



COUNTY OF ERIE

CHRIS COLLINS

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Erie County Executive Chris Collins and Erie County Legislator Dino Fudoli, Chairman of the Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, are pleased to announce an upcoming public meeting regarding the future of farms and food in Erie County. The meeting will be hosted by the Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board along with the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning. The meeting will help gather important information that will aid in preparing strategies to insure that agriculture remains an important component of the County's economy. It will be held:

Monday, March 21, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.
Cornell Cooperative Extension
21 South Grove Street, East Aurora.

Farming is a significant contributor to the local economy. The 2007 Census of Agriculture notes that Erie County farms sold \$117 million of agricultural products that year. But, like New York State, Erie County is losing farms and farmland fast. In the last 25 years, New York lost nearly half a million acres of farmland. The state's food security and economy are hurt as the state continues to lose farmland at a rate of 9,000 acres per year—the equivalent of one farm every 3 ½ days. In Erie County, six percent of farmland was lost or converted in the five years from 2002 to 2007, and the number of farms decreased by two percent.

The loss of farms and farmland has a negative impact on local economies as the growing, processing, buying, and selling of food has traditionally been a cornerstone of many Erie County communities. Local farms contribute in other ways too. Farms provide food and jobs. Well-managed farms protect water quality. Farms maintain scenic landscapes and wildlife habitat that not only attract tourist dollars but are integral to the quality of life of local people.

If you would like to learn more about local farms and the process that will guide county support for agriculture in the next decade, please plan to attend the March 21st public meeting. Representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Eden Valley Growers, American Farmland Trust and other agricultural organizations will highlight ongoing work which supports Erie County farms.

Farmers, local officials, environmentalists, and others interested in farms, food and land in the county are urged to attend.

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