



## ***Northern New York Agricultural Development Research January 27, 2021 Legislative Hearing***

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Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony about the critical role the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP) plays in the regional economy and communities of New York State's far north region. I am speaking on behalf of the nearly 100 farmers who advise the program and for all the farmers who benefit from the Program that operates at a fiscal efficiency of 97.5 percent of funding going directly to research. Please let me offer brief snapshots of the vital and far-reaching impact the Legislature's funding commitment to this regional, farmer-driven program—the New York State Legislature itself established this program in recognition of the unique needs of the northern region of the State.

**Regional Food Security:** Our NNY counties are primarily agricultural economies; that fact coupled with the NNYADP's real-world, on-the-ground research provided a strong basis for the region to quickly adapt to the pandemic-driven, hyperlocal food source interest by consumers. While there have been challenges and losses, there are also opportunities made possible by our Local Foods, Livestock, Dairy, Horticulture, Crops and Maple research. **Significant examples of the value of your support of the NNYADP include:**

- how **NNYADP food hub research and development** work since 2013, working with 25 food buyers, 125 farmers, and consumers, positioned to adjust in 2020;
- Some dairy farms pivoted to **bottling milk or value-added**.
- Livestock producers responded to unprecedented demand with on-hand NNYADP marketing resources to help **new local meats buyers** understand cuts, pricing, and packaging.
- **Maple producers** developed drive-through and contact-free pickup opportunities in 2020; continued NNYADP funding will support growth of the NNY maple industry into a **\$15 million annual industry** (NNYADP research in 2008 predicted \$10 million, reached \$12 million prior to COVID).
- Recent spinoffs of the food hub work created **hyperlocalized food hubs and new produce auctions**.
- A NNYADP project started in July 2019 began initiating development of **web-based learning** opportunities for dairy farm milker personnel.
- Crop pest solutions and other **NNYADP project results have been applied on farms across NYS**.

**Agricultural Environmental Stewardship:** **NNYADP-DEC Host First-of-their-kind Water Quality Trials**  
The NNYADP has funded tile drainage research and field crops soil and water research to develop a precise understanding of how agricultural production impacts water quality. The tile drainage research trial site was established on NYS DEC land in 2012 and research continues with interest from across the Northeast and other states. Project work is already advancing precision nutrient management to protect our natural resources.

**Climate Adaptability:** New York State's northern counties are subject to unique climate and microclimate challenges. The NNYADP supports research to help all sectors: fruit, vegetables, berries, crops, livestock and dairy adapt to cold and heat stress. As part of this, projects are also addressing high tunnel year-round food production opportunities and evaluating new crops, including honey, honeyberry, aronia, malting barley, and hardy grapes.

***As northern New York continues to weather the pandemic and look toward recovery, Legislative funding for the NNYADP is key to our regional food security, natural resources conservation, and agricultural/economic sustainability.***

Sincerely, Joseph Giroux, Dairy Farmer and NNYADP Co-Chair, Plattsburgh, NY, 518-563-7523  
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***The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program is supported by the New York State Legislature and administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. Learn more at [www.nnyagdev.org](http://www.nnyagdev.org).***