



# The Role of Agriculture in the New York State Economy

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## Highlights

- In 2007, there were 36,350 farms in New York State with total sales of \$4.4 billion—51 percent more sales than in 1997.
- Nearly 56,900 people were involved in farming and ranching in 2007 as key farm operators. Almost 60,000 farm laborers were hired statewide.
- Net farm income from farm operations nearly doubled between 2002 and 2007, rising from \$538.7 million to \$1.2 billion.
- Farmers supplement their income by leasing mineral rights (e.g., natural gas), agri-tourism (e.g., wine tours), and wind energy production. In 2008, New York added 407 megawatts of new wind capacity, the fifth-largest increase in the nation.
- Sales of milk and other dairy products from cows totaled \$2.3 billion in 2007, which accounted for more than half of the State's total farm sales. New York was the nation's third-largest milk producer and fourth-largest cheese producer in 2007.
- Apples are New York's largest fruit crop, and production in the State ranked second in the nation. New York had 1,350 apple farms in 2007, covering 49,970 acres.
- New York ranked third in the nation (behind California and Washington) in grape production for wine and juice in 2007. New York was also the second-largest producer of wine in the nation.
- New York ranked fourth in the nation in 2007 for the production of both tart cherries and pears, and ranked seventh for strawberries.
- New York ranked second in the country in the production of maple syrup and cabbage, and fourth in sweet corn and pumpkins in 2007.
- Organic farming is growing. In 2008, New York had 827 certified organic farms (up from 580 in 2006)—which was fourth-highest in the nation.
- The Farmers' Market Federation of New York promotes markets to sellers, buyers, and communities. There were 350 farmers' markets in New York in 2006 (including more than 40 in Manhattan), a 49 percent increase since 2000.

Agriculture is important to New York State's economy, and takes place in almost every region of the State. Nearly one-quarter of New York's total land area is utilized as farmland. In 2007, the industry had total sales of \$4.4 billion and employed tens of thousands of workers.

While New York ranks 26th in the country in terms of overall agricultural sales, there are several items—such as dairy, fruits, berries, wine, and some vegetables—in which New York ranks among the biggest producers in the nation.

Farming in New York is primarily done by small, family businesses, but it is a multibillion-dollar industry that supports thousands of jobs beyond those on farms. New York State's average farm is smaller than 200 acres, or about half the national average.

The work is difficult and profit margins are tight—less than 20 percent of farms generate more than \$100,000 in farm income. Many farmers supplement their incomes by leasing their land for mining or wind turbines, or relieve financial pressure by selling farmland for residential development.

Farmers face many challenges. Access to credit, especially today, is difficult; property taxes are high; and foreign competition is stiff. There are also regulatory and economic factors that affect farm income. Low wholesale milk prices have cut deeply into profit margins for New York's dairy farmers, forcing many into foreclosure.

While farming is an important industry in New York State, it is also a way of life. Growers often come from generations of farmers who have lived and worked in their local communities. In addition, farmers play an important role in protecting our environment, helping to develop new technologies that minimize water usage, reduce carbon footprints, prevent soil erosion, and maintain the productive quality of their land.

## Farms in New York State

New York has nearly 7.2 million acres of farmland, accounting for about one-quarter of the State's land area. Of New York's total farmland, about 60 percent is cropland, 24 percent is woodland, and 10 percent is pastureland.

Between 1997 and 2007, the amount of farmland declined by 7.9 percent—a loss of 613,500 acres. Nonetheless, the total sales of crops and livestock from the State's farms rose by more than 50 percent during this period, from \$2.9 billion in 1997 to \$4.4 billion in 2007—with most of the increase occurring after 2002.<sup>1</sup>

In 2007, there were 36,350 farms in New York (1,900 fewer than ten years earlier), and nearly all were owned by families. Most were small—70 percent were 170 acres or less. Overall, the average farm size in New York was 197 acres, or about half the national average.

## Major Agricultural Commodities

Though New York State ranks 26th among the 50 states for total value of agricultural sales, it has a strong presence in some crop and livestock categories. New York ranked third in milk and dairy sales nationwide, and sixth in fruits, tree nuts, and berries (it ranked second for apples) in 2007. Overall, the top six commodity groups in the State in 2007 were: milk and dairy products; greenhouse, nursery, and floricultural products; fruits, tree nuts, and berries; vegetables, melons, and potatoes; cattle and calves; and grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas (see Figure 1).

### Milk and Other Dairy Products

- In 2007, sales of milk and other dairy products from cows accounted for more than half of the State's total farm receipts. There were 5,799 dairy farms in New York State; Wyoming, Cayuga, St. Lawrence, Jefferson, and Genesee counties were the largest producers. New York was the nation's third-largest milk producer behind California and Wisconsin.

<sup>1</sup> Data for this report is drawn primarily from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture (conducted every five years, most recently in 2007), and supplemented by data from the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

**Figure 1**  
**New York State**  
**Top Agricultural Commodity Categories in 2007**

	Sales (millions)	Share of Total	US Rank
Milk, other dairy products from cows	\$2,280.2	51.6%	3
Greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture	\$389.1	8.8%	12
Fruits, tree nuts, berries	\$363.3	8.2%	6
Vegetables, melons, potatoes	\$338.0	7.7%	11
Cattle, calves	\$318.1	7.2%	34
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas	\$315.6	7.1%	28
Other crops, hay	\$147.0	3.3%	21
Poultry, eggs	\$123.7	2.8%	32
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, donkeys	\$50.6	1.1%	5
Hogs, pigs	\$28.3	0.6%	31
Other animals, animal products	\$25.1	0.6%	16
Aquaculture	\$20.4	0.5%	15
Sheep, goats, and their products	\$10.2	0.2%	17
Christmas trees & other woody crops	\$8.8	0.2%	7
<b>Total value of agricultural products</b>	<b>\$4,418.6</b>		<b>26</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

- New York State ranked fourth among all states in cheese production in 2007, accounting for more than 7 percent of the nation's cheese.
- New York ranked third in the production of Italian and mozzarella cheeses, accounting for nearly 10 percent of all production of Italian cheese in the nation.

### Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture Products

- Suffolk County accounted for nearly half of the State's sales of greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture products in 2007. Other top producers were Orange, Erie, Nassau, and Monroe counties.

### Fruits, Tree Nuts, and Berries

- New York ranked second in the nation in apple production in 2007. Apples, the State's largest fruit crop, yielded \$249 million in sales. New York has 1,350 apple farms, and apple production is responsible for more than 10,000 direct jobs and thousands of indirect jobs.
- Wayne, Ulster, and Orleans counties account for nearly two-thirds of the State's apple farm acreage.
- New York ranked third in the nation (behind California and Washington) in grape production for wine and juice. Chautauqua, Yates, and Suffolk counties were the top producers of grapes in the State during 2007.

- New York ranked fourth in the country for the production of both tart cherries and pears in 2007, and ranked seventh for the production of strawberries.

#### ***Vegetables, Melons, and Potatoes***

- Nearly 45 percent of the State’s production of vegetables, melons, and potatoes originated in the Finger Lakes region in 2007.
- New York was the second-largest producer of cabbage in the nation.
- New York’s production of sweet corn ranked fourth in the nation in 2007, with sales valued at \$72.6 million. Top counties in the production of corn were Cayuga, Orleans, and Genesee.
- New York was the nation’s fourth-largest producer of pumpkins, with \$22.7 million in sales in 2007.
- New York ranked 11th in the country for potato production.

#### ***Cattle and Calves***

- In 2007, 45 percent of livestock sales came from the Finger Lakes and the Southern Tier.

#### ***Grains***

- New York was the nation’s third-highest producer of corn for silage (i.e., for use in animal feed and biofuels), with 2007 production valued at \$262 million.
- Sales of grain corn produced in the State totaled \$191 million in 2007, ranking 22nd nationwide.

### **The Wine Industry**

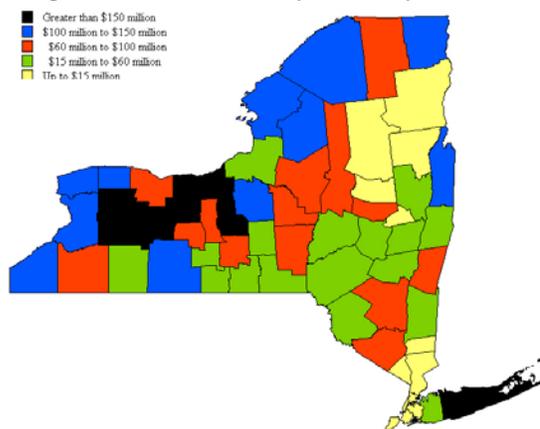
New York was the second-largest producer of wine in the nation behind California in 2007. Two hundred million bottles of wine were produced in New York, of which 85 percent was produced in the Finger Lakes and surrounding areas. Wine sales in New York exceed \$420 million, and the State’s wineries employ 3,000 workers.

In 2008, New York had 208 wineries. Almost 90 percent of them were located in three regions: the Finger Lakes and surrounding areas (96 wineries), Long Island (50), and the Hudson Valley (37). Although Western New York had only 18 wineries, the area grew over 100,000 tons of grapes, which was more than any other region.

### **Regional and County Impact**

New York’s agricultural production is spread throughout the State (see Figure 2). The top five counties for sales in 2007 were Suffolk, Wyoming, Cayuga, Genesee, and Wayne.

**Figure 2**  
**Agricultural Sales by County in 2007**



Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture; OSDC analysis

#### ***Finger Lakes***

The Finger Lakes region (which includes Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties) made \$1.2 billion in agricultural sales in 2007, which represented 27.9 percent of the total farm sales in New York. In 2007, there were 6,417 farms and 1.5 million acres of farmland in the Finger Lakes.

Wyoming County was second-highest in the State for agricultural sales in 2007, and led the State in the sale of cattle and calves, as well as milk and other dairy products and corn for silage. Wayne County was the State’s top producer of fruits, tree nuts, and berries. Apples are a major crop in Wayne—the county was the State’s top producer of apples and ranked third in the nation in 2007. Genesee was New York’s top producer of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes.

#### ***North Country***

The North Country (including Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties) generated \$596.1 million in sales in 2007—13.5 percent of the State’s total. The main commodities from the region’s 4,288 farms and 1.1 million farm acres are milk and other dairy products, cattle and calves, and corn for silage. Two of New York’s top ten agricultural counties are in the region (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3****Top 10 Counties in Agricultural Sales in 2007**

County	Sales (millions)	Acres of Farmland	Number of Farms
Suffolk	\$242.9	34,400	585
Wyoming	\$229.9	218,030	761
Cayuga	\$214.4	249,480	936
Genesee	\$177.8	183,540	551
Wayne	\$169.0	168,470	938
Ontario	\$153.8	198,940	859
Livingston	\$153.8	222,480	792
St. Lawrence	\$140.2	347,250	1,330
Jefferson	\$139.2	262,330	885
Chautauqua	\$138.6	235,860	1,658
<b>Total Top 10</b>	<b>\$1,759,710</b>	<b>2,120,770</b>	<b>9,295</b>
<b>Total NYS</b>	<b>\$4,418,630</b>	<b>7,174,740</b>	<b>36,350</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

**Central New York**

The Central New York region includes Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego counties. The region had 3,598 farms with 813,310 acres of farmland, which had agricultural sales of \$532.3 million in 2007 (12.1 percent of sales statewide). The region's main commodities are milk and dairy products, cattle and calves, and grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas. Cayuga had the third-highest agricultural sales in the State in 2007, and ranked second-highest for dairy sales.

**Southern Tier**

The Southern Tier region includes Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins counties. Agricultural sales totaled \$484 million in 2007, or 11 percent of sales statewide. With 6,713 farms and 1.3 million acres of farmland, the region has the second-highest acreage of farmland in the State. It was the State's top producer of Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops in 2007, with a 30 percent share of total State sales. Other top commodities of the region are hay, hogs, and pigs.

**Western New York**

The Western New York region includes Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, and Niagara counties. Agricultural sales were \$480.4 million in 2007, representing 10.9 percent of the State's total. Chautauqua, with \$138.5 million in sales, is the leading agricultural county in the region, and was New York's top producer of grapes in 2007.

**Capital District**

The Capital District (including Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, and Washington counties) had \$351.2 million in agricultural sales in 2007. The region had 4,133 farms with 698,680 farm acres. Washington County, the region's top agricultural producer, had the third-highest farm acreage for corn for silage. Columbia County topped the State in the sale of sheep, goats, and their products.

**Long Island**

Long Island, which includes Nassau and Suffolk counties, had agricultural sales of \$258.7 million in 2007—the highest of any county in the State. Suffolk County, with 585 farms and 34,400 acres of farmland, accounted for 93 percent of the region's agricultural sales. Suffolk is New York's top producer of greenhouse, nursery, floriculture, and sod, and is home to one-quarter of the State's wineries. Suffolk also ranks as the State's top producer of aquaculture, which is the farming of freshwater and saltwater organisms such as mollusks, crustaceans, and aquatic plants.

**Hudson Valley**

Sales of agricultural commodities in the Hudson Valley (including Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties) reached \$239.9 million in 2007. The leading agricultural county in the region is Orange, which had New York's second-highest sales of greenhouse, nursery, floriculture, and sod products in 2007, and the fourth-highest sales of vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes. Orange County is the top producer of cabbages, and a large producer of onions and pumpkins. Ulster County had the State's second-highest sales of fruits, tree nuts, and berries (and ranked second in the State for apples). Other major crops for the county are pears and cabbages.

**Mohawk Valley**

The Mohawk Valley (including Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, and Oneida counties) had agricultural sales of \$234.9 million in 2007. Herkimer had the State's second-highest inventory of bee colonies and of pigeons or squab, while Montgomery had the second-highest inventory of goats.

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