

# Supporting a “New Agriculture” at Alfred State

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Promoting innovation while respecting a 100+ year tradition of agricultural education at Alfred State



Dairy remains the top agricultural industry  
in New York State, but.....



# small dairy farms in the northern Appalachian Plateau region have been struggling for 30 years

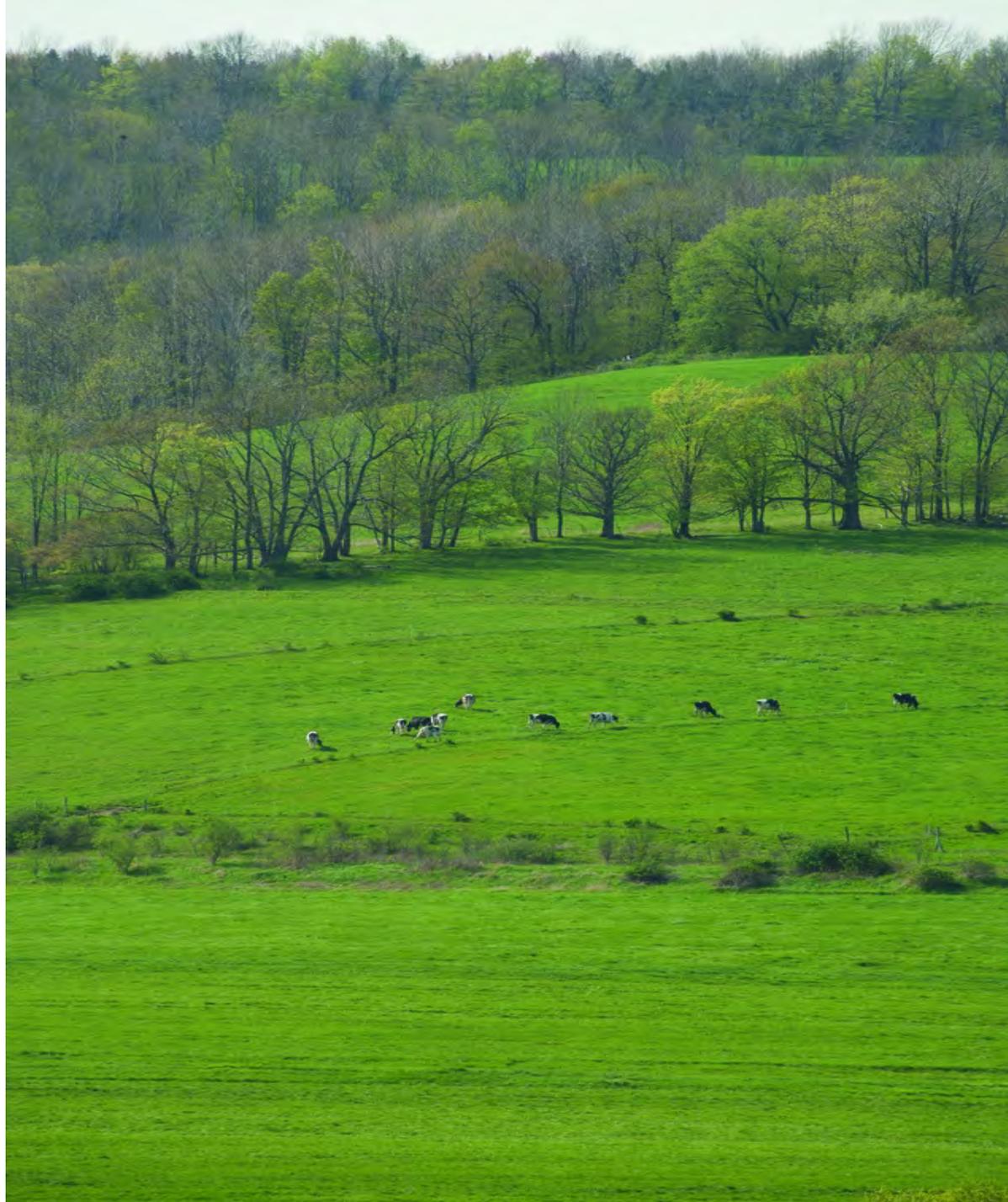
Significant structural change

Shift in production away from areas considered “marginal” to areas more suitable for large-scale operations

Infrastructure for small-farm agriculture all but disappeared in many of the Appalachian counties on either side of the NYS-PA border

Agricultural education programs, both secondary and post-secondary, disappeared

The hill country was dominated by what most believed to be “last generation farms”



## Changing profile of students interested in agriculture

- Less likely to have a commercial farming background
- increased awareness of/interest in issues of food system sustainability, animal welfare and the relationship between food choices and health.
- Keenly aware of the barriers to entry in “mainstream” commercial agriculture and open to alternative pathways to farm-based livelihoods
- Often not majoring in agriculture
- Market savvy and creative



## Defying long-standing “expert opinion” on the future of small farms.

Small farms are re-emerging across the region, creating livelihoods around growing markets for organic, grass-based, local, AWA, etc.

Relatively affordable land and a climate favorable for grass-based systems have attracted new interest in the region’s agricultural resources.



# Major re-investment in infrastructure for agricultural education at Alfred State

## COSA organic dairy initiative



Preparing decision-makers and problem solvers for an  
ever changing business  
College farm is a resource for many ASC programs



Community and technical colleges need to go beyond the role of “work force development”



# Beyond “training” to developing an “innovator’s mindset” through project-based learning



# COSA supports innovation for small-farm sustainable agriculture

A team of Alfred State mechanical engineering and agriculture students converted tractor to electric power for use in high tunnel greenhouse





## **SARE-grant supported project linked engineering students with innovative farmer Fred Forsburg**

Local farmers participate in a field day to evaluate and recommend improvements to a multi-purpose platform envisioned by Fred and engineered by students.

# Co-sponsoring Field Days with NOFA-NY

## Getting the garlic planted 7 times faster



# student project – paper shredder/blower for dairy bedding



## Linking student project teams with community organizations and volunteers

Agriculture students are developing a College apiary and assisting with community outreach on beekeeping

Helped launch community gardening project

Organized community demonstrations on vermicomposting and water-conserving irrigation systems

Surveying /civil engineering students involved in layout of community garden plots and paddocks for management intensive grazing systems



# Partnerships are Essential!

Must leverage the talents of our small agriculture faculty

- Applied field research with scientists from Penn State and Cornell
- Demonstrations and field days on the farms of local innovators as well as the College Farm
- Co-sponsor workshops with Organic Valley Coop, NOFA-NY, Cornell Cooperative Extension, other

# New farmer incubator program

- **Goal – grow entrepreneurs for the local food economy**
- Offering access to productive land on very favorable terms
- Support for business planning
- Technical backstopping
- Opportunities for students to begin a business while in college

**Thank You!**

