

Agricultural Economic Development

Agriculture is a major industry throughout the state and in Rensselaer County. New York farmers produce more than \$ 5.4 billion annually in gross receipts and Rensselaer County farmers produce \$53 million in annual farm sales. Farms provide employment, generate local economic activity and add diversity to the county's economy. Many of the dollars generated by farms are spent at local businesses across the county and region, helping support local economies. Strengthening the farm sector helps ensure that agriculture remains a viable industry in our communities.

The Agriculture Economic Development program provides opportunities for farmers to strengthen their farm operations through a variety of programs.

- Agribusiness Assistance

The Rensselaer County IDA partners with the [Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation](#) (HVADC) to enhance the agricultural sector in Rensselaer County. HVADC's programs assist new and existing agricultural businesses and support policies and regulations that advance Hudson Valley's agricultural economy through technical assistance, project planning and development services, agricultural development support and capital access planning. For more information contact [HVADC](#) at (518) 432-5360 or info@hvadc.org.

- Farmland Protection

Agriculture is a predominant land use in Rensselaer County, with 99,000 acres of the county's land in farming. To protect the most fertile and threatened farmland from further conversion, the county provides opportunities for farmers to protect their farmland through the Farmland Protection Program. The county works in partnership with the [Agricultural Stewardship Association](#) to implement the program. For more information, contact ASA at (518) 692-7285 or asa@agstewardship.org.

- Harvest Connection

The Harvest Connection Project provides opportunities for specialty crop growers in the Capital Region to utilize the web and social media to connect consumers with businesses that sell specialty crops. Any farmer that grows fruits, vegetables, greenhouse and nursery crops, Christmas trees, honey or maple syrup in the Capital Region is eligible to participate. The project is funded by the USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant Program.

- Farm to School Project

Rensselaer County was recently awarded a New York Farm to School Grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The funding will enable the county to train school staff in food preparation and procurement as well as provide outreach to farmers interested in selling specialty crop products to schools.