FY 2011 PROGRAM WORK TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

1. Full name of your Program Work Team (PWT):
Cornell’s Small Farms Program Work Team

2. Please list names, affiliations and e-mail addresses of the PWT Co-Chairs: (With an asterisk [*], please indicate the co-chair responsible for finalizing this report.)
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3. Please identify your PWT’s activities, accomplishments, and, most importantly, outcomes and impacts over the past year.

The mission of the Small Farms Program is to support and encourage the sustainability of healthy, thriving small farms that contribute to food security, healthy rural communities, and the environment, with detail at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu. To this end, we have fostered small farms focused research, extension programs, networking and collaboration across NYS.

The Small Farms Program continued funding and facilitating statewide Small Farms Project Teams. The projects are from focus areas identified at the 2010 Small Farms Summit: Livestock Processing, Small Dairy, Local Market Access and Growth, and Renewable Energy. Project teams consist of a cross section of the farm sector including farmers, agriculture educators and service providers, community development groups, agricultural non-profit organizations, and community members in New York State.

- **Livestock Processing**: The team developed a series of 4 workshops that teaches the basics of strategic marketing, including how to identify a target market and focus your farm’s marketing efforts. The sessions include:
  - Session 1: Introduction to Strategic Marketing: Identifying a Target Market
  - Session 2: Communicating with Customers
  - Session 3: A Guide to Marketing Channel Selection
  - Session 4: Review and Critique of Your Marketing Materials

  83 individual participants from 59 livestock production farms participated in the trainings as six locations around NY where they learned how to choose the markets that meet the needs of their farm, such as CSA, farmers’ market and wholesale. Each session in was recorded, and the links are posted on the Small Farms website at: http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/projects/LP/livestock.cfm

- **Local Markets**: The local foods/local markets project team worked on a methodology to assess the viability and ability of distributors to support small commercial farms. Ultimately, it was decided that as almost all fresh-food distributors in New York State work with at least some New York State producers, the work team focused its initial efforts on interviewing as many distributors as possible to develop insight into sustainable models for working with small, commercial, New York State farms, as well as regulatory and other barriers associated with increasing market access.

The team has: 1) conducted 13 in-person interviews of distribution companies ranging in size from under $100,000 in sales to over $200 million; 2) developed a database of distribution companies in NYS that work with NYS farms; 3) presented at two conferences to support the expansion of small and micro-scale local food
distributors in NYS; 4) has drafted a report containing policy recommendations needed to support local foods distribution systems;

- **Renewable Energy:** hosted 4 on-farm renewable energy workshops with 120 participants attending.
  
  - **Region: Catskills, Delaware County**
    Tim and Jean McCumber raise a pasture based flock of 50 Dorper sheep on their 58 acre farm. Tim installed their 6.72 kwh grid tied solar PV electric system (with financial help from the NY Power Authority) and an evacuated tube hot water system.
  
  - **Region: Hudson Valley, Ulster County**
    Jay and Polly Armour operate a 24 acre diversified organic farm. The farm raises produce, heirloom seedlings, grass-fed beef, pasture raised turkeys. The centerpiece of the operation is passive-solar heated and earth-cooled straw-bale vegetable barn with attached greenhouse. A 14-kw grid-intertied PV electric system is situated on the barn roof, which is being financed by a combination of a NYSERDA grant and a low-interest loan.
  
  - **Region: Central NY, Montgomery County**
    Jan and Ron Bever operate their house, barn and sugar shack entirely off the grid. They use two Southwest Windpower microturbines that generate 400 watts each and six 120 watt solar panels, along with 12 Trojan T-105 batteries to store the power. Jan and Ron installed all the systems themselves with the help of their neighbors
  
  - **Region: Thousand Islands – Seaway, Jefferson County**
    Dani Baker and David Belding are the owners of this highly diversified organic farm, with retail sales of vegetables, eggs, beef, chicken, goat and pork. Dani and David recently completed a sustainable energy project, including a 10KW wind turbine and a 7KW solar array. Combined with a 17kw back-up generator for emergencies.

- **Small Dairy:**
  
  - Fay Benson, Project Team Leader, received funding from the Grasslands Conservation Initiative to print “Grazing Dairy Production Book”. 275 copies were sent out form the Small Farms Office to county CCE contacts and made available on the website.
  
  - Wrote case studies on low cost producers combined with good rates of return. Drafted a factsheet on Small Dairy benchmarks from Dairy Farm Business Summary Online materials and videos will be posted on the new Small Dairy website link.
  
  - Researched, conducted interviews and drafted an article about the potential new regulations for winter spreading. What are the implications for small dairies?
  
  - Implemented a survey of New York’s Organic Dairies to determine the availability of certified forages and grain in New York.

The Northeast Beginning Farmer Project unveiled a new website with expanded tools and a wealth of new resources. [http://nebeginningfarmers.org](http://nebeginningfarmers.org) The new site features a growing selection of video footage capturing experienced farmers and their successful production techniques in action. Included in the library are video interviews with farmers sharing advice on profitability, choosing an enterprise, evaluating land, and much more. The ‘New Farmer Hub’ helps farmers draft a pre-business plan with the help of tutorials and interactive worksheets. Users can search our map to locate service providers offering customized one-on-one support. In addition, we hosted professional development training for 65 beginning farmer
specialists from around the Northeast. This included sessions on economic impact evaluation, land access, and beginning farmer training criteria and evaluation methods.

Based on surveys, interviews, focus groups and informal conversations with farmers, extension educators, faculty, and other farm support agencies we have begun to address two new initiatives of training and research. Our first new initiative is to address ways of assessing and reporting the economic impact of small farms and beginning farmers. The team of SFP staff, extension staff and faculty from 3 Universities (Cornell, UVM, Penn State) led a webinar and face to face workshop in Albany for beginning service providers from around the Northeast. From this workshop a number of beginning farmer service provider organizations from around the northeast expressed interest and commitment in participating in a full training of data collection and assessment.

The second new initiative is improving our education, outreach and connection with minority farmers. The purpose of the study is to understand the particular learning, communication and resource needs of black farmers in NY. This research will be shared with collaborators to develop new strategies improving the agricultural services offered to minority farmers in New York.

Our outreach includes coordinating the writing and editing of the Small Farm Quarterly, as a special insert in Country Folks magazine. Over 27,000 households receive research-based and farmer-generated information via Small Farm Quarterly. With each issue, 14-18 CCE educators and Cornell researchers, 4-6 agency/NGO staff, and 3-4 farmer-authors are enabled to reach and serve this small farm audience. Over 5,000 subscribers to our monthly email Small Farms Update have access to announcements, news, events, funding opportunities and educational resources. Our extensive web site averages 3,200 hits per week. Our program efforts have resulted in 88% of NY's county CCE offices conducting educational programs specific to small farms. Our work teams have provided testimony, state-wide action plans and educational events on key issues affecting grasslands utilization, livestock processing, small farm energy, local markets, and beginning farmers. Since the Beginning Farmer website launched 9 months ago, we have had nearly 57,400 visitors, averaging 180 visits per day. Several hundred people have created accounts on the site, and about half of these have completed 3 or more new farmer planning worksheets. In 2011 we offered 10 online courses with an average of 30 participants per course - including 4 new topics - to help beginning farmers continue their educational growth. We do not offer any academic credit, but those who successfully complete a course will receive a certificate and are also eligible for Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrower training credit, which can improve eligibility to receive a low-interest FSA loan. We have distributed more than 6,000 hard copies of the Guide to Farming in NY, in addition to copies downloaded electronically, and have received very positive feedback from farmers.

Small Farm Quarterly: http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/quarterly/
Small Farms Website: www.smallfarms.cornell.edu
Beginning Farmer Resource Center: http://nebeginningfarmers.org
Small Farms Youtube Channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/cornellsmallfarms

Publications:
Roth, M. 2011. (updated) Guide to Farming in New York: What Every Ag Entrepreneur Needs to Know. This resource includes 33 fact sheets on all aspects of getting started or operating a farm in NY. Available at: http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pdfs/GuidetoFarminginNYUpdated2-11.pdf