Small Farms Program

Project(s): The Cornell Small Farms Program (Rangarajan; 2013 – 2015).

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Need: Small family farms, those that have an annual income of less than $350,000 per year, account for over 90% of farms in New York and nationally. They contribute to food security, healthy rural communities, and the environment; however, their small size often presents unique challenges. Small farmers report issues such as market access, on-farm energy efficiency, soil health, and vegetable production as obstacles to growth. The Cornell Small Farms Program (CSFP) links Cornell University research to small-scale farmers, generating innovative extension initiatives that support and encourage the sustainability of diverse, thriving small farms in New York.

Approach: In addition to maintaining its core of existing projects, including an impressive catalog of online courses and resources, the Cornell Small Farms Program is full of growth and new pursuits. Highlights include a new project to support NYS veterans who own farms or are interested in starting a post-military career in agriculture. The CSFP also launched two other science-based programs, the first aimed at equipping farmers with the skills and resources to successfully market to larger venues, like grocery stores and cooperatives. The second was an Agroforestry program to engage participants who are interested in diversified forms of revenue.

Results and Impact: Since 2002, the CSFP has been a visionary leader in translating and delivering cutting edge agricultural research to small family farms. During the past year alone, the program has reached over 300 veteran farmers through mailing lists, meetings, and trainings; helped hundreds of beginning farmers through thousands of farmer training services; presented webinars on accessing new markets to over 800 people; and engaged with almost 800 agroforesters through presentations, conferences, and trainings. While the focus of the CSFP is the NYS small farm sector, its resources have attracted attention from farmers (both established and aspiring), educators, and non-profit organizations in all 50 states and over 60 countries. By encouraging small farms-focused research and extension, the CSFP fosters sustainability, food security, economic growth, and a healthy environment in NYS.

Related Information: Cornell Small Farms Program