**Town of Dryden Agriculture Profile**

**Draft – 5.26.16**

To effectively protect and promote agriculture in the Town of Dryden, it is necessary to understand the nature of farming in the Town. There are 7,007 owned and 4,040 rented acres in the town receiving agricultural property tax assessment, an additional 229 owned acres that do not receive agricultural assessment, plus 3,166 acres owned and farmed by Cornell University, for a total of 14,512 acres involved in agriculture – 24% of the town’s land base. Tompkins County Assessment Department data (2015) provides fairly accurate information about land that is farmed because both farmers and landowners value the benefit of agricultural assessment of property they own or rent to farmers. Cornell University agricultural land is tax exempt, and therefore is not included on a list of property receiving agricultural assessment. However, there is significant Cornell-owned agricultural land in the town, so it’s important to include those acres when considering the town’s agricultural base. There may be more than mentioned above that is farmed and does not receive agricultural assessment.

Thirty-seven (37) farm enterprises receiving agricultural assessment are associated with the above agriculturally-assessed farmer owned properties, five of which are actually based in another town of county. To gain a better understanding of Dryden agriculture, a survey was distributed to these operations, plus ten farmers identified as not receiving agricultural assessment, in 2014, 21 of which were returned (45% return rate, 50% return rate if only Dryden-based farms are considered). The survey included questions about farm operations (acres, crops, livestock, employees, etc.), farming in the Town of Dryden, and future plans. For farms that did not return the survey, Cooperative Extension staff referenced Agriculture District review survey data (2015). Therefore, in developing the town farm profile, all farming operations known at that time were included; additionally, all farming operations were invited to public information meetings to provide further input.

A survey was also sent to 38 landowners renting land to farmers and receiving agricultural assessment. Twenty-one (21) of these surveys were returned (55% return rate). All landowners receiving agriculture assessment were invited to attend public information meetings held. In this survey landowners were asked about future plans for their land, which has significant impact on land available for farming given the amount of rented land that is farmed.

**Land in Farms**

As noted above, 14,512 acres of land are associated with farming in the town. Twenty-eight percent of the farmland is rented (4,040 acres) by farmers, another 22% (3,166 acres) is owned by Cornell University, and the balance is farmer-owned (7,007). 1,469 (10%) of the 14,512 acres owned or rented by farmers are under certified organic production. Compared to 2004 Agriculture Assessment data, there were 13,341 acres owned and rented by farmers. In the past 10 years, there has been a 1,171 acre increase in land that is owned or rented by farmers.

The increase in land owned and rented by farmers can be attributed to: 1) expanding dairy and crop operations; 2) inactive land that is easily certified for organic production; 3) large dairy and crop farmers in other town and counties renting and buying land in the town; and 4) government regulations that require Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) to spread manure over a larger area to avoid nitrogen and phosphorous contamination of water supplies. Demand for land in Dryden from Cortland and Cayuga County farmers has been primarily driven by large dairy operations that must comply with CAFO regulations; however, there are also several crop farmers that farm land in the town. At the same time, three Dryden farms own or rent land beyond town boundaries into Cortland County or in the Town of Groton, illustrating that Dryden farmers are being pushed to find land at some distance from their home farms.

**Farming Enterprises**

The predominant agricultural enterprise in the town, both in terms of land used and income generated, is dairy farming along with commodity feed and field crop production. Other types of farm enterprises include horticultural businesses, large and small vegetable and fruit farms, farm markets, equine and other livestock farms, and hops. The growth of diversified farming operations in the town has been slower relative to other parts of the county. The reasons are that agricultural lands in the town are intensively used by crop and dairy farmers, and the price of farmland in the town is higher than in other parts of the county, making it harder for small diversified farmers to buy land in most of Dryden. Larger farm operations are able and willing to pay more for quality farmland.

**Farming Activity by**

**Type of Enterprise**

***Dairy …………………………….. 9***

*In the town; 1 dairy owns land in Dryden with facilities in Groton*

***Crops, No dairy………………..15***

*Includes 1 hops operation, and 4 operations from other Tompkins County towns and 1 each from Cortland and Cayuga Counties.*

***Vegetables/Fruit………………. 7***

*Includes 4 Farm Markets, Cornell Orchards on Sweazy Road; 1 Community Supported Agriculture/Retail produce operation, 1 U-Pick small market gardeners*

***Livestock…………………………10***

*Includes 2 beef, 5 sheep and/or goats, and 3 heifer operations*

***Equine…………………………….12***

*Includes 5 offering stables or riding services; these operations also often sell hay*

***Ornamental Plants/Nursery 1***

*Includes 1 operation also listed as a Farm Market under Vegetables/Fruit*

***Total: ……………………………. 48***

*Enterprises associated with 47 farm businesses.*

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County

A diversity of field crops is grown on Dryden farms. The most common crops are corn, legume and grass hay, and soybeans. Producers also raise oats, winter barley, wheat, triticale, sorghum, sunflowers and trees. Pasture is another significant use of farmland, most typically for dairy livestock, although farmers also reported raising equine, beef cattle and sheep.

There are two are certified organic farms: one dairy farm and one vegetable farm.

**Farm Operators/Employment**

While only 37 farming operations receive agricultural assessment, the total number of agricultural businesses in the town is 47; this includes 4 horticultural sales and service operations. Of the 47, 74% (35) are operating full time or significant part time businesses. Nine farms have been in existence for 50 years or more, and three of these are century farms.

Nearly all farms report that various family members (parents, spouses, siblings, children, “other”) have roles in the farm operations, including labor, management, bookkeeping and clerical. On some farms, there is a division of labor with different family members in charge of different aspects of the operation, such as caring for calves, being in charge of equipment, or overseeing crops.

Dryden farms provide full or part time employment opportunities for over 60 owners and their family members. Additionally, farmers hire at least 60 part time and seasonal employees. It is estimated that there are at least 29 Hispanic workers on town dairy farms. Hispanic workers are vital on many dairy farms. There is concern that immigration enforcement actions and changes in immigration law could result in the sudden loss of Hispanic workers resulting in critical labor shortages on dairy farms. Further efforts to evaluate the importance of the Hispanic workforce should be considered by the town agriculture committee once appointed.

**Economic Value of Farming**

Overall farm product sales in the town are estimated to be around $12 million with about $8 million attributed to dairy farming. This is the second largest value of agricultural product sales of any town in the county and it reinforces the significance of the agriculture industry in the Town of Dryden. Town of Dryden farms generate 18% of total farm product sales in the Tompkins County ($67 Million total sales for Tompkins County, 2012 Census of Agriculture).

Capital investments on farms over the past 7 years as reported in the 2011 agriculture district review survey ranged from ten farms with investments under than $10,000 to three farms with over one million invested, and three more with investments between $500,000 and one million. The majority of farms invested $10,000 to $50,000 per farm (7 year period). The fact that the larger farms are investing in their businesses is a sign of farm viability, that farms are modernizing, and that farmers are optimistic about the future of farming. Typical farm investments include: new structures or equipment and, on dairy farms, environmental investments required for EPA Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) compliance.

As mentioned before, farms in Dryden provide at least 60 full and part time jobs for owners and operators and at least 60 additional jobs that are part-time or seasonal. This amounts to a combined payroll of at least 3 million. Most farm employment is associated with dairy farms and horticulture businesses. Dairy farm management jobs pay competitive wages and laborers are generally paid above minimum wage. Crop farms and smaller specialty enterprises are owner operated and may employ extra workers during harvest. Jobs on farms result in dollars being spent in the community for housing, food, and other personal goods.

Both part-time farmers and full-time farmers indicate that having off farm family income to provide health and retirement benefits is vital to the farm operation and family quality of life.

**Taxes paid by Dryden Farmers – [awaiting data]**

*Fire District Tax*

*Town of Dryden Taxes*

*County taxes*

*Dryden School Taxes*

*Other School Taxes*

*Total tax liability paid by farmers in the Town of Dryden ????? – burden shared by 47 businesses involved in farming. Note that nearly ?% of gross ag sales is paid out in taxes.*

Source: Tompkins County Assessment Department, 2015

**Future Plans Reported by Dryden Farmers**

Dryden farmers (full and part –time) and non-farming agricultural land owners indicate a strong desire to keep their land in agriculture and productive farming into the future. Most have not sold lots for development outside of homes for family members, and of the few lots reported sold, they were typically many years ago. Because the agricultural sector in Dryden is very strong and growing, there are current examples of existing farms buying, and often competing for, good farmland as it becomes available. Because a large part of Dryden’s agricultural land base lies somewhat contiguously around the Village of Dryden, and there are often side roads farmers can use to access land that is several miles from the home farm, farmer and non-farmer owned agricultural land is knit together into a fairly cohesive band of actively farmed land in the western half of the town. Half a dozen farmers plan to buy and/or lease more farmland in the future, if it becomes available.

While many farmers and non-farming agricultural landowners report an intention of passing their land to the next generation, less than half have estate plans in place. Those that do have plans in place tend to be the larger dairy farms. Often, land owned by those without an heir is considered the most at-risk for being lost for farming in the future. However, when a farmer or agricultural land owner passes away without a well-written estate plan, or even an up-to-date will, the land may become vulnerable – even if there are heirs. Dryden has a good base of contiguous farmland under conservation easement, in a location where it serves as an “anchor” for surrounding farmland.

There are a total of 1266 acres land under permanent easement in the Town of Dryden: 852 acres of farmland, protected through the NYS Purchase of Development Rights program, and 414 acres protected through the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

While Dairy Farms work the most land in the town, Crop farmers are a close second; the three largest crops farmers in the town have no “next generation” in place. The land they work is in the agricultural band mentioned above, but it may be more acreage than the larger dairies can absorb. Some of this land boarders the Village of Dryden, which may make it attractive for development.

The continuing availability of land to rent is a source of stress for both dairy and crop farmers, of all size operations. With over half of the land that is farmed being rented by farmers, there is some level of uncertainty about landowner plans. However, from the landowner survey, there was a strong stated preference to keep land in farming.

Small and beginning farming enterprises also face uncertainty. Many small farms, including those in Dryden, find it challenging to develop a profitable farming enterprise. It is typical that a major effort is expended on the part of owners during the startup years, but if limited progress is made with marketing, covering costs, and building equity, the owners tend to burn out. Some are able to refine and adjust operations until their goals are met which may include covering costs and taxes while raising food for themselves, while others hope to develop a part or full time business that eventually replaces off farm income. Small, part-time livestock and produce farms may be less likely continue beyond the current owners, however, others such farms will emerge, therefore it is anticipated that farmland use will remain stable into the future.

**Key Concerns Voiced by Farmers**

***Agricultural policies***

* Ag land zoning should not be in conflict with Ag District Law
* There need to be more farmer input when zoning changes are being considered;
* Active farmland and land attached to it (forests and woodlots, fallow land, waterways, etc.) should not be re-zoned to anything else
* high level of importance placed on the NYS Agricultural District Law in keeping land in
* agriculture assessment to keep taxes manageable but the state exemption is not great enough
* desire for town leadership pre-disposed to protecting farming interests, making it possible to keep farming
* government regulations in general are of concern

***Risks to farming operations***

* + Landuse: access, prices, competition, increased ag land prices results in higher assessed value.
  + Increasing costs: fuel, taxes, improvements, production
  + Regulation: increasing State and Federal regulations, local government interference
  + Labor: finding and managing good help; young people don’t want to work on farms
  + Economic pressures: staying financially viable without getting bigger, competitive pricing, low prices, access to financing and capital, increasing efficiencies
  + Commodities: finding good quality feeds
  + Climate change: adjusting to new weather patterns
* Planning for the future: many of today’s issues will be passed to the next generation if not resolved

***Development pressure***

* Development should be in pockets, eg. cluster of homes with open space attached
* Development should radiate from an established population center
* Increased traffic slows farming access
* Dryden is slowly growing, and will continue to have urban pressure with people wanting a home in the “country”. Every new house is another “neighbor” with potential relationship challenges/complaints (smell, dirt on road, farming practices)
* misinformation and lack of understanding about agriculture practices among general public: farmers are stewards of their land – this needs to be communicated to the public

***Demand for good farmland among farmers* –** Due to the level of farming activity in the town, there is demand among farmers for good quality farmland to own and rent. In recent years, rental rates and the price of farmland in Dryden have increased, contributing to higher operating costs (debt). The increase in prices paid for farmland is driven by larger farm operations, some from outside the town and county, that rents town farmland as it become available. Given the size of these farming operations, they can often afford to pay higher land prices. Some Dryden farmers have consequently lost nearby rental land to expand their farming operations. While larger operations keep land in farming, it makes it harder for Dryden farmers to remain competitive and impacts the ability of new farming operations to start up. High value and small scale farming enterprises may be able to afford higher prices for smaller parcels. The demand for land may result in squeezing out middle sized farms.

***Property values* –** In 2012 Tompkins County Assessment undertook a comprehensive review of agriculture property sales to determine the current value of farmland for assessment purposes. The purpose of the review was to bring agricultural land assessments to 100% fair market value. For the Town of Dryden, farmland sales ranged from $1,000 to $4,500 per acre, with an average selling price for the 6 farm properties in the review of $2,850. The average farmland selling price in the county was $2,300. Farmers are concerned about the increase in the assessed value of their properties along with the ability to buy or rent land at a price they can afford. Farming as a business is based on land as its productive resource. If land is not available at a price a farmer can afford, it will surely be taken over by other interests. A town Purchase of Development Rights program is one way to keep land available and affordable for town farmers. However, higher prices paid for farmland is also making PDR less attractive to farmers, as the difference between agriculture values and development values is shrinking, meaning that farmers will get paid less when selling their development rights.

***Taxes*** – given the amount of land required to operate a viable farming operation, taxes - even with agricultural assessment and the NYS Farmers School Tax Credit - represent a significant operating expense. Of the five leading agricultural states, NY farmers pay the highest taxes, even higher than California farmers. This means that NY farmers are at a competitive disadvantage given the higher cost of doing business and they are also, therefore, less profitable. Higher taxes and less profit can lead to loss of farming enterprises and the associated farmland.

***Land Rented vs. Owned* –** farmers can be uncertain about whether land they are renting today for farming will be available in the future. Rural landowners, like farmers, are impacted by increasing taxes. Those renting land to a farmer and receiving agricultural assessment are less impacted by tax increases. Most farmers work with landowners they rent from to ensure there is a five-year lease in place as required to qualify for agricultural assessment. Many parcels being rented to farmers are owned by older residents including some that retired from farming but still own their land. A key concern is what will happen to this land once it is transferred to the next generation; will the heirs hold on to the land or will they sell it? Some may be sold to farmers, but some may be lost to farming depending on the heirs and estate. Estate planning and the sale of development rights may be one way to help keep rented land in farming.

***The Next Generation of Farmers*** – Agriculture depends on future farmers to take over current operations or start new ones. In Dryden, there is a mix of farming operations with a younger generation or business partners ready to take over, along with farms that have no heirs or transition plan in place. The transition of farming operations to new owners or the next generation will require estate planning. Cooperative Extension and NY FarmNet can link farmers to legal counselors to help this process move forward.

There is an active community of beginning farmers and farming entrepreneurs in Tompkins County. These farming enthusiasts are seeking to raise a variety of crops and livestock on a small scale destined for local markets. In the Town of Dryden there are fewer start-up farms because land is less available and prices are higher. Small scale farming can play an important role in the rural economy and could be encouraged by matching beginning farmers with rural landowners or farmers who want to keep their land in farming. Cooperative Extension has started Finger Lakes LandLink to foster connections between land owners and land seekers.

***Economic Realities of Farming* –** Ultimately, maintaining land in farming will depend on the economic conditions and policies that impact farming. Regulations, high taxes, high utility costs, availability of labor, supply and demand, input costs, and market prices all impact the costs and returns. Many farms have expanded to keep up with these realities; however, expansion alone may not address these challenges. Good management and strategic planning is critical. Some farmers have changed production and marketing strategies to generate higher returns. Policies at the local, state and federal level all play a role in agriculture’s future. At the local level, the key policy issues will be land use control and giving priority to agriculture, along with property taxes.

***Other Ways to Encourage the Continuation of Farming***

***As Mentioned by farmers and landowners at meetings and in the surveys***

* encourage growth in concentrated areas to stop/slow down growth in farming areas
* evaluate the option to lease development rights for a period of time with stipulations
* Evaluate zoning requirements to make sure farmers who want to sell a lot are able to sell the smallest lot possible, and that it can be the least desirable for farming
* Review zoning to ensure active farmland is not zoned residential or conservation
* Amend existing zoning to align with NYS Agriculture and Marketing recommendations

**Agricultural Trends and Future Outlook**

Farmers in the Town of Dryden have reflected on what they see as trends and the outlook for agriculture in the town. Given the long history of active agriculture as a dominant land use and economic sector, there is optimism that agriculture will remain viable in the future given protection of high quality soil resources, well managed farming operations, and the availability of farmland for expansion.

***Farmland***

Farming has been a continuous activity in the Town of Dryden since it was settled. Over its 200+ year history, there has been a shift in farming and farm related enterprises. One major shift was from small plot diversified farming and related processing facilities such as creameries, mills, and tanneries that existed in the late 1800’s to early 1900’s to more specialized agriculture that emerged mid-20th century and continues today. There is a trend today to return to smaller specialty agriculture and organic farming. While there has been a loss of farm numbers over time, the land in farming has remained steady and is recently increasing.

The gain in actively farmed lands as show in the Land Use Land Cover data from Tompkins County Planning (2012) has been fueled by both large and small farms. Larger dairies are seeking land to comply with regulations for manure spreading; higher corn prices drive the need for more acreage; organic farms are seeking land where synthetic inputs have not been used for at least three years; and small specialty farms are emerging on parcels from one to 20 acres. While there is turnover of ownership, there is continuity in agriculture due to the fact that Dryden is a highly active farming area with high quality soils to support productive agriculture.

In the past ten years, there has been a transition in farmland ownership from many small farms to larger dairy and crop farms, some from out of the town and/or county. Both farm real estate prices and farmland rental prices have increased. As a result, some of the town’s mid-sized farms may be being squeezed by the larger farms that buy land or pay higher rental rates. It is harder for town farmers to find land to buy or rent at affordable prices, which impacts their ability to expand. Some town farmers are buying land at some distance from their home base, when land next door sold or was rented at a price higher than they were able to pay. When farmers buy land at a distance from their home farm, there is an increased cost to farming.

This raises several questions about agriculture in the future. Will it be dominated by large farm owners; will mid-sized crop farming operations be able to find land they need to remain viable, and will high priced farmland deter the next generation of beginning farmers? Another impact of higher farmland prices is that it results in higher assessed values. The overall tax liability for farmers increases even with the benefit of agricultural assessment. Taxes may be a small portion of a large farm’s operating costs, but for small farms, it has a big impact on farming profits, cost of living, and overall quality of life for farming families.

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Without an active farmland protection program that helps balance agricultural land use for operations of all sizes, these trends may continue with the following consequences:

1. The future of farming will depend on the viability of large farm operations. If these operations should downsize or even worse file for bankruptcy, it is uncertain what would happen to farmland they own or rent. With fewer farms to re-absorb that land, some land may be abandoned until some future use emerges.
2. Smaller diversified farming enterprises may find it harder to buy land in the town given the competition for farmland and higher selling prices. This limits the opportunity for new ventures focused on local food production and agri-tourism to emerge unless they have significant investment capital.

Several actions could be considered by the Town to help preserve an active local farming community. One is to make rural landowners aware that selling or renting farmland to a neighboring farmer instead of the highest price may help preserve the local farming community. An incentive program that encourages landowners to sell to local farms could be considered. New farming enterprises might be encouraged through similar incentives that connect current landowners with beginning farmers with the goal of ultimately transitioning land to new owners. Creativity and commitment will be needed to secure a future for farming. To realize the vision for agriculture’s continuation will require an engaged town agriculture committee and agriculture community, as well as consensus among town officials and the community at large that agriculture should be protected and promoted for the benefit of all.

***Farming Operations***

In the Town of Dryden as farmers have retired, the remaining farmers have absorbed much of the available farmland. This has resulted in fewer farmers farming more acres spread throughout the town. This historical trend of fewer and larger dairy and crop farms will likely continue.

The transition to organic dairy farming began in early 2000. Currently there is one certified organic dairy in the town, farming at three separate farmsteads, farming a total of around 1,400 acres of land they own or rent in the Town of Dryden, plus about 1000 acres in Courtland County, and a third farmstead in the Town of Groton with about 230 acres. At present, there are no reports of additional dairies planning to become certified. Organic dairies rely on organic crops they grow or buy. Given prices of organic feed, more crop farmers could raise organic crops to meet the needs of organic dairies. There is one crop farmer raising approximately 230 acres of organic hay to supply area dairy farmers, an organic vegetable farm with about 45 acres in production and an organic blueberry u-pick operation.

Livestock beyond dairy is rather diverse, with five sheep and/or goats, two beef, three dairy heifer, and 12 equine operations, for a total of about 2800 owned and rented acres.

Overall, there has not been as strong a trend towards small diversified farming in Dryden, mostly because the larger specialized dairy and crop enterprises dominate. Also, the price of farmland is generally higher in the Town of Dryden, making it less attractive to new farmers who are starting up south and west of Ithaca where land prices are somewhat lower.

There is limited commercial ornamental horticulture industry in Dryden, primarily through four farm stand operations. Growth in housing and commercial development creates demand for horticulture sales and services and generates niche farming opportunities that are less land intensive than grain or dairy farming.

Vegetables and berries growing have potential in Dryden. Evidence for this comes from the fact there are, or have been, successful u-pick strawberry and blueberry operations in the town as well as a diverse vegetable operation. A pick your own fruit farm could offer a high value crop opportunity for an enterprising new farmer.

There is currently one CSA operation in Dryden: Ithaca Organics, which has a storefront in Freeville. The new TC3 agricultural program may also begin offering produce through a CSA model at some point in the future. Based on the large numbers of CSA’s based in Trumansburg, Dryden could certainly become home to at least a couple more CSA farms.

Interest in local foods is likely to continue as a societal trend as long as local foods are easily obtainable and affordable. The level of interest among Dryden residents in local foods is unknown; a survey of residents might be considered. Many Dryden residents shop at one of the two Dryden Farm Markets. There has been a recent effort to start a Farmer’s Market in Dryden, but it is too soon to tell if it will be successful. A market will only succeed if there are sufficient vendors and customers.

**Landowner Survey Results**

A survey was sent to 38 Dryden non-farming landowners that receive agricultural assessment on land they rent to farmers; 21 returned the surveys (55% return rate). These property owners were asked a variety of questions about their land and what they thought might happen to it in the future. Following is a summary of landowner responses (survey questions can be found in Appendix II).

Like much of the farmer owned land in Dryden, agricultural land that is rented to farmers has typically been in the family for decades. Seventeen (81%) landowners responding have owned their land for 20 or more years, and ten of these owners reported their land has been in their family for over 50 years. The most commonly cited reasons for holding on to or purchasing agricultural land were maintain open space (14 responses/67%), for privacy (10 responses/48%) and recreation was somewhat important (5 responses/24%). Income was the least often selected response (3 responses/14%). Eight respondents (38%) provided additional reasons including family, love, inherited it, it’s home (two respondents), dislike zoning (?), garden and nature, and family heritage.

All respondents were reasonably satisfied with their current rental arrangement, with 15 (71%) leaning towards highly satisfied. Most, 18, found it relatively easy to find a farmer to rent land, although one reported some difficulty. Thirteen landowners reported renting their land to the same farmer for more than ten years, and eight of these had agreements for twenty years or more. Only one landowner reported that their current rental arrangement was less than five years old. All of the landowners expect to rent their land to a farmer for at least the next five to ten years, although only nine (43%) of those expect to rent beyond ten years; only one said no, the rest were all unsure.

Fourteen landowners (67%) place no restrictions on farming practices used by farmers renting land. Of the five (24%) reporting some form of restriction, four are involved organic production/no pesticides use.

Fifteen landowners (71%) have never sold land for house lots. Fourteen landowners respond no, they do not intend to sell housing lots in the next five to ten years; five said they didn’t know or maybe, and no one said yes. Profit, the need for supplemental or retirement income, or high taxes were some of the reasons landowners had sold or might sell housing lots. Landowner hopes for the future are that their land stay agricultural or open space, whether or not it passed to family members, (13 or 62%), and three thought the land would be used for development. Nearly all respondents indicated income from the sale of housing lots was not important.

Landowners clearly indicated interest in keeping their land actively farmed (31 or 82%) and undeveloped (25 or 61%). They also cited that receiving agricultural assessment on rented land is important (25 or 61%), and rental payments they receive were somewhat less important by comparison (20 said it was important, 12 moderately important, and 5 said not important).

Of the non-farm landowners with woodlands, seven have a forest management plan, seven regularly harvest wood for timber, and nine regularly harvest wood for firewood.

Most landowners (31 or 82%) do not expect to ever farm the land themselves, although five expected to start farming at some point.

Sixteen respondents (42%) thought there was a great amount of housing development pressure on the Town of Dryden, 8 thought there was some, and 11 thought the pressure was very low. There was a shift in these figures when landowners were asked about development near their land: 11 thought there was a great amount of housing development pressure, 11 thought there was some, and 13 thought the pressure was very low. Most respondents, 28 (74%), indicated nearby development would not influence them to subdivide their land, while five said it would and three others indicated it might.

Landowners indicated interest in the following as services/assistance to help manage land:

* Keep the Ag District intact
* Someone to look at the land and let me know it is being most productively used
* Keep zoning to a minimum
* Lower taxes
* Keep the land around me strictly for agriculture; don’t want to be blocked in by housing developments
* Continue to encourage farmland to stay in farming
* Observance/enforcement of existing land use ordinances
* Make it possible for retired farmers live off their land by not restricting farmland sales
* Tax advantages for farming & small rural business
* Lower taxes on farmland. Undeveloped land owners should be rewarded for NOT subdividing. Most subdivide to pay for land they are trying to keep.

Sentiments regarding large farms and their associated odors and potential pollution hazards were not mentioned as issues by survey respondents perhaps because they rent to farmers, some renting many years to the same farmer, and therefore they may have less concern about farming practices than a more recent rural landowner who does not know the farmer as well. At least one rural landowner attending a public meeting expressed concern about farming practices on large dairy farms.

Agriculture production methods have improved significantly over the years and larger farms do pose some risks that smaller less intensive enterprises may not pose. The EPA regulations that dairy and large livestock operations must follow have generally minimized the environmental risks. Building good farmer neighbor relations is in the interest of the farm community. Farming practices can be modified to accommodate the needs of the farm and of the surrounding rural residents.