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ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN NEW YORK

by Brian M. Henehan

Senior Extension Associate

Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management

College of Agriculture and Life Science

Cornell University

Organic agriculture represents a growing segment, albeit small, of production and food processing in New York State. To gain a better understanding of what opportunities might yet be available to New York farmers and processors, a three year research project is looking at opportunities and barriers to growth of organic agriculture in New York. The first phase of the project was to document current organic agricultural production in New York.

In the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Brian Henehan and Jie Li have compiled and released the most recent and most complete statistics about organic production in New York State published in a Dyson School Extension Bulletin titled *Organic Agriculture in New York State*, Which is available online at:

<http://www.aem.cornell.edu/outreach/extensionpdf/2010/Cornell-Dyson-eb1013.pdf>

The authors acknowledge the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) which collected this extensive data as well as the dedicated organic farmers who were interested and responded to the survey. In New York, 1,577 surveys were mailed to certified, exempt, and transitional organic farmers. An impressive 1,412 surveys were returned reporting on 2008 farm production and information.

The organic crops and farm products with the highest sales from certified and exempt farms are listed in the following table. Given the significant role dairy farming plays in New York agriculture, it is not surprising that four out of the top five farm crops or products include milk and dairy cows, hay and haylage, corn for grain or silage and soybeans. Vegetables, potatoes and melons ranked third on the list.

Organic Agricultural Products Marketed from Certified and Exempt Farms in New York State.

Rank	Crop/Product	Total Certified & Exempt Sales
1	Milk & Dairy Cows	\$62,615,402
2	Corn for grain and silage	11,343,944
3	Vegetables, potatoes, & melons	9,463,516
4	Hay & Haylage	6,156,169
5	Soybeans	4,607,897
Total	Top 5 Farm Products	\$94,186,928

Source: 2008 Organic Production Survey, USDA, NASS and *Organic Agriculture in New York State*, Dyson School Extension Bulletin

Organic farmers were fairly optimistic about their future with 37% reporting that they planned to increase their organic production. Despite the impression that organic farmers sell direct to consumers, the largest portion of reported sales (39%) was to processors, mills, or packers, then to grower cooperatives (17%), direct to consumers (15%), and then distributors, wholesalers, or brokers (12%). More than half (58%) of their “first point of sales” were made locally, within 100 miles, and almost all (92%) within 500 miles. This sales pattern could be explained by the large share of sales from organic milk production, the largest contributor to organic sales in the state.

There are a number of programs and projects at Cornell University focusing on organic food and agricultural production. Faculty and Extension personnel at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as well as at the Agricultural Experiment Stations (both at Cornell and in Geneva), the Homer C. Thompson Research Farm, and the Organic Program Work Team comprised of Cooperative Extension, faculty and practitioners are expanding knowledge about organic production and food processing. A summary of Cornell-led projects can be found online at: <http://www.cues.cornell.edu/cals/cuaes/organic/>

Although organic agriculture and food processing represent a small share of total production in New York State, there may be opportunities for farms or businesses to tap into this approach to agriculture and food production. The final two phases of the research project will focus on food and beverage manufacturing and the forecast for consumer demand.

"Smart Marketing" is a monthly marketing newsletter for extension publication in local newsletters and to place in local media. It reviews the elements critical to successful marketing in the food and agricultural industry. Articles are written by faculty members in the Department of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University

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