



## 2019 Program Evaluation



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# Abstract

NY FarmNet is a state funded support organization for farmers in New York State. It offers free, confidential, on site or virtual consulting related to financial and personal issues.

The main areas NY FarmNet consultants assist with are business or strategy planning, farm finances, and plan of action for succession – followed closely by personal wellbeing, family communications, and relationship support. Dairy farmers account for more than half of NY FarmNet cases, and many clients from all farm types are repeat customers of the program.

This evaluation is based on two surveys – the first being a follow up survey sent to each farmer who had a case deemed complete during 2019, and the second being an open survey made available to program stakeholders and New York agricultural industry professionals that was conducted in late 2018. The first survey focused on the service each farmer received as a client of the program. The second focused on what NY FarmNet could do to support the industry as a whole.

Based on this evaluation, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) Stress is high among farmers, and often caused by uncontrollable forces. Supporting and resolving mental and behavioral health issues remains a high priority for the industry. This includes reducing associated stigma and addressing issues in a way that is comfortable and relatable to farmers.
- 2) NY FarmNet needs to continually market the program in a unique way that targets farmers and agribusiness, and ensure that the services they offer are broadly understood.
- 3) NY FarmNet continues to meet the needs of New York agriculture. Ninety-eight percent of stakeholders who were familiar with the program stated that they would recommend it, and 92-percent of program clients surveyed stated that they would encourage others to contact NY FarmNet.

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*"All last year we saw news, videos, and conversations about the plight of the farm community. Suicides and foreclosures and prices dropping...equipment and land loans and interest rates. Hopelessness. [NY FarmNet consultants] Gabriel and Judy came into our home, sat at our table with us while I cried and my husband fumed. They made themselves available to come into our chaos and despair and help us find the way out. How much did that cost us? Not a penny. We've told friends about our experience and urged them to reach out. Some have, some haven't. I can't say enough about the support they gave us. Pretty sure without Gabriel and Judy, and FarmNet's resources we would be divorced and out of business.... Like so many people we know and have heard of. But today we are still running, in better business shape, and together. Priceless."*

– Central NY crop farmer

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## Introduction

The NY FarmNet program was started in 1986 at Cornell University as a free consulting service to farmers. The farm crisis of the mid-80s was increasing the demand for a holistic consulting approach, with farmers seeking both personal and family well-being support, in addition to financial guidance. Today, the program offers consulting to any type of farmer in New York State. Financial consultants offer traditional farm business management and financial guidance, while family consultants address stress, communication, and behavioral health issues. One of each type of consultant is assigned to each farmer (case) that contacts NY FarmNet for assistance. Farmers and farm family members contact the 800 helpline, (1-800-547-3276) that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, or complete a web form based on [www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org) to request assistance.

During the year 2019, NY FarmNet opened 305 new farm cases. A case is opened when a farmer calls or fills out the online web form and consultants are assigned by office staff. During the same time period, nearly 800 cases were ongoing – some cases are resolved with a phone call or two, while others receive ongoing support for several years. Ninety percent of farms who worked with NY FarmNet consultants in 2019 remained in farming. Ninety-five succession plans and 179 business plans were developed with support from NY FarmNet in 2019. Farm business transfers, guided by NY FarmNet, kept over 42,000 acres of land in farming. Expanding farm businesses and helping the next generation start farming fuels economic growth in rural communities. Based on a 2019 study by Todd Schmit, Faculty Director of the Agribusiness and Rural Development Program at Cornell University, every \$100 generated by farm businesses results in an additional \$61 of economic activity in New York State.

In recent years, NY FarmNet's services have become more critical as the agricultural industry in New York has suffered. Dairy producers have experienced low milk prices for the past five years, cash crop farms have been impacted by trade policies, and producers across the board are feeling the pinch of severe weather events, ever changing government regulations, and labor policy developments. New York farmers have experienced high stress levels, leading some to struggle with behavioral health issues, substance use challenges, and even death by suicide. NY FarmNet's consultants provide a much needed and valuable resource to the rural agricultural communities across the state, where other resources such as health care and behavioral health professionals are in short supply.

NY FarmNet is funded primarily by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the New York State Office of Mental Health. Also, since 2017, five agricultural lenders (NBT, Community Bank NA, Farm Credit East, and Tompkins Trust/Bank of Castile) have pledged \$5,000 each year for five years. These funds are earmarked for consultant trainings, which take place three times each year and cover a multitude of topics. The NY FarmNet program model is built upon 45 consultants spread across the state. They each work on a part time, as needed basis, allowing the program to operate efficiently and to effectively match demand as it ebbs and flows with the farming season.

As a program of Cornell University, the land grant university of New York State, NY FarmNet has access to a multitude of resources and collaborators. Invaluable programs, such as Cornell Small Farms, Ag Workforce Development, PRO- DAIRY, and Cornell Cooperative Extension, are

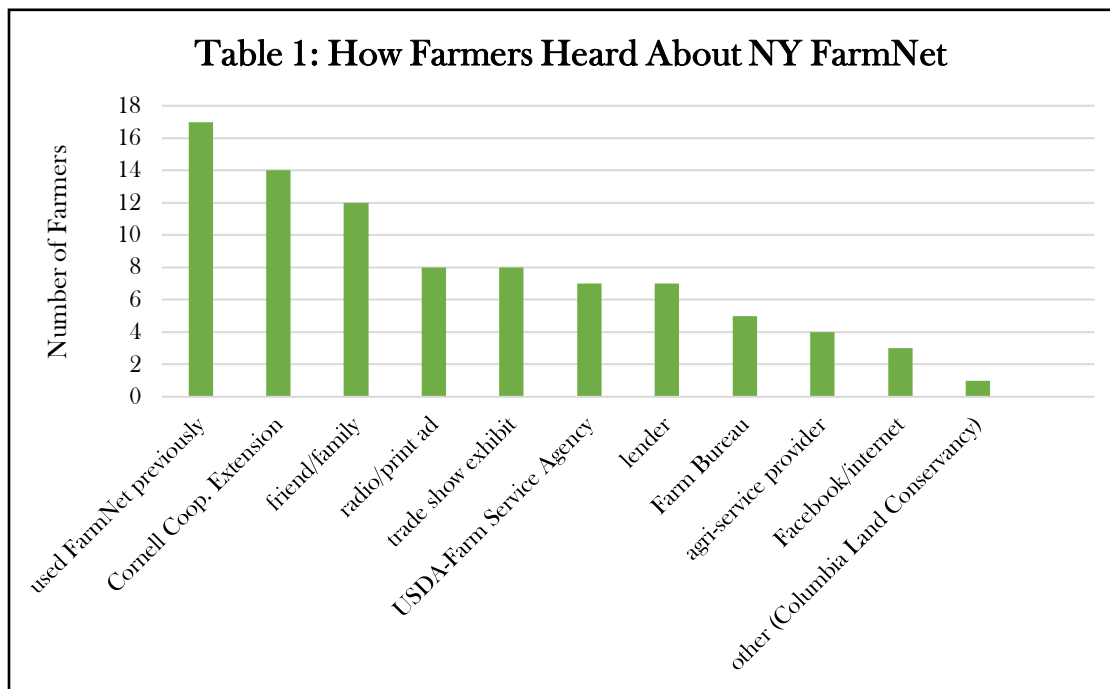
easily accessible. NY FarmNet is classified as a non-profit under Cornell University, and therefore able to access a variety of funding sources that would otherwise be restricted. Support from central administration offices, such as Human Resources, Office of Sponsored Programs/Research, Finance Department, and the Office of Governmental and Community Relations, allow the program to operate efficiently and maximize its potential.

This program evaluation examines need within the agricultural community. It is based on the responses of over two hundred farmers and agri-service professionals. These results were published in late 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2019 Farmer Follow up Survey

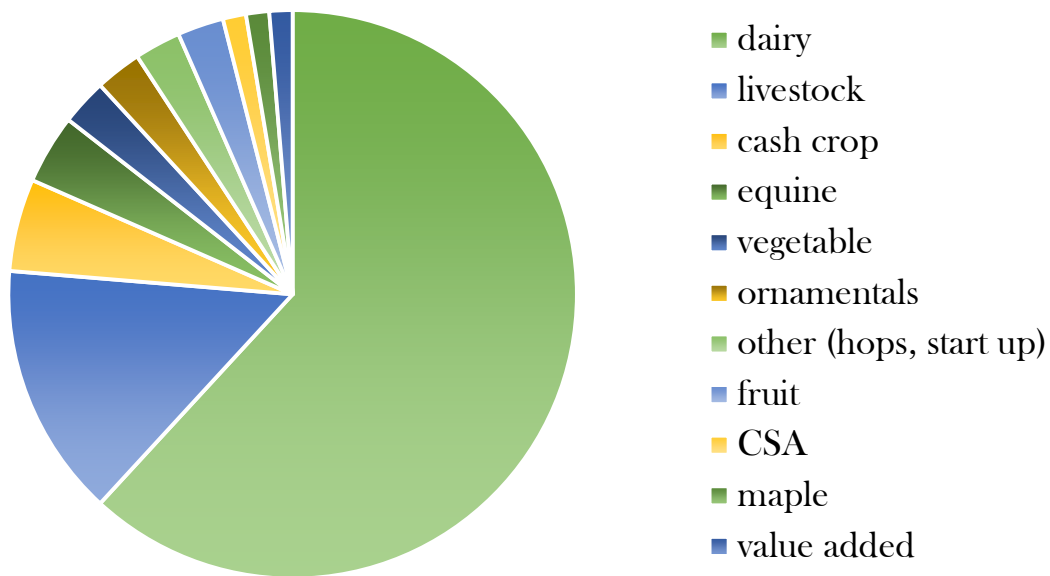
Two-hundred-thirty-five total surveys were distributed - digitally via email and Qualtrics, and in hard copy through the US Postal Service to NY FarmNet cases that were closed during 2019. Cases are closed when issues are resolved (long term or for the time being), the primary focus of consultation shifts, which leads to a new case being created, or the farmer stops responding to communication from consultants. Not every closed case receives a survey. Exceptions include those that never developed into a case, and cases where an accurate address was not available. Both consultants (family and financial) assigned to a client must mark the case “closed” in the program’s information management system before a survey is generated. Surveys are distributed within one month of the case being closed.

Seventy-six responses were collected, showing a 32-percent response rate. All percentages listed are calculated using the actual number of responses received for that question. The following tables show how those 76 farmers knew about the program, what type of farm they have, and why they contacted NY FarmNet.

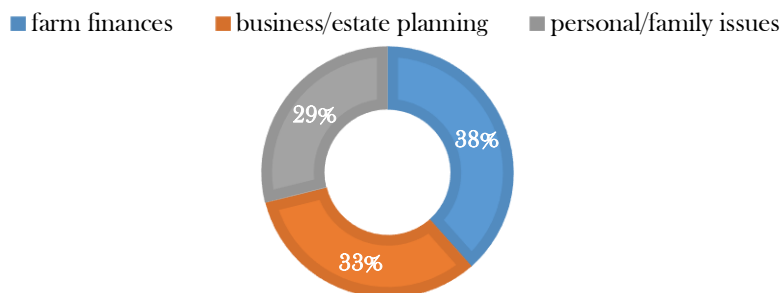


(Table 1: Seven respondents made multiple selections, which is why the total is over 76)

**Table 2: Primary Farm Type**



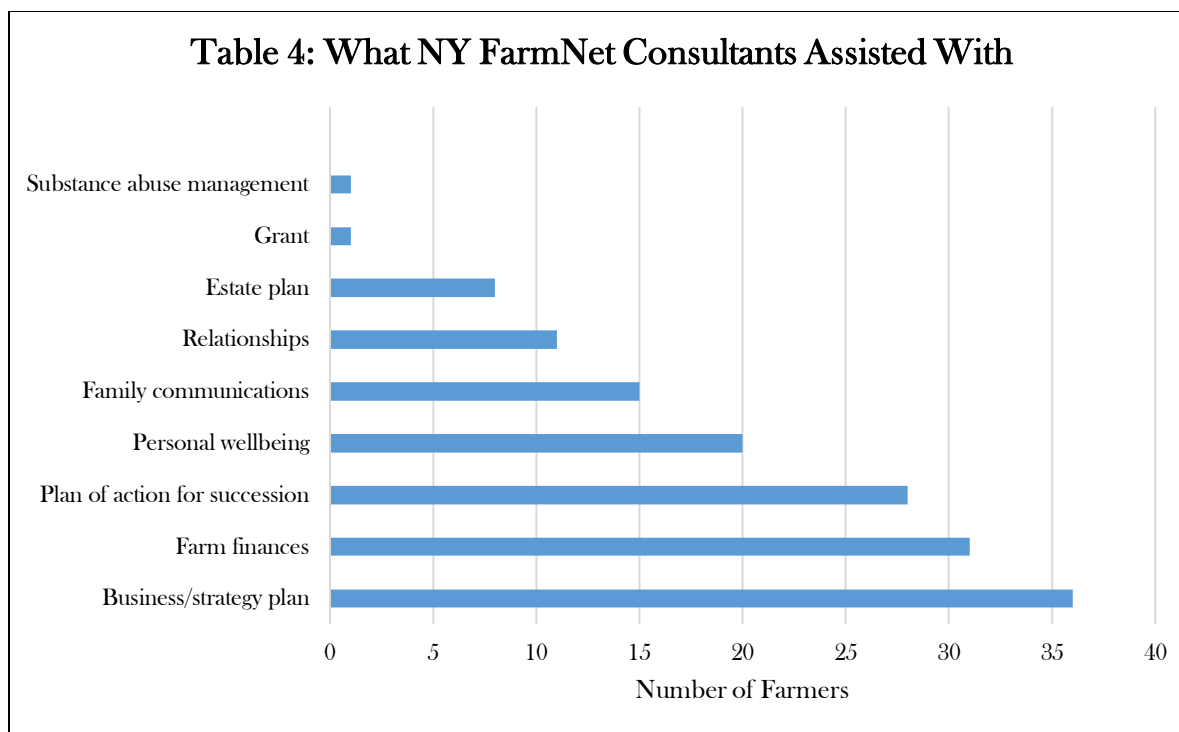
**Table 3: Why Farmers Contacted NY FarmNet**



Sixty-four percent of survey respondents contacted NY FarmNet by **calling the 800 line** and speaking to someone in the office or at the answering service. The answering service is based out of Auburn, NY. They email phone messages to the office staff immediately upon their reception. If a caller indicates that their message is an emergency, the answering service additionally calls the office staff until they speak to someone who can address the situation immediately. Incoming call and new case volume tends to be highest in February/March and August/September each year.

Thirteen percent of survey respondents used the contact form on the NY FarmNet website; 11-percent contacted a consultant directly; and 12-percent indicated “other.”

Farmers who started a case met with their consultants an average of **three** times.



Thirty-seven percent of farmers reported that their assigned consultants provided them with a referral to another agency or person. Seventy-three percent reported that their consultants assisted them to identify **clear and understandable options** for their situation. When asked to rate their consultant’s knowledge and ability on a scale of one (poor) to five (excellent), **family consultants** received an average rating of **4.37** and **financial consultants** received an average rating of **4.27**.

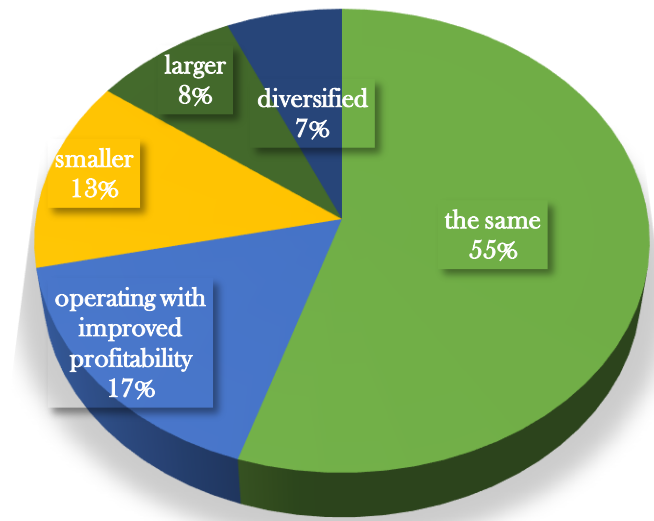
Shifting to open ended questions, the survey next asked **“What changes have you made, or are you planning to make, based on working with NY FarmNet? If none, why not?”**

The two categories with the most responses were “nothing” with 15 responses, and “selling,” with 13. Reasons for taking no action (nothing) were **family issues impeding progress, struggling industries**, uncertainty on how to proceed, and finding advice from consultants to be unhelpful or not applicable. Items reported as sold include the whole farm, animals, equipment, crops, and land — or some combination thereof. Some responses mentioned selling some assets in order to keep the house, or to protect remaining animals. Nine responses focused on refinancing and updating insurance policies or business structure. Four responses related to succession planning, like updating wills, meeting with an accountant, and attending a workshop. Three responses were centered on improved family dynamics and communication. Three focused on diversification, such as learning a new method for tracking finances, finding a job off the farm, and changing the direction of the business. Two indicated that the farmer separated from their spouse or significant other. A handful of miscellaneous responses ranged from “trying to be more safety minded around equipment” to “still working on [a] plan.”

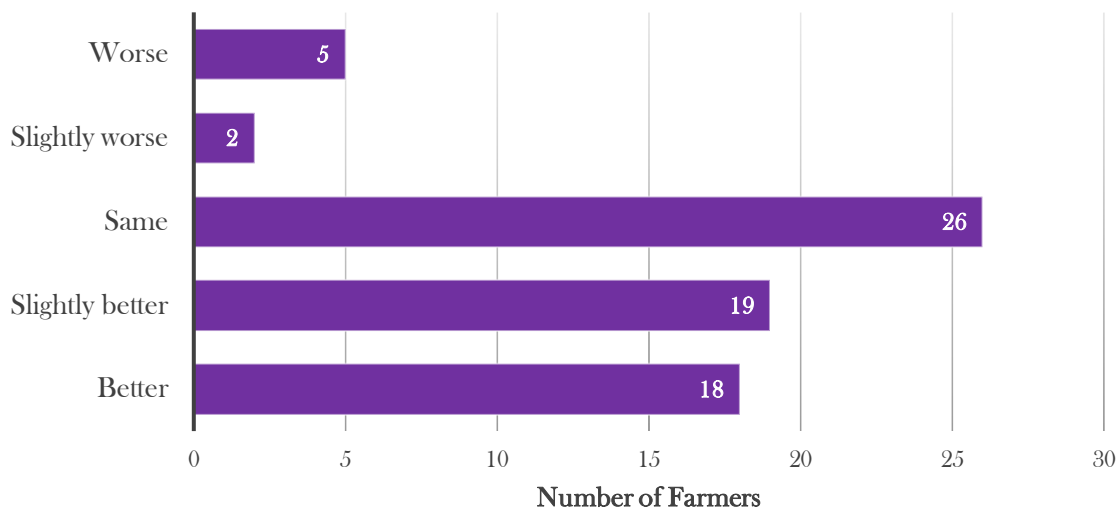
**Seventy-nine percent of respondents indicated that they were still involved with farming at the time of the survey.** Two follow up questions were asked of this group, with results displayed below.



**Table 5: My farming operation is now, compared to when I called NY FarmNet**



**Table 6: Rate your well-being now, compared to when you first called NY FarmNet**



When asked whether or not NY FarmNet was able to resolve their issue, 63-percent responded yes. Those who answered yes shared some common themes offered by their consultants:

- presentation of understandable options and detailed information related to them
- clarification on steps to take during succession planning and how to keep things equitable
- referrals to attorneys and other resources

- assistance in handling creditors and putting together cash flow analysis
- moral and personal support and tips for effective communication

Those who answered no, NY FarmNet was not able to resolve our issue, focused on one or two causes – either an outside force was at work making it impossible, or they found the help they received from consultants to be ineffective. Reported outside forces included health issues, economic factors, and family dynamics that wouldn’t budge.

***It can be very hard to ask for help; especially independent minded farmers like us. FarmNet consultants have the background and expertise to ease this discomfort and get to resolving issues.***

**-Central NY Dairy Farmer**

**When asked if they would contact NY FarmNet again, 78-percent of respondents answered yes.** They found NY FarmNet to be “an exceptional resource” and a “great service provided at no cost.” Their consultants were “good listeners and problem solvers;” “more than willing to go out of their way to do whatever they could to help us in any way possible;” “knowledgeable people trying to help;” and, “understood my situation very well;” “have the background and expertise to ease this discomfort and get to resolving issues.”

**One farmer insightfully commented that “outside help is imperative in times of stress.”**

A portion of respondents, 18-percent, answered no, they would not contact NY FarmNet again. Some reported they were now out of farming or didn’t have much left. Only four respondents reported that their consultants were not helpful.

**When asked if they would encourage others to contact NY FarmNet, 92-percent of survey respondents answered yes, they would.** Some indicated that they already had. Top reasons respondents would refer include:

- “It’s free, and they know other experts if they can’t help enough.”
- “They were attentive, timely, and very knowledgeable.”
- “They were compassionate during a difficult decision-making time. They helped us organize and put things on the table – but we made the final decisions.”

A remaining 8-percent answered no, they would not encourage others to contact NY FarmNet, however none elaborated on why.

The survey then asked, **what other services could NY FarmNet offer that would be valuable to you or your community?**

When asked to weigh in on the services NY FarmNet offers, respondents noted that many of the services they’d like help with, NY FarmNet already provides. Some of the services specifically

mentioned include: financial guidance, stress management, succession planning, financial planning for beginning farmers, farm business planning, estate planning, personal well-being support, and help with interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, when NY FarmNet surveyed program stakeholders (second survey, summarized below), which include people who work in New York agriculture, Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and directors, lenders and loan officers, veterinarians, equipment dealers, and other agribusiness professionals, their responses echoed the sentiments of the farmers. More focus on succession planning, proactive business planning, interpersonal relationships and communication, mental health awareness and suicide prevention, educational programming, career guidance and support, referrals to outside healthcare agencies, and referrals to additional resources were among the most common responses.

However, both the farmer and stakeholder responses highlight a weakness in NY FarmNet. Many of the services these two groups would like to see the program offer are already in the program's repertoire. At present, NY FarmNet offers business planning guidance, estate and retirement planning, conflict management, help conducting business meetings, effective communication training, personal well-being support (including stress management, family and/or parent-child disputes, domestic violence, substance use disorder concerns, loss and grief, depression and anxiety), business transfers, personal well-being support for agricultural business professionals, and outreach programs that focus on all of these areas. However, because NY FarmNet was established in 1986 in response to the national farm crisis, the stigma of being *only* for farm crisis, or the "farmer suicide hotline" still holds true to an extent. Through more proactive engagement with New York's agricultural community – both farmers and agribusiness professionals alike – the "crisis only" attachment to the program will be broken. Much of the work the program does now is focused on proactive and personal risk management.

A final question asked farmers to identify **other services NY FarmNet could offer that would be valuable to them or their communities**. Suggestions included a matching service for retiring farmers to find a successor, accounting training, money management skills, classes on farm business/computer programming/mental health wellness, credit counseling, farm insurance, help finding workers, training for young farmers, and sending money. Some of these are services already offered by other organizations, and NY FarmNet staff and consultants are continuously working to strengthen that network and provide referrals.

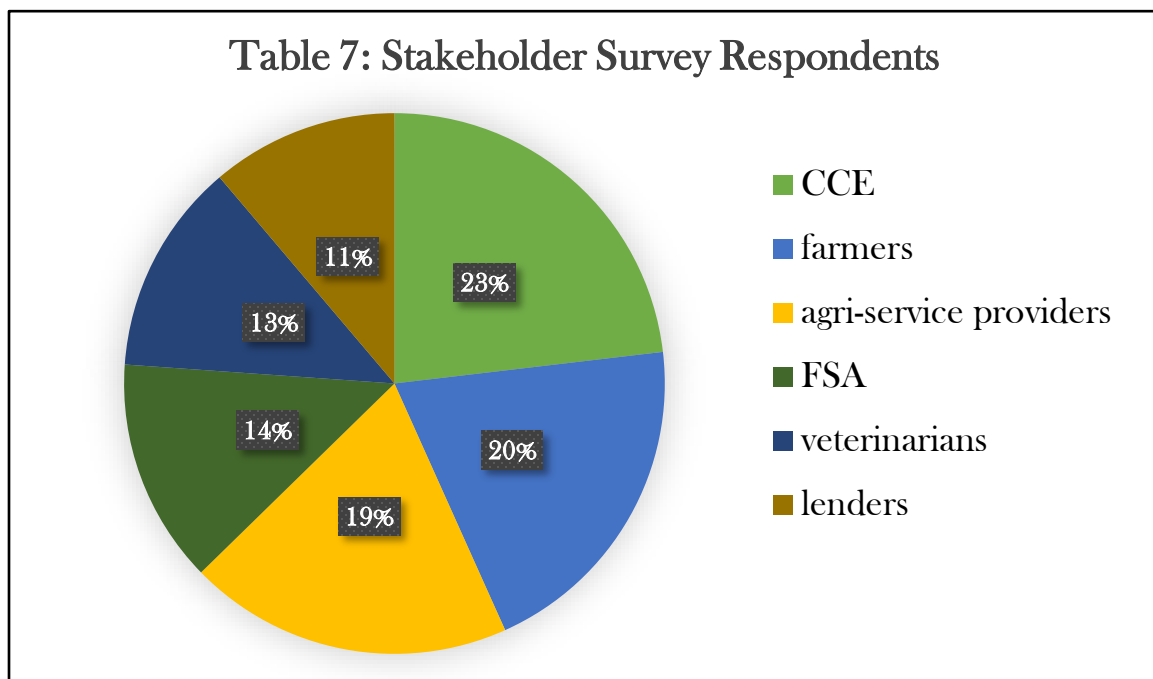
*"The dual approach of financial and personal guidance was unique and helpful in a way I would not have expected."*

-Western NY dairy farmer

## 2018 Stakeholder Survey

The NY FarmNet Stakeholder Survey was distributed via email containing an anonymous Qualtrics link to: Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) employees, United States Department of Agriculture – Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees, New York Farm Bureau, New York State Grange, NYS Agri Business Association (NYSABA), NY Bankers Association, North East Agribusiness & Feed Alliance (NEAFA), veterinarians, equipment dealers, and rural health organizations. All groups were encouraged to share the link further within their organizations. A press release was also issued in Morning Ag Clips which opened the survey up to anyone with stake in agriculture. The survey was open from September 10- October 31, 2018.

The survey received 134 valid responses. The breakdown of respondents is shown in Table 7.



Ninety-three percent of respondents were already familiar with NY FarmNet. Veterinarians were least familiar with the program, with only 65-percent reporting that they had heard of it. **Of the remaining groups (CCE, farmers, agri-service providers, FSA, lenders), between 93-percent and 100-percent were familiar with NY FarmNet.**

Of those who indicated they were familiar with the program, an overall 75-percent reported having recommended that a farmer/farm family should contact NY FarmNet for assistance.

Of the remaining 25-percent, who indicated they had not recommended NY FarmNet, respondents were asked to explain why. Sixty-three percent selected “Did not know enough about NY FarmNet” and 30-percent selected “Do not know any farmers in need of FarmNet services.” Several written in responses included “thought it was only for big dairy,” geography, and not having an appropriate opportunity to make the suggestion.

Farmers and veterinarians were least likely to have recommended NY FarmNet to someone else, 52-percent and 45-percent respectively. **One-hundred-percent of lenders surveyed had recommended NY FarmNet services.**

A second question, asked of those who were already familiar with the program, was “Would you recommend NY FarmNet again in the future?” **Ninety-eight percent stated they would recommend NY FarmNet again.** Two would not – one was a farmer and one was a veterinarian.

Survey takers were then shown a list of 13 services currently offered by NY FarmNet and asked to select those they were already aware of. **Stress management topped the list, with 92-percent of respondents indicating they already knew NY FarmNet provided this service.** Stress management was followed by business planning, financial counseling, and family communication management, all with a response rate between 83 and 87-percent. At the bottom of the list was grant assistance, with only 23-percent of respondents indicating they knew that NY FarmNet provided this service. Other categories with low response rates were substance abuse support, with 35-percent, and government program assistance, with 46-percent.

Respondents who identified as veterinarians had the lowest levels of awareness of what NY FarmNet offers, with only 18-percent indicating substance abuse support and relationship support services.

Respondents who identified as lenders had the highest levels of awareness regarding program offerings. One-hundred-percent already knew NY FarmNet provides business planning, family communication management, and financial counseling.

Among FSA employees, 100-percent of respondents already knew that the program provides stress management and succession planning. The only category below 50-percent among this group was grant assistance.

CCE employees also had high awareness related to services offered by NY FarmNet, with 100-percent indicating stress management, and more than 90-percent indicating family communication management and financial counseling.

The remaining three questions on this survey were open ended. Responses for the first two were broken into the following categories:

- Connections
- Diversification/Marketing
- Exit Planning
- Health Care/Mental Health
- Labor
- Legal/Political
- Outreach Materials
- Programming
- Not Feasible

*(Items marked with an \* below are already offered by NY FarmNet. There may still be room for improvement in some instances.)*

**The first open ended question was: “What additional services would be helpful to farmers in New York State?”**

The *healthcare/mental health* category received the most responses, such as:

- healthcare access/consultation services
- support for lesbian, gay, and transgender folks in farm families, and more drug/substance abuse symptoms awareness
- suicide prevention\*; more obvious link to suicide prevention
- referrals to mental health services due to stress of the farm economy\*

The *diversification/marketing* category also received significant suggestions:

- marketing support\*
- researching options for additional income sources\*
- evaluation, strategic planning, new enterprise planning, regulation compliance\*
- alternative uses for extra milk, alternative uses for farmland and equipment\*
- what can be done for farmers (particularly dairy) to have some control of pricing on a competitive basis for the goods they produce in the wholesale market they need to work in?

Suggestions for services relating to *labor* focused on finding labor during shortages, human resource management (marketing, hiring, firing, training, payroll, management), and Spanish language translation services.

Specific *programming* requests included workshops geared towards the younger generation regarding succession planning and business expansion, and educating farmers in agricultural policy and resources available for political advocacy.

Ideas related to *cultivating connections* included matching services for farmers, developing personal wellness groups within communities (i.e. coffee shop lunch), referrals to attorneys\*, real estate agents, and financial advisors, and increasing awareness of the program within hard to reach communities such as the Amish.

*Exit planning* recommendations included assistance with skills assessment\*, job placement\*, how to start a small business\*, and overall exit strategy\*. One legal suggestion related to the accountability of horse owners.

**The second open ended question was “What programs or services could NY FarmNet offer that would specifically address the high stress levels associated with farming and agribusiness?”**

As in the previous question, the highest number of suggestions focused on *health care and/or mental health* resources. The prominent theme was removing the stigma associated with mental

health care. **Half of the suggestions in this category were given from agri-service providers.** Specific suggestions included:

- education and awareness aimed at normalizing therapy\*
- addressing those that are “afraid” or who don’t want to admit they may need to talk to a counselor\*
- explain to farmers that even if they are doing all the right things they are not responsible for commodity prices\*
- yoga for farmers
- additional stress management resources\*, personal well-being guidance\*
- suicide prevention\*
- a localized list of substance abuse resources\*

*Legal or political* suggestions also ranked high, with the majority coming **directly from farmers:**

- helping eliminate corporate money from political campaigns
- lower taxes and regulations from NYS (ag exemptions, library taxes)
- assist in helping farmers clearly articulate their concerns in writing or verbally to their elected officials on a regular basis
- lobbying the large funders
- allow farmers to grow more specialty cash crops
- increase dollars available to farms
- government insurance to combat changing rules

Suggestions aimed at *cultivating connections* were considerable, the majority coming from CCE employees.

- peer support group (x2), get farmers together to talk, meetings bringing farmers together, coffee socials to discuss issues, helping farmers realize they are not alone in their struggles\*.
- look to CCE agents to spread the word more to farmers\*

*Programming* responses ranged from a general request for increased programs, to positive role models, to farmer recognition/appreciation events, and helping farmers understand the cycle of change\*. **A specific suggestion was given to provide workshops that are advertised as general meetings and cover a variety of topics including stress management – instead of making that the main focus which may turn some producers away.** A second specific suggestion extended an offer to assist with equine assisted programs.

A cluster of suggestions focused on *getting out of the industry*. They included career guidance\*, recommendations for other job opportunities\*, and help in determining how to liquidate a farm business\*.

A final comment, offered by an agri-service provider, focused on how to help farmers control the markets they serve to optimize their gross margins.

The third open-ended question was “How could NY FarmNet better support your organization?”

Responses focused around making *connections* were most numerous. Specific suggestions include:

- more collaboration, while maintaining confidentiality
- more interactions with NY FarmNet consultants in our area (x2)
- reach out directly to establish a relationship\*
- work on a local level through CCE
- keeping us updated on what you are finding in the field, so we are prepared (submitted by a lender)
- encourage producers to report to their local FSA office\*
- expand information network to include farmers and agri-service providers
- be more proactive in reaching out to industry reps so farmers can be referred to them as needed

A second significant, though fairly straightforward, group of suggestions focused on *outreach materials*. Offering printed materials and tabling at conferences\*, and a providing a way for us (FSA employees) to refer a farmer to NY FarmNet\* were mentioned. Another request was for articles in newsletters and radio spots\*.

Other scattered responses related to *programming* (building relationships with consultants in their area, collaboration opportunities, education training on services provided\*, and producer meetings), *availability* (be available, as a place to refer callers, have more volunteers to advise, and expand beyond NY state), and *legal/financial* (help reduce costs of doing business here, and state and private grant assistance). One suggestion, from a farmer, was to assist with succession or exit strategy in the near future\*.

Some additional specific responses include:

- more support and overall alpaca knowledge and management
- support all farmers in growing specialty cash crops
- provide realistic business plans\*
- employing a veterinarian
- maintain familiarity with FSA-USDA procedural limitations

The final questions on the survey related to raising awareness of the program. The first was whether the respondent would like NY FarmNet to send them promotional materials, including brochures, referral cards, and other items. Forty six out of 134 total respondents replied yes, and all materials were shipped within one week of the request. The second question was whether the respondent would like a NY FarmNet representative to do a presentation for their organization, and 17 answered affirmatively. Presentations were scheduled and based on a range of topics, audiences, and locations.



## NY FarmNet Response to Demand

As a result of both the stakeholder and farmer feedback surveys, NY FarmNet has continued to evolve as a program. While some of the services requested are beyond the purview of the program – specifically those related to legal advice and giving direct financial support to struggling farms – other services, such as educational outreach focusing on: succession planning, mental health, stress management, and suicide prevention are, and have been, a focus.

In 2019, consultants and staff spent more than 900 hours conducting in-person educational programs, participating in regional farmer’s meetings, and working with agricultural partners across New York State to expand the program’s audience. Some of this work led to additional partnerships with non-agricultural organizations including The Suicide Prevention Center of New York, rural health coalitions, and county mental health offices.

NY FarmNet staff have delivered presentations on the national and regional level to agricultural and rural health professionals highlighting the unique services available. NY FarmNet’s focus on destigmatization and education of mental health in rural communities is uncharted territory. The continued focus on mental health awareness in agriculture drives demand for educational programming and will remain a top priority for NY FarmNet.

In recent years, NY FarmNet has explored outside grant funding to bolster the work being done around farm stress. Several staff and consultants have been trained in Michigan State University Extension’s Farm Stress Management curriculum, and both Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid. NY FarmNet is also a network partner on the United States Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture Northeast Farm and Ranch Assistance Network (FRSAN). Participating in the Northeast FRSAN, NY FarmNet is able to share best practices through the decades of experience, as well as connect with researchers from land grant institutions focusing on farmer mental health and rural resiliency throughout 13 states.

Based on this evaluation, the demand for farm finance and succession planning workshops also remains strong. NY FarmNet staff and consultants collaborate with attorneys, accountants, and farm business experts at least three times per year to provide workshops to farmers and farm families. Publications related to succession planning are continuously being updated and revised for distribution directly to farmers, free of charge.

*A very qualified team met with us, listened to us, and then assisted us to find solutions to our needs. I'm very grateful for their help and confidentiality.*

**-Western NY Dairy Farmer**

At the onset of COVID-19, NY FarmNet froze consultant travel based on guidance from Cornell University and New York State. Consultants adapted and quickly made the shift to meeting with farmers using video or phone conference exclusively. While this is not a permanent change, and some farmers are reluctant to communicate in any way besides in person, the consultants have continued to progress with a significant portion of their farm clients.

NY FarmNet also expanded its personal well-being consulting services to agribusiness professionals who work directly with farmers in May of 2020. With the stress and uncertainty of operating an essential business amidst a global pandemic, many of the support systems for farmers (often the agribusiness professionals themselves) were under increased pressure to do provide more with less resources available.

Part of NY FarmNet's success is the incredible knowledge base their financial and family consultants bring to farm clients. Whether it is having worked in agricultural lending or operating their own farm business, financial consultants support farm families by guiding them through the process of building budgets, completing cash flow analysis, and encouraging clients to hone their money management. As the program has evolved since 1986, it has become clear that personal stress and well-being issues are directly connected to financial stress.

Family consultants bring experience from having worked in family counseling, social work, or at state mental health facilities. They provide farm families with short term counseling, and then refer them to local agencies if longer term care is needed. They help clients strengthen communication throughout the farm and family, as those lines can easily get blurred while operating a family business. Family consultants facilitate discussions surrounding estate and transition planning, which are often difficult to begin and can bring deep emotions and memories to the surface. In some cases, simply having a listening ear is all a person needs in order to feel a little more in control of their situation.

NY FarmNet hosts three in person consultant trainings each year, where the entire organization comes together and is immersed in customized, multi day presentations. Training topics range from the components of a successful lease, to recognizing and addressing signs of suicide, and everything in between. Presenters range from our own consultants who have specialization and experience to share, to nationally acclaimed speakers addressing farming in a larger context. These trainings are supported by the generous donations provided by NBT Bank, Community Bank NA, Farm Credit East, Tompkins Trust, and Bank of Castile. It is necessary to mention that NY FarmNet consultants are not attorneys and are therefore unable to provide legal advice. However, their experience in guiding farm families through transition makes them a valuable resource in preparing to meet with one.

*I was very pleased with the services we received. The FarmNet agents were knowledgeable, helpful, did research on our behalf to assist us, and were very compassionate. Additionally, they kept in touch with us, checked in on us and we felt very supported by them. Thank you from my heart for this service.*

**-Eastern NY Vegetable Farmer**

## Conclusion

NY FarmNet supports an underserved population in New York State. By helping and guiding farm families and agribusiness professionals through times of crisis, change, and growth, it helps protect agriculture for future generations. While the program is not the same as it was in 1986, the core foundation of the work NY FarmNet does holds true. It gives support not just to farmers, but to their families, employees, and other industry professionals who keep agriculture moving forward.

This program evaluation highlights areas in which NY FarmNet can continue to grow, as well as ways the program is currently meeting the reported needs of farmers in New York State. This type of assessment is critical to the evolution of NY FarmNet, and the agricultural industry of New York State. Prior to this publication, the program had not been formally evaluated since 1991.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions related to the program, please call 1-800-547-3276 or email [nyfarmnet@cornell.edu](mailto:nyfarmnet@cornell.edu) anytime.

*Don't really know what more to say than... "God Bless the Farmer" who is still trying to make a go of it ... It's a whole different kind of farming then what we grew up knowing...*

**-Western NY Dairy Farmer**



### NY FarmNet Consultants

Pictured from left to right

Front: Kim Fortin, Anita Deming, Sheldon Brown, Gerald LeClar, Karen Baase, Judy Flint, Maureen Kiely, Carol DeClue, Becky Wiseman, Karen Scanlon-Fish, Larry Larabee, Brenda O'Brien, Huck Heintz.

Back: Leon Dickinson, Jim Grace, Gabriel Gurley, David Chamberlain, Phill Ludwig, Barry Berghaus, Franci Saunders, Richard Overton, Andy Gilbert, Ed Ward, Greg Mruk, Bruce Rohr, John Adams, Bill Sanok

Not pictured: Ron Kuck, Dave Gott, Jennifer Westerville, Ginny Carlberg, Ashley Colosi, Conniejo Dicruttalo, Kelly Dryja, Jan Kirshenbaum, Erica Leubner, Kimberly MacCrea, Sheila Marshman, Ron Moore, Lori Shipman, Joe Walsh, Elaine Eaton, Dewey Hakes, Teresa McMahon, Will Schonfeld, Mary Ark

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## OTHER A.E.M. EXTENSION BULLETINS

EB No	Title	Fee (if applicable)	Author(s)
2020-09	NY FarmNet 2019 Program Evaluation		Parseghian, A., and Downes, K.
2020-08	Dairy Replacement Programs: Costs and Analysis Summer 2019		Karszes, J. and Hill, L.
2020-07	Dairy Farm Business Summary New York State 2018		Karszes, J, Hill, L, Christman, A, and Knoblauch, W.
2020-06	Sensitivity Analysis of Profits for V. Vinifera Grapes in the Finger Lakes Region of New York - 2019		Davis, T., and Gomez, M.
2020-05	Progress of the Dairy Farm Report Selected Financial and Production Factors Dairy Farm Business Summary New York State, 2019 153 Farms		Karszes, J., Hill, L., and Knoblauch, W.
2020-04	Business Tools for NYS Berry Growers		Williams, K., Kalaitzandonakes, M., Gómez, M.
2020-03	Regional Grass Fed Beef Supply Chain		Kalaitzandonakes, M., Gómez, M., and Peters, C.
2020-02	Cost of Establishment and Production of Cold Hardy Grapes in the Chautauqua Region of New York - 2019		Davis, T., Gómez, M., Moss, R., Martin, K., and Walter-Peterson, H.
2020-01	Cost of Establishment and Production of V. Vinifera Grapes in the Finger Lakes Region of New York - 2019		Davis, T., Gómez, M., Moss, R., Walter-Peterson, H.
2019-06	Adapting Your Labor Strategies to New York's Revised Farm Employment Laws		Eiholzer, L., Ifft, J., Karszes, J., and Stup, R.
2019-05	Assessing the Barriers to Increasing Customer Participation and Farm Sales at Farmers Markets: Implications for Marketing Strategy		Schmit T.M., Severson, R.M. & Sawaura, E.
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