improve the menus at our schools around the State by including more New York produced food items. Once the farm to school connection is made, children eat better and healthier, farmers make more of the food dollars we spend, and an important education link is established, which teaches children who grows their food."

Tim Martens, partner of Martens Companies, a family business of growers, packers, processors and shippers of quality potato products based out of Port Byron, New York, said, "The Department of Agriculture and Markets helped convene a meeting with Betsey and other food service directors to talk about sourcing potato products, and since that meeting, we have worked together with the directors who have developed and tested menu items from potatoes we have provided. The children seem to like what they are tasting and we are very interested in providing quality New York potato products to New York schools."

In addition to these six regional meetings, the New York State Farm-to-School Coordinating

Committee will meet on June 6 in Auburn to share information about statewide Farm-to-School efforts, such as the upcoming New York Harvest for New York Kids Week, scheduled for September 27 through October 5, 2003.

To find out more about the regional meetings, contact Glenda Neff at 315-255-6958; or to inquire about the State's Farm-to-School efforts, contact Bill Jordan at 518-457-0752.

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NY FARMS!

*A campaign to promote farming and protect farmland in New York State
125 Williams Rd Candor, NY 13743 (607)659-3710 nyfarms@baldcom.net*

To: Food Service Directors, Distributors, Growers & Processors of NY farm products
From: Glenda Neff (315)255-6958 email: glenda_neff@juno.com

NY State Regional Farm-School Meetings

Thursday, May 29 3:00-5:00 pm Finger Lakes meeting

at Geneva Middle School, 63 Pulteney Street (directions on reverse)

This is one in a series of regional meetings across NY State. To receive info about meetings in Albany, Buffalo, Long Island and NY City, contact Glenda Neff.

NY Farms!, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, NYS School Food Service Association, and the Cornell Farm-to-School Program invite you to participate in this timely meeting. We are all increasingly aware of how children's diets and food habits affect their health and ability to learn. Child nutrition programs such as school and summer meal programs serve an essential role by providing healthy meals, from breakfasts to lunches and even after-school snacks and suppers!

The purpose of this meeting is to help you, the people who grow, process, distribute, purchase and prepare the foods, connect with each other, learn what food service is looking for, get more fresh, tasty NY foods into the school distribution pipeline, and identify opportunities for new value-added products and markets. Here is what you can expect on the program:

- Share what foods – particularly vegetables and fruits – are currently in demand, and what is being tried in pilots and taste tests.
- Hear from Food Service Directors who are serving NY farm products, including the experiences of Cornell's Farm-to-School pilot projects.
- Learn how the Pride of New York, NY State's program to promote NY foods, can help with sourcing.
- Taste roasted potato wedges from Marten's Farms, a new product which has been tested in several public schools. Hear what was involved so far on the part of school food service and Martens in developing products for the school market.
- Hear how Superior Growers has built a successful business selling fresh apples and cider to the school market.
- Identify ways that changes in policy, regulations, and funding by the federal and state government can help put more healthy, tasty, local foods into Child Nutrition Programs.

I will attend Wed, May 29th Farm-School meeting at Geneva Middle School

Name _____ School/Business _____

Phone _____ Email _____

RSVP to Glenda Neff – email to glenda_neff@juno.com or phone (315)255-6958

NY State Regional Farm-School Meetings

A series of six regional meetings across NY State to bring more NY-grown and processed foods into the school food service distribution system.

To receive info about meetings in Buffalo and Albany areas, Long Island and NY City, contact Glenda Neff (315)255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com

**Finger Lakes meeting
at Geneva Middle School**

Thursday, May 29 3:00-5:00 pm

Registration at 2:45; Meeting starts at 3:00 pm

Geneva Middle School, 63 Pulteney St, corner of Milton ph (315)781-0404

From the east or west on NYS Thruway

Exit 42 to Rte 14 South

Rte 14 becomes Exchange St. in City of Geneva

Right onto Castle Street

at second traffic light, you come to a "V", with Byrne Dairy on corner

bear left onto Milton Street, a short, one-way street

Geneva Middle School is on corner of Milton & Pulteney

Left onto Pulteney St. to enter parking lot next to the Middle School

Use gym door entrance on parking lot side of building.

From west on Rte 5/20

You see Hobart William Smith campus and playing fields on your right,
next traffic light is Pulteney St.

Left onto Pulteney St.

Second traffic light up, you will see the school and parking lot

Use gym door entrance on parking lot side of building.

From east on Rte 5/20

After passing Seneca Lake on your left, you continue up the hill.

Right onto Pulteney St.

Second traffic light up, you will see the school and parking lot

Use gym door entrance on parking lot side of building.

The Farm-School meeting will be held in the cafeteria.

Any questions about directions, please call: (315)781-0404

Finger Lakes Farm-School Meeting
Thursday, May 29, 2003 3-5 pm
Geneva Middle School

Registration – and tasting of Martens potato products

Welcome

Introductions

What Farm-School is about

NY State Farm-School Program
NYS School Food Service Association NY Farms! Task Force
Cornell Farm-School

Pilot with Martens Farms

How it got started; what products tried, how did the children like them?

Cornell Farm-School pilot projects – what has been learned; what was tried?

SFS Directors –

- what fruits and vegetables (fresh or processed) are you using now.
- Have you asked for and purchased NY-grown? Only for NY Harvest for NY Kids? or regularly during the year?
- Does your school district have or planning to have salad bars? baked potato bars? taco bars? stir fry entre's?

Distributors –

- what products do you carry?
- do you regularly buy local and NY-grown?
- who do you service?

Growers –

- what products? any minimal processing? what markets?

Cornell –

- how local Extension can help with NY Harvest for NY Kids, classroom activities, farm tours, recipe development

NYSDAM –

- Grow NY program
- Pride of NY
- NY Harvest for NY Kids (with NYS Dept of Education)

How **policy and funding** by the federal and state government can help put more healthy, tasty, local foods into Child Nutrition Programs

Closing Was this a useful meeting? Were your expectations met? What do you think you will try because of what you learned today?

Thank you for your time today!

Hand-outs for Regional Farm-School Meeting

Agenda

Attendance list (RSVPs) with contact info

Pride of New York cards

Pride of New York posters

Martens Farms brochures

NY Harvest for NY Kids

Memo to Food Service

Poster

Resources

NYSSFSA NY Farms! Partnership Awards

Cornell Farm-to-School brochures

Cornell Farm-to-School Pilot Project – what was purchased and prices

Vegetable/Fruit of the Month fliers

NE Regional Food Guide

List of County Cooperative Extension agents and educators

NY Apple Association – Listing of apple & cider wholesalers

NY Farms! “Where to Find NY-grown farm products”

Central New York Farm-School Meeting
Thursday, May 15, 2003
Jamesville-Dewitt High School

Alan Sorenson	Chittenango CSD	315-687-2619 sorensena@ccs.cnyric.org
Bill Jordan	NYS Dept of Ag & Markets	607-457-0752 william.jordan@agmkt.state.ny.us
Brian Wright	Baldwinsville CSD	315-638-6063 bwright@bville.org
Chris Smith	Superior Growers	315-524-5151 chriscliderman@aol.com
Dan Giarrusso	Syracuse Banana	315-471-2251 sybanana@syracusebanana.com
Dave Evans	SUNY Morrisville Nelson Farms	315-684-6578 evansdl@morrisville.edu
David McClurg	NY Apple Association	585-924-2171 david@nyapplecountry.com
Deb Chynoweth	Jamesville-Dewitt CSD	315-445-8386 dchynowe@jd.cnyric.org
Debbie Richardson	Hannibal CSD	315-564-7932 drichard@hannibal.cnyric.org
Glenda Neff	NY Farms!	315-255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com
Jennifer Wilkens	Cornell Farm-to-School Program	607-255-2730 jlw15@cornell.edu
Jim VanRiper	SUNY Morrisville, School of Ag & Natural Resources	315-684-6083 vanripjc@morrisville.edu
JoEllen Martino	Geneva CSD	315-781-0400 jmartino@genevacsd.org
John Buckley	Andy's Produce	315-471-3332
Judy Yacavone	Jamesville-Dewitt CSD	315-445-8386 jyacavon@twcnny.rr.com
Marty Broccoli	Cornell Cooperative Ext Oneida Upstate NY Growers & Packers	315-736-7394 mjb83@cornell.edu
Melissa Waldron	Martens Farms	315-776-8821
Patti Barber	North Syracuse CSD	315-452-3133 pbarber@nscsd.k12.ny.us
Rita Vedsted	Jamesville-Dewitt CSD	315-445-8386
Sam Zappala	Empire Produce Processors, LLC	315-343-2157 szappala@twcnny.rr.com
Thelma Ellis	Fabius-Pompey CSD	315-683-5857 tellis@fabius.cnyric.org
Tracy Farrell	Cornell Farm-to-School Program	607-255-2620 tjf6@cornell.edu
Vaughn Gingerich	Martens Farms	315-776-8821

RSVPs, but couldn't make it:

East Syracuse-Minoa CSD - Judy Gott, Eileen Archer
 West Genesee CSD - Marjorie Small, Cindy McManus
 Mento's Produce, Frank Mento

Unable to attend, interested:

Syracuse City SD - Cindy Bonura
 Tully CSD - Peggy Murphy
 Liverpool CSD - Carrie Bonacci
 Lyncourt UFSD-Salina - Lisa McKenney

Phoenix CSD - Maria Riska-Skeele
 Oswego City SD - Patricia Smith
 South Jefferson CSD - Cynthia Harnas

**Central New York Meeting
May 15, 2003 at Jamesville-Dewitt High School**

22 participants included

- 8 school districts

- 2 produce distributors – Syracuse Banana and Andy's Produce

- NY Apple Association

- Martens Farms (potatoes, whole & cut)

- Superior Growers (fresh apples and single-serving apple cider)

- 3 newly-formed ag/food enterprises

 - Upstate NY Growers & Packers (vegetables)

 - Empire Produce Processors (onions)

 - Nelson Farms at SUNY Morrisville School of Ag & Natural Resources

After FS Directors shared information about what fruits and vegetables they are using and looking for, the suppliers offered information about what they can and do provide. The 3 new enterprises came to learn about the school market and are interested in developing products that schools would purchase.

Syracuse Banana is the largest local produce distributor supplying school districts in Central New York. They service schools, colleges and institutions in a 100-mile radius of Syracuse. They work with brokers to find regional farm products. They are licensed to handle dairy products as well, and carry Upstate Farms products.

Andy's Produce also services schools from Syracuse to Rochester. They are a smaller business, servicing restaurants and smaller school districts. They have regular delivery routes in the northern Finger Lakes, including Auburn and Geneva. Their sales rep handed out a comprehensive list of their products with information on origin. Being a smaller company, Andy's Produce feels it can be competitive with excellent service to all its customers, no matter the size.

Superior Growers sells fresh apples and 4 oz. single serving apple cider to schools. They are developing new cider products, such as with cinnamon, or with berries. Their 4 oz. cider is shipped frozen through distributors such as Perry's Ice Cream. An advantage with distributing through a dairy vendor like Perry's is that they deliver to each school building (rather than to one, as most suppliers).

Empire Produce Processors is a grower association based in Oswego County. They are building a facility to process and sell onions – diced, sliced, rings, specialty cuts – for delis and the food service market. They grow "Empire Sweet", a mild, sweet onion, and "NY Bold", a cooking onion.

Upstate NY Growers & Packers is a co-op of growers from the Mohawk Valley, as far east as Albany area. They plan to cooperatively market and package a variety of fruits and vegetables – strawberries, potatoes, green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, squash. They are exploring how they might work with other companies that have processing capabilities, such as Martens and Empire Produce Processors.

Upstate NY Growers & Packers has sold shucked corn on the cob to NY State prisons. This item sparked interest from the FS Directors present, who said they served corn on the cob, or "cobettes" (half an ear) to elementary school children, and the children like it.

SUNY Morrisville College of Agriculture & Natural Resources has its own dairy products processing facility, and through its Morrisville Auxiliary Corporation is about to launch a small scale processing and business development venture called Nelson Farms. Nelson Farms will serve individuals who have commercial food ideas, recipes or products, but lack sufficient capital, access to or knowledge of health regulations by providing them with opportunities to develop, produce, distribute and market products. Along with an e-commerce site, Nelson Farms plans to establish a statewide distribution & marketing center for farmers, growers and small scale food processors.

Capitol District Farm-School Meeting
Wednesday, May 28, 2003 Cohoes High School

Bernie Wilson	Cornell Cooperative Extension Renssalaer County	518-272-4210 bw27@cornell.edu
Bill Jordan	NYS Dept of Ag & Markets	607-457-0752 william.jordan@agmkt.state.ny.us
Brian Gilchrist	Cornell Cooperative Extension Washington County	518-746-2560 btg5@cornell.edu
Charles Winters	Ginsberg's Institutional Foods	800-999-6006 CWinters@ginsbergs.com
Debbie Kelleher	Cornell Cooperative Extension Washington County	518-746-2544 dak23@cornell.edu
Dona Barth	Cohoes CSD	518-237-5785 dbarth@cohoes.org
Eileen LeBlanc	Brittonkill CSD	518-279-4600 x608 c
Elaine Troy	NYS Dept of Health	eht01@health.state.ny.us
Florence Selin	Schalmont CSD	518-355-6110 x3042 fselin@mum.neric.org
Glenda Neff	NY Farms!	315-255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com
Jane Pepin	Hudson Falls CSD	518-747-2121 x3263 jpepin@hudsonfalls.k12.ny.us
Linda Mossop	Guilderland CDS	518-456-6200 x3110 MossopL@Guilderlandschools.org
Maxine Christman	Middleburgh CSD	518-827-5155 maxinechristman254@hotmail.com
Nate Darrow	Saratoga Apple	518-695-3131 ndarrow1@nycap.rr.com
Paula Blizniak	NYS Dept of Health Division of Nutrition	518-402-7339 pxb05@health.state.ny.us
Paula Schafer	Cornell Cooperative Extension Washington & Saratoga Counties	518-746-2560, 518-885-8995 pjb11@cornell.edu
Phil Famiano	Joseph Aiello & Sons Inc	518-472-9188 jaiello@capital.net
Thomas Cook	Albany City SD	518-462-7322 TCook@albany.k12.ny.us
Thomas Gallagher	Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County	518-765-3500 tjg3@cornell.edu
Ralph Douty	Upstate NY Growers & Packers	518-461-3276
Stephen Onderdonk	NYS Dept of Health Division of Nutrition	518-402-7390 sro03@health.state.ny.us

**Capitol District Meeting
May 28, 2003 at Cohoes High School**

20 participants included

8 school districts

2 produce distributors – Aiello & Sons and Ginsberg's

2 farms – Saratoga Apple and Douty Farms

5 from Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany, Washington & Saratoga counties

3 from NYS Department of Health

Food Service Directors jumped into the discussion of fresh produce by naming the types of labor-saving items they are looking for, starting with apples – sliced apples. The Albany City School District would like to source fresh NY apple slices in their vending machines. He was not aware of their availability (Nature's Pleasure 315-594-6051).

The current cost of fresh apple slices (approx. \$.30/bag was mentioned at the meeting) means it is not a viable option for the regular school lunch menu. Hudson Falls CSD is looking at slicing equipment to use with apples and oranges. She pointed out that graded apples are not necessary if they are slicing apples (compared to serving whole apples, when consistent size is important.)

Saratoga Apple sells "direct-wholesale" and direct to consumers. They have sold apples to Cohoes School District for the last ten years, delivering 7-8 cases/week. Saratoga Apple has standing orders with four other schools, but is not looking to scale up in the school market without considering efficiencies of location and volume. They also slice apples for the restaurant market. No preservative is used to keep the slices from browning, because the apples are used in pies and other baked items. (518-695-3131)

A response from a FS Director: it doesn't work to buy just apples direct from a grower, as it takes that volume out of the rest of her produce order, making the total order smaller and less profitable to her distributor.

Other produce mentioned by the FS Directors which were not the usual items cited at other meetings: cantaloupe, cauliflower, cabbage for cole slaw. Pears and table grapes were also on their list.

Aiello & Sons began as a family fresh produce business in 1914, and is managed today by the third generation Aiello's. Their annual sales average \$3.5 million; their service territory is centered on Albany, south to Poughkeepsie, west to Oneonta, north to Glens Falls. Phil Famiano, their sales rep, provided a list of the NY State farms that Aiello's buys from (see appendix) and said: "The farmers are pro-active – they come to us." (518-472-9188)

Ginsberg's also began as a family business, a grocery store in 1909, evolving into a food distribution business by the 1960's. It, too, is still managed by the third generation of the Ginsberg's. They are the largest food service distributor in the Hudson Valley, delivering as far east as Syracuse. Ginsberg's services many school districts in the rural areas of the Catskills. Charles Winters is the Contract Manager and also serves on the Industry Advisory Committee of the NYS School Food Service Association. (581-828-4004 x250)

Ralph Douty, Douty Farm, grows vegetables in Albany County. He is a member of Upstate Growers & Packers, a new co-op of growers from the Mohawk Valley east to the Capitol District area. They plan to cooperatively market and package a variety of fruits and vegetables – strawberries, potatoes, green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, squash. They are exploring how they might work with other companies that have processing capabilities, such as Martens and Empire Produce Processors.

Another large grower of squash, Chuck Colaruotolo, Running Creek Farm in Columbia County, is also a member of Upstate Growers & Packers, and working with other growers to re-open the Clermont Fruit Processors' facility. The plant has the equipment for processing a variety of fruits and vegetables. (See Appendix) Ralph Douty attended the meeting for both entities, to hear what kinds of products schools are interested in. (518-461-3276)

Brochures from Schoharie County and Saratoga County were passed out listing local farms who sell direct to customers, and some who sell wholesale. These brochures are very useful resources for planning NY Harvest for NY Kids activities like farm tours, purchases for special food tastings, or inviting a farmer and farm animals to school.

Finger Lakes Farm-School Meeting
Thursday, May 29, 2003 Geneva Middle School

Alison Clarke	Politics of Food/Rochester Roots	585-232-1520 alisonclarke@mailstation.com
Betsey Bacelli	Owego-Apalachin CSD	607-687-6284 bbacelli@oagw.stier.org
Beverly Pinkley	Gananda CSD	315-986-3521 x3208 bpinkley@gananda.org
Eldon White	Genecco Produce Inc.	585-394-1025
Deb Richardson	Hannibal CSD	315-564-7932 drichard@hannibal.cnyric.org
Debbie Morley	Bloomfield CSD	585-657-6121 x1151
Glenda Neff	NY Farms!	315-255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com
Janet Elman	Victor CSD	585-924-3252 x5436 ElmanJ@victorschools.org
JoEllen Martino	Geneva CSD	315-781-0400 jmartino@genevacsd.org
Jude Barry	Cornell Cooperative Extension Cayuga County	315-255-1183, jab267@cornell.edu
Martha Goodsell	NY Farms!	607-659-3710 nyfarms@baldcom.net
Matt Greene	Cornell Cooperative Extension Jefferson County	315-788-8450 mpg6@cornell.edu
Melissa Waldron	Marten's Farms	315-776-8821 melissa@spudsrus.com
Nancy Narmocida	Hilton CSD	585-392-1000 x2152 narmocida@hilton.k12.ny.us
Odette Butler	Cornell Cooperative Extension Jefferson County	315-788-8450 omh2@cornell.edu
Sharon Bogue	Canandaigua City SD	585-396-3739 BogueS@canandaiguaschools.org
Susan Grace	Cornell Cooperative Extension Monroe County	585-461-1000 x233 smf26@cornell.edu
Todd Fowler	Bloomfield CSD	585-657-6121 x1151 TFowler@bloomfieldcsd.org
Tracy Farrell	Cornell Farm-to-School Program	607-255-2620 tjf6@cornell.edu
sends regrets, very interested in servicing schools with NY-grown:		
Bill Davis	Davis Brothers	800-244-0206
Don Schlenker	Alvin C. Schlenker & Sons, Inc.	585-624-2458
sends regrets, very interested in purchasing NY-grown:		
Mary Ellen Perry	Port Byron CSD	315-776-8079 x1114 meperry@portbyron.cnyric.org

Finger Lakes Meeting

May 29, 2003 at Geneva Middle School

18 participants included

- 8 school districts

- 1 produce distributor – Genecco Produce

- 1 farm – Martens Farm

- 4 educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension Monroe, Cayuga & Jefferson counties

- 1 community organization – Politics of Food

The meeting started with a go-around for introductions and to share what experiences school districts have with buying local and NY-grown products. Some also gave their opinion of the benefits of Farm-School connections. Food that tastes great, and relationships with local farms, putting money into the local economy, were the main reasons cited. One Food Service Director said “I’m a farm advocate.” But she is frustrated because she wants to buy direct from farmers, and hasn’t “found a farmer to service me.” Another reported that she purchased from local farmers for NY Harvest for NY Kids Week, but had to pick up the produce. Although she did that just for NY Harvest, it is not something she can afford to do regularly.

Besides a tasting of roasted potatoes, we heard reports from three school districts who had participated in the potato and squash pilot project. There was high student acceptance of the roasted potato wedges. Besides roasted potato wedges, soup, and salad, the pilot tested butternut squash. Few students liked it, but one Food Service Director pointed out that it was not on the menu enough times to really test acceptance. A new food item, she said, takes about six times on the menu before students start to try it.

Melissa Waldron from Martens Farm answered questions about how to get their products through Rochester area distributors.

Hannibal CSD is a Cornell Farm-to-School pilot program as well as participating in the testing of Martens products. Deb Richardson described the cooperation of her produce supplier, C’s Farm in Oswego (315-343-1010). They have sourced local fruits and vegetables for her, and also marketed those to other school customers.

Some products that schools said they are using, besides apples: “salt potatoes”, green peppers, tomatoes, pears. Many of the schools attending buy Superior Growers apple cider for the reimbursable lunch menu. An Extension agent from Jefferson County reported that the South Jefferson CSD offers 8 oz. apple cider from nearby Burrville Cider Mill as an “a la carte” item.

Genecco Produce, which services several of the school districts in attendance, is based in Canandaigua. (585-394-1025). Their sales rep, Eldon White, says they see schools buying more fresh potatoes, and also salad and cole slaw mix. He noted that USDA Donated Foods brought in out-of-state apples to schools.

Betsey Bacelli reported that NY Farm-School Coordinating Committee is working with USDA to increase NY-grown purchases. In fact, NY apples were purchased by USDA in 2002. Frozen and canned vegetables and fruits purchased by USDA might be NY-grown, but are not labeled as such.

Other produce distributors expressed their interest in the Finger Lakes meeting, but could not attend. They service schools, buy from NY farmers, and are interested in doing more:

Bill Davis, Davis Brothers, Oswego 1-800-244-0206

Don Schlenker, Schlenker & Sons, Rochester 585-424-1881

Andy Boucounis, Andy's Produce, Syracuse 315-471-3332

Odette Butler, Cornell Cooperative Extension (315-788-8450), described Farm-School efforts in Jefferson County. They surveyed schools and farms, then provided farms with a list of schools who were looking for local farm products, and schools with a list of farmers. Some farmers are now growing specific crops for school districts. South Jefferson CSD is one customer; they offer a baked potato bar with local product. They also offer 8 oz. apple cider from nearby Burrville Cider Mill as an "a la carte" item.

Community gardens involve 600 children from 3 schools, and grow strawberries, squash and pumpkins. Extension is submitting grant proposals for a warehouse and kitchen for small scale processing to aid in marketing and distribution of local products. These projects are in partnership with local food pantries (emergency food distribution).

In Rochester, Politics of Food helped start 10 community school gardens which integrate cultural and environmental history into the curriculum through gardening experience. The gardens are sustained during the summer months by Extension master gardeners, community volunteers, and youth, parents and elders. (www.geocities.com/polfood/)

Canandaigua City SD is has plans in the works for this Fall's NY Harvest for NY Kids – a field trip to the Canandaigua Farmers' Market. Students will purchase food and prepare it in the classroom. There is also special project for 4th graders that links social studies, local history, and agriculture.

At the close of the meeting, we made a list of what information at the local level would help increase the volume of locally- and NY-grown fresh fruits and vegetables in the distribution system to schools. This info could be compiled by Extension or community organizations as part of a Farm-to-School project.

- Provide a list of area growers and crops to produce distributors
- Provide a list of what is available, in specific time periods (EG 6-8 weeks ahead) to schools
- Compile a list of growers who want to sell to schools
- Compile a list of schools who are willing to buy from individual growers
- Identify distributors who will "go the extra mile" to source and offer to schools

Long Island Farm-School Meeting
Tuesday, June 3, 2003 South Huntington UFSD

Beth Collins	The Ross School	631-907-5418 bcollins@ross.org
Betsey Bacelli	NYS School Food Service Assoc	607-687-6284 bbacelli@oagw.stier.org
Bonnie Scally	Half Hollow Hills CSD	631-592-3021 bscally@halfhollowhills.k12.ny.us
Carol Ann Grodski	Harborfields CSD	631-754-5310 x351 hffood@villagenet.com
Charles McTiernan	South Huntington UFSD	631-425-5300 x113 bedell@shuntington.k12.ny.us
Connie Farr	The Farm NOFA-NY LI chapter president	631-369-8237 rfarr@optonline.net
Elena Lynch-Dobert	Rocky Point UFSD	631-744-1600 x2550 eedobert@rockypoint.k12.ny.us
Emily Rein	Hewlett Woodmere UFSD	516-374-8018 erein@hewlett-woodmere.net
Emma Young-Martin	Cornell Cooperative Extension Suffolk County	631-727-7850 x343 ely1@cornell.edu
Glenda Neff	NY Farms!	315-255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com
Jackie Dulik	Amityville UFSD	631598-6520 jdulik@erols.com
Janet Sklar	Bay Shore UFSD	631-968-1193 jsklar@bayshore.k12.ny.us
Joseph Casa	Harbor View Foods	631-928-5040 joecasa@optonline.net
Karen Young	Landmark/Savory Foods	631-654-4500 kmyoung01@aol.com
Kathleen Kulbaba	Massapequa UFSD	516-797-6195 kkulbaba@msd.k12.ny.us
Lauren Jarrett	EECO Farm	631-324-5523 ljarrett@optonline.net
Linda Horrigan	Comsewogue UFSD Port Jefferson Station	631-474-2848 lhorrigan@comsewogue.k12.ny.us
Patricia Daley-Jimenez	Bellmore-Merrick CSD	pdaley@bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us
Suzanne Silverstein	Sewanhaka CHSD, Floral Park	516-488-9666 jrsuzsilverstein@att.net

Deborah Credidio & Timothy Roger, Brentwood UFSD, 631-434-2316 bpschoolunch@netscape.net, had hoped to but were unable to attend.

Angelo Cataldo, Medford Produce, 631-758-1794 services Rocky Point and other school districts. Angelo sent regrets that he could not attend and reports that he does source from local growers. Would like more information about local products and sources.

other distributors servicing schools who were unable to attend: Sara Provisions 631-331-7163
Island Wide 631-580-2084 Mivilia Foods 631-953-6970

Long Island Meeting

June 3, 2003 at South Huntington UFSD office

18 participants included

- 10 public school districts

- 1 private school currently buying from local farms

- 1 food service distributor – Savory Foods

- 1 broker – Harborview Foods

- 2 farms – The Farm, a commercial organic vegetable farm; and East End Community Organic Farm, an educational farm

The FS Directors who attended are very eager to buy from Long Island and New York farms. The districts closer to NY City have a bigger challenge, as their distributors buy produce at Hunt's Point Terminal Market, which has relatively little NY-grown. Some food service companies are based out of New Jersey, serving metro-NY and Long Island. We pointed out that sourcing New Jersey-grown does support the Northeast agriculture and food system. A study is underway on the feasibility of a farmers' wholesale market in New York City, which might help distributors access more New York and New Jersey-grown foods.

Long Island has a Food Service Co-op which brings together 40 school districts (approximately 150,000 meals) for multi-million dollar cooperative purchasing. They don't currently buy produce through this co-op, but suggested it might be an avenue for purchasing NY-grown. On a smaller scale, 'clusters' of school districts could work with a distributor and growers to carry particular local farm products. Betsey Bacelli described the experiences of school districts in Broome & Tioga counties. They share information and meet with their local supplier, a farmer who is growing, buying wholesale from other NY growers, and delivering to schools. Their latest project, with facilitation by Cornell Cooperative Extension, was to sample ground beef from locally-raised livestock. The quality was very good, with much lower fat-content than their usual item. The schools compiled an order for 3,000 lbs. of ground beef for their NY Harvest for NY Kids Week menu (September 29-October 3).

Labor is a critical issue, FS Directors said, and they are looking for products that save time in the kitchen. They need pre-cut, sliced, shredded, salad mixes.

"I need to know what is grown on Long Island and when it is available." said one FS Director. Another added: "and where to buy it and who to contact." Give us more specific information, to make ordering easy and quick.

Savory Foods is part of a food service distribution company. Their Marketing Director, Karen Young, attended the meeting. She also has a child in the South Huntington school district. She reported "Savory Foods buys a lot from Long Island growers. Farmers deliver to us." Some of the items she said they have from Long Island growers during September-November, are peppers, mesclun, cucumbers, cabbage, and cauliflower. They provide restaurants a weekly list of available locally-grown items, and she says they could identify for school customers where items are coming from. Karen Young 631-654-4500 x4984

Harbor View Foods is almost 4 years old, buying vegetables from Long Island growers for retail supermarkets. Joe Casa, owner of Harbor View, was very articulate about the advantages of buying Long Island-grown – the taste, freshness, and, during harvest time, it's cheaper than out-of-state. He sees Long Island growers starting to invest in equipment for

higher-value items such as lettuce (vacuum coolers), and growing the supply as he builds demand.
Joseph Casa 631-928-5040 joecasa@optonline.net

Mr. Casa reported that a Regional Market for wholesale sellers was studied for eastern Long Island. Such a wholesale market would help distributors brokers like himself. (As a follow-up to this meeting, we checked on the results of that study. The conclusion was that a wholesale market authority would not be feasible for eastern Long Island. As mentioned above, a wholesale market is under study for New York City. Hopefully, the larger customer base and accessibility for upstate NY growers will make it economically viable.) Mr. Casa also mentioned that Suffolk County is looking at the potential for processing and packaging facilities for vegetables and fruits.

ECCO Farm is a recently founded community organic farm with an educational mission in East Hampton. They are working with the Town of East Hampton, which owns 42-acres of prime agricultural land across from their High School. They would like to work with schools, providing vegetables as well as community service opportunities, taste tests and culinary programs for students. They see potential for extended season See www.eecofarm.org for more information.

The Ross School, a private school also in East Hampton, is currently buying fruits and vegetables from Long Island farms. Their students are gardening and visiting local organic farms. The school is buying fruits and vegetables in season and freezing them for use during the winter.

Angelo Cataldo, Medford Produce, was unable to attend the meeting, but sent a message that he sources Long Island-grown for Rocky Point UFSD. He said he is able to source more local items during the summer months, and does so for the summer meals program at Smithtown CSD. Ph: 631-758-1794

Western NY Farm-School Meeting
Wednesday, June 11, 2003 Depew High School

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Anita Trautwein	Alden CSD	716-937-9116 x4186 atrautwein@alden.wnyric.org
Anne McGuirk	Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD	716-891-6416 mcgua@sloan.wnyric.org
Anthony Busard	Tarantino Foods LLC	716-823-6600
Barbara Albi	Depew CSD	716-686-2454 balbi@depew.wnyric.org
Barbara Dygert	Bippert Farm	716-668-4328 bdygert@localnet.com
Barbara Goodman	Akron CSD	716-542-5027 bgoodman@akronschoools.org
Betty Ziegler	Sweet Home CSD (Amherst)	716-250-1446 eziegler@shs.k12.ny.us
Bridgit O'Brien Wood	Buffalo City SD	716-851-3688 bwood2@buffalo.K12.ny.us
Corrine Giannini	NYS Dept of Health	716-847-4530 cxg04@health.state.ny.us
Debbie C. Naples	Livonia & Byron-Bergen CSDs	585-346-4000 x4302 dcn14510@frontiernet.net
Diane Suhrbier	NYS School Food Service Assoc	716-947-9445 dsuhrbier@adelphia.net
Doloros Stinson	Niagara Wheatfield CSD	716-215-3144 DStinson@nwcsd.wnyric.org
Elizabeth Karabinakis	Cornell Farm-to-School	evk4@cornell.edu
Evelyn Skalski	St Mary's High School	716-683-0630 nanae2002@aol.com
Gina Vance	Personal Touch Food Service	gvance@ptfswny.org
Glenda Neff	NY Farms!	315-255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com
Jen Reardon	Cornell Cooperative Extension Genesee County	585-343-3040 x114 jdr38@cornell.edu
Judith Zernentsch	Cleveland Hill CSD	jzernentsch@chlwnyric.org
Kathryn Christopher	Williamsville CSD	716-626-8015 kchristopher@williamsvillek12.org
Jason Murphy	Cornell Cooperative Extension Wyoming Co.	585-786-2251 jhm35@cornell.edu
Judy Hugaboom	Newfane CSD	716-778-6561 jhugaboom@newfane.wnyric.org
Linda Freeman	Barker CSD	716-795-3201 LFreeman@bark.wnyric.org
Marcia Scheideman	Cornell Cooperative Extension	716-652-5400 mls69@cornell.edu
Margo Bittner	Singer Farms LLC	716-778-7330 mbittner58@aol.com
Melissa Waldron	Marten's Farms – Spuds R Us	315-776-8821 melissa@spudsrus.com

**Western NY Farm-School Meeting
Wednesday, June 11, 2003 Depew High School**

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Michael Windhorst	Frontier Produce	716-825-5195
Mitch Beyler	Martins Farms (squash)	585-637-3636 mitch@martinfarms.com
Paul Lehman	Cornell Cooperative Extension Niagara County	716-433-8839 pel5@cornell.edu
Susan Birmingham	Frontier CSD	716-926-1702 sbirmingham@frontier.wnyric.org
Susan McCarthy	Martins Farms (squash)	SMMcCarthy@msn.com
Tracy Farrell	Cornell Farm-to-School Program	607-255-2620 tjf6@cornell.edu
Vaughn Gingerich	Marten's Farms – Spuds R Us	315-776-8821

Distributors and school districts who RSVP'd or wanted to attend, but were not able to:

John Cassiano	Desiderio's Produce	716-823-2211
Beverly DiCarlo	Braymiller Market	716-649-2356
Charmayne Pollow	Lewiston Porter CSD	716-286-7288 pollowc@lew-port.com
Donna Kurial	Wilson CSD	716-751-9341 x139 dkurial@wilson.wnyric.org
Glenn Dombrowski	Boulevard Produce	716-694-1174
Linda Muldoon	Hamburg CSD	716-646-3269 lmuldoon@hamburg.wnyric.org

Niagara county distributors – from Doloros Stinson, Niagara-Wheatfield CSD, re: for distribution of Marten's potato products to schools

Peter Wagner	Wagner's Farm Market	716-731-4440
	Will Poultry	716-853-2000
	Maple Leaf Foods	716-892-8526 800-243-3919 fax: 716-892-3880

**Western New York Meeting
June 11, 2003 at Depew High School**

31 participants included

- 14 public school districts and 1 Catholic high school
- 1 food service management company – The Personal Touch
- 2 produce distributors – Frontier Produce and Tarantino Foods
- 3 farms – Singer Farms (fruit), Marten’s Farm (potatoes), and
John B. Martin & Sons Farms (squash)
- 1 farm/distributor – Bippert Farm
- 4 educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie, Niagara, and Wyoming counties
- 1 dietician from NYS Department of Health

The Western NY meeting had the largest number of attendees and the most diverse players. The discussion quickly honed in on what the Food Service Directors believe would help them incorporate NY-grown foods into their menus.

One of the first suggestions from the FS Directors was that farmers cooperatively pack and market a wide range of vegetables and fruits to schools, so schools could buy a wide range of fresh produce items direct from farmers (assumption that this would result in lower prices to schools).

Michael Winterhorst, Frontier Produce, explained that shipping plus insurance charges does add a lot to the costs of fresh fruits and vegetables from West Coast. In season, NY-grown is always “much cheaper”. He described the distributor business, especially small to medium-size ones like Frontier, as operating on very narrow margins. Another factor working against western NY growers is the cross-border trade – prices on lettuce and carrots from Canada are very low.

On the buyers’ side, the school districts do already cooperatively purchase, and could look into doing this for produce (similar idea was expressed on Long Island.) Clusters of school districts ordering the same locally-grown or NY-grown food items through the same distributor is what several school districts in Broome and Tioga counties are doing.

Everyone agreed that communication is key – between farmers and distributors, and between distributors and school customers. Some schools, when they call in their orders, are told what is currently available, or about to come in from New York. Or the supplier will be pro-active, and recommend what is in season in New York.

Barbara Dygert, Bippert Farm, is a supplier of produce from their own farm as well as other farms. They have done business with many schools. (Ph: 716-668-4328)

Barbara spoke of the problem with getting produce graded and packed to food service specs. She is not sure about finding farmers who would grow, grade, and pack to the specs need by schools. Also, some NY-grown products, EG lettuce, has a different texture than California-grown. Will schools accept it?

The answer is “it depends”. Some schools want the better taste of local tomatoes for as long as they are available in the Fall, and the satisfaction of buying New York. They are willing to work with less consistency, or different varieties, and order from a few different vendors. Others said they need consistent size and one supplier for everything. It’s a time and therefore a cost issue with ordering, billing, receiving from multiple vendors.

Singer Farms grows a wide range of fruits in Niagara County. (Margo Bittner 716-778-7330) They sell and make deliveries to produce stands as far away as the Southern Tier. They are willing to look into a school route with deliveries from September to April. Singer Farms dried cherries and other fruits may be already in schools through USDA donated foods. Margo is also available for speaking at schools with her "Aggie Culture" presentation. A very informative brochure on Singer Farms line of products was passed out. (See Appendix)

Buffalo City SD has a good partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County. Extension conducts nutrition programs in the classroom and organizes field trips to markets. They offer the Erie County Family, Farm & Food Tour on the last Saturday of September every year. Buses take families to visit several area farms; the day ends with a tasting of Erie County foods. (Extension 716-652-5400)

Buffalo City school food service participated in a Pear Bureau Northwest promotion of pears, learning about how to purchase, store, and use them. The educational components and the recipes were appreciated by the food service staff. This annual promotion takes place after the fresh harvest season for pears in New York, but it has resulted in more frequent placement of pears on the menu, and New York pears are purchased when available. (www.usapears.com)

In New York State, we have similar programs funded by apple growers and provided through the NY Apple Association (www.nyapplecountry.com) How can we have in-service programs and promotions for school food service about other New York-grown foods?

Marten's potato products are available through distributors in Buffalo. They can also provide cut butternut squash. Marten's is working with other groups to start with the necessary product development for a low-fat french fry. (315-776-8821 www.spudsRus.com)

Butternut and acorn squash, as well as cabbage, are the crops grown, stored, and shipped by John B. Martin & Sons Farms. They sell 90% of their squash into New England wholesale channels and 10% in New York State. Martin's equipment peels, cuts and packages butternut squash for retail and food service markets. Shelf life is 7-10 days. Squash is available from September to April. Martin & Sons does not sell directly to schools, but through food service distributors. (585-637-3636 www.martinfarms.com)

Mitch Beyler, Martin & Sons Farm, asked the FS Directors what they are looking for in a butternut squash product. Peeled, de-seeded, sliced or cubed is important, they told him. Preparing winter squash is time-consuming and difficult to do. One FS Director described how she is using a slicer to cut whole acorn squash into flat, scalloped pieces. Another school district offered a tasting of butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squash during NY Harvest for NY Kids Week 2002. A recipe of squash and apples was described by another FS Director.

Sharing and developing recipes is an important step for easy use of new food items. Erie and Niagara county school districts could coordinate ordering a product like cut squash and sharing recipes for NY Harvest for NY Kids, suggested a FS Director. The brochure from Martens Companies provides some recipes developed by the schools which piloted diced and wedge potatoes. The Cornell Farm-to-School has also shares recipes on its web site (www.cce.cornell.edu/farmtoschool). Send recipes to Tracy Farrell email: tjf6@cornell.edu

Could the summer culinary program for school food service do some recipe development for farm products grown in New York? (The NY State Professional Cooking School is sponsored by the NY State Education Department. From schools across NYS, 120 food service professionals learn new techniques, food safety, nutrition and recipes at these summer sessions.)

How often must a new food like squash be offered before children really start eating it? At least six times, as was said at the Geneva meeting? “Many times”, it was agreed. But not only must the new food be offered more than a few times, other complementary activities are essential: learning activities in the classroom, school gardens, nutrition education with food samples. Teachers, Cooperative Extension, the Department of Health, and community-based organizations are important partners with the cafeteria in Farm-School programs.

How can we increase the resources for nutrition education and learning activities that incorporate agriculture and food? Even with current cut backs in funding from federal down to local sources, there is a growing recognition of the need. The long-term health costs of children’s diet choices and lack of physical activity are convincing policymakers that these programs are a priority.

The food service attendees closed this meeting with the same suggestion as in they began with – asking farmers to work together, market cooperatively, and sell as a group to schools. Thirteen public school districts in Erie and Niagara counties stated loud and clear that they want easy access to locally-grown foods.

June 17, 2003 2:00-3:30 pm
Art Institute of New York City
75 Varick St., 16th Floor

Lisa D'Amato, NYC Department of Education, Director of Procurement

Dianne Frankel, NYC Department of Education, Assistant to Chief Executive

Barbara Gulotta, NYC Department of Education, Director of Food Technology

Denise Toulon, NYC Department of Education,
Administrative School Food Service Manager

Bill Jordan, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Bob Lewis, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Jim Walls, NYS Office of General Services, USDA Donated Foods

Betsey Bacelli, NYS School Food Service Association

Mark Hellermann, The Art Institute of New York

Toni Liquori, Community Food Resource Center

Tim Martens, Martens Farms

David McClurg, NY Apple Association

Glenda Neff, NY Farms!

John Nettleton, Cornell Cooperative Extension of NY City

Christine Rohatynskyj, Food Patch

Chris Smith, Superior Growers

Meeting Agenda
June 17, 2003 2:00-3:30 pm
Art Institute of New York City
75 Varick St., 16th Floor

Welcome and Introductions

*Roasted potato tasting – potatoes from Martens Farms prepared by Betsey Bacelli
Apples from NY Apple Association; apple cider from Superior Growers*

A. Brief Description of NYS Farm to School Program, History, and Partners

B. Department of Defense Program

C. Potato Pilot with Martens Farms

1. Task Force and Meetings
2. Taste Pilots and Regional Meetings
3. Economic Analysis & Impact
4. Commodity & Regular Procurement
5. Potato Pilot in NYC

D. Apples & Cider, Other Products in NYC

E. Recent experiences with NYS fresh produce procurement

F. Creating a Pilot in NYC

For Procurement of NY State grown fruits and vegetables

1. Steps to Receive Food Technology Approval
2. Identify Products
3. Location(s) for Pilot Testing
4. Process for Expansion of Pilot to larger NYC system

G. Identify Next Steps

Meeting with NY City Department of Education June 17, 2003

Amidst tight schedules and major transitions, four senior administrators in the NYC Department of Education's Office of School Food and Nutrition Services met with representatives of the NYS Department of Agriculture & Marketing, NYS School Food Service Association, farmers, and other organizations on June 17, 2003. We shared information about Farm-School programs from Upstate New York; the availability of NY-grown products through purchasing, USDA Donated Foods, and the fresh fruits and vegetables pilot project with USDA and US Department of Defense to take place during school year 2003-04. We discussed the ways in which nutrition education, such as the CookShop program and other classroom activities, complement school meals to improve children's food choices.

Attendees

From the NYC Department of Education:

Dianne Frankel, Assistant to the Chief Executive
Lisa D'Amato, Director of Procurement
Barbara Gulotta, Director of Food Technology
Denise Toulon, Administrative School Food Service Manager

From NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets:

Bill Jordan, Special Assistant
Bob Lewis, Chief Marketing Representative

Betsey Bacelli, NYS School Food Service Association

Toni Liquori, Community Food Resource Center

Tim Martens, Martens Farms

David McClurg, NY Apple Association

Glenda Neff, NY Farms!

John Nettleton, Cornell Cooperative Extension of NY City

Christina Rohatynskyj, Food Patch of Westchester County

Chris Smith, Superior Growers

Jim Walls, NYS Office of General Services, USDA Donated Foods (via telephone)

Mark Hellermann, The Art Institute of New York (faculty member of this culinary college which hosted the meeting)

Betsey Bacelli, School Food Service Director for Owego/Apalachin school district, opened the meeting with a description of her experiences with Farm-to-School. She shared her personal enthusiasm and observations of the many benefits for students, food service staff, and the community. Working together, a cluster of school districts in Broome and Tioga counties have put more NY-grown foods on their menus. The students have enjoyed more fresh fruits and vegetables; they have learned about agriculture and food through NY Harvest for NY Kids activities. Kitchen staff are impressed with the quality of local fruits and vegetables, they enjoy getting to know their local farmer-supplier. This has brought them additional 'job satisfaction' and the motivation to visit farm markets for their personal shopping. Cornell Farm-to-School and Cooperative Extension assist with educational materials, workshops, festivals, nutrition information, and identifying local farm products. After a testing of locally-raised beef found it to be much lower fat content and higher quality than their usual supply, a cluster of school districts put in a special order of ground beef to feature on the menu for NY Harvest for NY Kids Sept 29 – Oct 3, 2003.

Glenda Neff, NY Farms!, reinforced the importance of pairing education about foods, nutrition, and agriculture, with locally-grown foods on the school menu. The Farm-School program in New York State has two goals: improving children's health and strengthening the regional food system, from farm to cafeteria.

Lisa D'Amato, Director of Procurement for NY City Department of Education, reported that the *Request for Bids* for the purchasing period starting November 1, 2003 was just released in the weeks before this meeting. She pointed out that "New York-preferred" was included in the specs for fresh apples, which was greeted with spontaneous applause!

During the school year '03-'04, NY City schools are participating in a pilot project with the USDA and Department of Defense which will bring \$3.2 million of fresh fruits and vegetables into the NYC school meal program. The procurement is by the Department of Defense, with a national competitive bid process. Jim Walls described the project and emphasized the willingness of USDA and his office to work with agricultural producers in New York State.

Potatoes in various forms are on the NY City school lunch menu at least once and often two times per week. They utilize all the potato products offered by the USDA donated foods program. USDA potatoes comprise 85-90% of the total volume used.

In comparison, NY City purchases most of the fresh apples that they serve in the schools. They are also very interested in fresh apple slices, and have purchased them in the past.

An analysis by Bill Jordan of New York-grown potato crops and school consumption of potato products made the case for the potential economic impact of schools purchasing NY-grown potatoes. The current consumption of french fries and similar potato products in New York schools represents between \$11.5 and \$13.2 million in annual sales.

Upstate NY potato grower Tim Martens described the products his family's company, Martens Country Kitchen, offers the food service market. They package potatoes whole, diced, sliced, and wedges. Potatoes such as the wedges sampled at this meeting may be available through the Donated Foods Program or the DoD pilot in NYC, as well as for purchase through NYC distributors. Further down the road, Martens is considering development of a lower-fat french fry product.

NY apples and cider are also available for purchase, and have in the recent past been distributed by USDA Donated Foods. The NY Apple Association will continue to work with growers, packers, and distributors to keep NY apples in the pipeline to schools. NY Apple also has Teacher's Kits for the classroom, posters and colorful signage for the cafeteria.

Chris Smith is an apple grower and cider producer in Wayne County. His company, Superior Growers, supplies fresh, pasteurized cider in single serving containers to schools. The product has been through the approval process by the NY City Department of Education Office of Food Technology, and may be purchased during the coming school year.

In the future, a farmers' wholesale market in NY City may be a source for distributors and schools to purchase direct from NY growers. A feasibility study is now underway for such a market, reported Bob Lewis, NYS Department of Ag & Markets.

An example of buying large quantities of fresh produce direct from farmers was related by Christina Rohatynskyj, Food-PATCH. Food-PATCH is the food bank which distributes food to food pantries in Westchester County, similar to a central warehouse for a supermarket chain. The logistics of purchasing, bagging, and delivering perishable products such as fresh fruits and vegetables was at first a big challenge. The produce Food-PATCH bought through a food broker was not very good quality and had a short shelf-life. With help from Bob Lewis, NYS Department of Ag & Markets, they began buying direct from farmers. They contracted with one farmer for \$20,000 of produce. Purchases of NY-grown farm products grew from \$265,000 in 2001 to \$500,000 in 2002. For the 2003 growing season, Food-PATCH is contracting with three farmers.

Starting in the Fall of 2003, NY City schools menu will include fresh fruits and vegetables on their menu every day. The Department of Education also wants to expand the CookShop program into more schools next year. They see CookShop, a nutrition education program of the Community Food Resources Center, as an important complement to the offerings of more fresh fruits and vegetables. Children are more likely to choose and eat fruits and vegetables after tasting and learning about them in the classroom.

The meeting closed with acknowledgement by all that we need to stay in communication particularly with regards to the DoD fruits and vegetables pilot, and work together on the NYS Farm-to-School Coordinating Committee.

from the NY State Farm-to-School Program

**Suggestions to increase purchases of
NY-grown fresh fruits and vegetables**



School Food Service Directors

- Become aware of fresh fruits and vegetables that are grown in New York and the Northeast. Many (apples, potatoes, cabbage, squash) are available throughout the school year due to advances in storage technology. When planning menus, check the Harvest/Availability Calendar at <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/HarvestCalendar.html> and the NE Regional Food Guide at <http://www.nutrition.cornell.edu/FoodGuide/>
- Serve NY fruits and vegetables as snacks, for meetings and special events
- Plan and advertise meals that incorporate NY foods for special events such as NY Harvest for NY Kids or banquets
- Request that your produce supplier source from NY growers; ask for a list of what NY-grown items they carry, and what farms and packers they buy from
- If a supplier says NY produce is more expensive, ask where the cheaper items are coming from and ask for comparative price quotes
- Ask for the origin of produce items on every bid and price list.
- Request bids cooperatively and order NY foods with other school districts from a produce distributor, food service business, or farmers

Produce and Food Service Distributors

- Let schools know which NY fruits and vegetables will be available in the coming 6-8 weeks, so that schools can plan menus which include these foods
- Find sources of locally-grown through Pride of NY web site www.prideofny.com NY Apple Association www.nyapplecountry.com Order the NYS Vegetable Growers Association Shippers Directory (315)687-5734 email: nysvga@twcny.rr.com
- Market your business as supportive of New York agriculture
- Provide periodically-updated lists of what NY-grown items you carry, and the farms, packers, and processors who supply you with NY-grown
- Throughout the year, provide information about where the produce was grown on price lists and bids

Farmers

- Get to know the K-12 school market by visiting local schools and meeting with School Food Service Directors.
- Pilot your products during NY Harvest for NY Kids (an annual week-long celebration in school cafeterias). Contact schools in the Spring to let them know what you will have available in September/October for their NY Harvest for NY Kids menus. If you cannot deliver directly to schools, find out which produce distributors they order from, and work with them.
- Exhibit at regional industry seminars of the NYS School Food Service Association, or attend the NYSSFSA trade show at their annual state conference at the booths of your distributors, or your commodity organization (NY Apple Association, NYS Vegetable Growers, ADA & Dairy Council etc.) See www.nyssfesa.org or call 1-800-NYSSFSA for information.
- Sign on to NYS Department of Ag & Market's **Pride of New York** program www.prideofny.com and be listed on the Pride of NY web site as a grower selling to schools and institutions.
- Work with distributors who are pro-active about sourcing NY-grown. Give them product info and brochures about your farm that they can pass on to their customers.
- Exhibit at the Trade Shows and NYSSFSA regional industry seminars, or NYS Department of Ag & Markets.

For more information about Farm-to-School in New York State:

NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Bill Jordan ph: 518-457-0752 William.Jordan@agmkt.state.ny.us

NY Farm-to-School Coordinating Committee

Ray Denniston, NYS School Food Service Association
ph: 607-763-1216 RDenniston@jcschools.stier.org

NY Farms!

Glenda Neff ph: 315-255-6958 glenda_neff@juno.com
Martha Goodsell ph: 607-659-3710 nyfarms@baldcom.net

Cornell Farm-to-School Program

Jennifer Wilkins ph: 607-255-2730 jlw15@cornell.edu
www.cce.cornell.edu/farmentoschool