

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN A WORKING LANDSCAPE

Together, we are making a difference! Your support in 2010 had a tangible impact on farms, youth and the rural communities we love!

You helped support the protection of a vibrant working landscape and sustainable communities through...

Expanding Market Opportunities for Farmers

Our rolling hills and often rocky soils, combined with cool nights and pure water add up to a landscape that is best suited to grazing animals like cows and goats – and that means milk! In order to protect our farms, we must build a sustainable market for the milk being produced here on small family farms. In early summer, **Farm Catskills began collecting dairy products from five or six goat and cow farms in the region to sell at a new farmers' market in New York City.** The O'Connor Foundation provided grant funds to help cover the initial costs of transportation.



In addition, our local dairy farmers will soon have a facility for experimenting with value added products! **Farm Catskills is being awarded an USDA RBEG grant to purchase and then lease milk processing equipment to Kortright Creek Creamery.** Kortright Creek Creamery will construct a building to house the equipment and will provide technical advice to interested dairy farmers. The construction phase is expected to start in February 2011.

Our produce farmers are also making new connections! Farm Catskills' Rural Health Service Corps member, Hana Payne, facilitated the purchase of local produce for senior meals and head start programs. Building on these relationships, **SUNY Delhi and Farm Catskills began fostering the development of programs that connect the college with local farms.** The college cafeteria program (CADI) has been buying products from local farms (with Farm Catskills brokering the connections to farmers) since the beginning of the fall semester and is excited about expanding the program in 2011 with assistance from Farm Catskills' Americorps VISTA member, Mary Pysnik.

Farm Catskills and CADI are planning a meeting with farmers in January to establish the college's needs in 2011 and create a supply plan to meet them. The college serves hundreds of meals to students each week in addition to hosting numerous special dinners for other organizations. The potential for this partnership to have a measurable impact for local farms is something we can all be proud to be involved in!

Building a Local Food System For Everyone

When a teenager returned to the cafeteria to ask for a beet salad recipe, we knew we were making a difference. **Farm Catskills' A Day of Food for Thought™** is bringing food systems education opportunities and local food to classrooms and cafeterias in Delaware County schools. We partnered with Delaware Academy and South Kortright Central School in 2010 to bring more than 400 young people a taste of what's possible when people work together to support local farms and eat healthy foods. Each event engaged young people's minds, hands and taste buds in learning about the costs of the existing food system and dreaming about what could be possible. With the help of a grant from the Watershed Agricultural Council/Pure Catskills, Farm Catskills brought the program to South Kortright and will add Walton and Charlotte Valley to the list for 2011.



At SUNY Delhi, Americorps VISTA member, Mary Pysnik, is working to give students opportunities to volunteer with farms and food system events, and conducting community-based research to identify opportunities to connect other institutions with local food and farms. **Mary and a committee of faculty and students have developed a series of events on campus designed to engage the student body in learning about local food systems**, including screening the films "Food Inc." and "FRESH" for students and community members. On November 16, the MacDonald dining hall hosted a Thanksgiving-themed dinner for students and faculty, serving an array of local foods.



Farm Catskills Rural Health Service Corps member, Hana Payne, made **more local, nutritious foods available to lower income families and senior citizens in Delaware County**. From the Delaware Opportunities garden in Hamden, 1,835 pounds of fresh produce were harvested and supplied three food banks, including Delaware Opportunities', Sidney's and Walton's; the WIC Program; foster care homes; six senior meal sites; a senior community; and the Head Start Program.

Delaware County is one of the most economically challenged counties in New York State, with more than 20% of its children living in poverty. Farm Catskills works to build a healthy food system for everyone in the community.

Outreach and Education About Farms and Farmland's Importance to Our Economy, Our Food Security and Our Communities

The Catskills have become increasingly attractive as a place to build a second home, and New York City spends millions of dollars purchasing land in its watershed. As a result, land prices have risen beyond what agriculture can support making it incredibly difficult for the next generation of farmers to get started in the Catskills. **Farm Catskills advocated for increased accessibility of land for new farmers and the promotion of a working rather than a conserved landscape in its response to the DEP's Land Acquisition Program.** Farm Catskills is prepared to

work with the DEP and support outreach and implementation of programs that truly protect the land, the water and our interdependent communities. We have followed carefully the Land Acquisition Program and its impact on farmers, and researched programs such as the Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value which could provide meaningful mitigation to these impacts while still achieving the DEP's important water quality protection goals.

Most Catskill land is maintained by farmers. When farms disappear, the landscape changes, as brush and houses grow up in their place.

With mindful land acquisition and access programs, the Catskill Mountain region's land and its farmers can grow as a significant source of food, particularly for New York City. Delaware County has a long tradition of a working landscape – the farmers tend and maintain the landscape, and are in turn, sustained by it. **Farm Catskills is working with farmers and their customers on conservation efforts that include both protecting the farmland and helping farmers sustain their livelihood.** One such effort is that of Lucky Dog Farm (www.luckydogorganic.com) which owns 45 acres and leases an additional 115 acres of adjacent land in the hamlet of Hamden. The farm cultivates organic vegetables and puts the remaining acreage in a cover crop used to enrich farm-made compost. Lucky Dog's home farm is protected through an agricultural easement, but the leased land is not permanently protected. Over the past eight years, two parcels of prime farmland that were important to Lucky Dog Farm were sold for development. Farm Catskills is now working with the farm to raise the funds to protect a 91 acre rented parcel that is integral to the farm's continued operation.



Strengthening Farm Catskills Capacity for Excellence to Protect the Working Landscape

37 new members joined Farm Catskills this year and nearly 400 fans are now following us on Facebook, contributing to the awareness that has made our 2010 achievements possible.

While our members are helping to spread the word, grants are enabling organizational assessments that will lead Farm Catskills into the next phase of progress! A Land Trust Alliance Assessing Your Organization Grant has **enabled the organization to work with a consultant to evaluate standards and practices and identify areas for improvement.** An extension of the grant has been awarded to continue the process into 2011. A Land Trust Alliance Capacity Grant enabled Farm Catskills to **develop more consistent communications methods and messages to grow awareness and support for its efforts.** We have applied for another capacity grant to improve skills and procedures for managing finances and to further expand outreach. Farm Catskills has also been awarded another part-time Americorps position for the summer of 2011 through the Rural Health Network. We are applying to have two full-time Americorps workers assigned to Farm Catskills beginning in the fall/winter of 2011. They will continue to **help farmers find markets both locally and regionally and work with schools to help them buy more local foods!**



Farming brings at least \$60 million into Delaware County's local economy each year. This money turns around in the local economy more than any other industry as farmers spend their income with local parts dealers, feed mills, veterinarians, accountants, trucking businesses, and other locally owned businesses.

Thank you for your continued support, and Cheers to an exciting 2011!

A broad base of membership strengthens our grassroots efforts to protect agriculture in the region...SPREAD THE WORD!

www.farmcatskills.org