Dairy production trends in New York are highly regional. The Finger Lakes and some western counties have grown in milk production and cow numbers. The North Country and Capital Region have grown in milk production through increased production per cow despite declining cow numbers. Other regions of the state have experienced overall decline in milk production and decline in cow numbers. The conflicting trends in New York dairy growth show the New York dairy industry at a crossroads. Concerted strategic effort will be needed if sustainable growth in statewide production is to be obtained.
Overall milk production in New York has grown slowly in the past 10-12 years with regional increases in the Western New York, Northern New York and the Capital Region. Regional declines in the southwestern New York, the Catskills and the Southern Tier.
New York Dairy Cow Numbers Trends by County

Most milk producing in counties in New York experienced declines in dairy cow numbers over the past 10-12 years. Reversing this trend is key to creating a sustainable dairy industry in New York.
U.S. Dairy Product Consumption
Pounds Consumed Per Person

U.S. dairy product consumption is up significantly in recent decades

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board
New York Dairy Products

Demand for New York milk is growing dramatically. In order to keep pace with this demand, farmers, cooperatives, industry, government and researchers must work together to grow our dairy industry in a sustainable way.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from National Ag Statistics Service, NYS Ag Report 7-2013
Fluid milk consumption has had a steady decline for many years lead by reduced consumption of whole milk. Yogurt consumption has doubled in recent years and flavored milk consumption has had growth of 25%. Cheese has had steady growth.
Milk Production gains the Northeast have been slow with New York and Ohio growing slowly and Vermont and Pennsylvania declining. In New York cow and farm numbers have been declining but production per cow has increased, this is where NY dairy growth has come from in recent years.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from National Agricultural Statistics Service
Western states have shown steady growth in milk production in recent years. Without a change in growth, New York will likely fall behind several other milk producing states making us less competitive for dairy manufacturing jobs.

Wisconsin is notable on this graph because their strategic planning began in 2000 and appears to have increased milk supply.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from National Agricultural Statistics Service
Number of New York Milk Cows

Over the past decade the number of milk cows in the State has been declining by about 9,000 (1.5%) cows per year.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from National Agricultural Statistics Service

11/9/2012
Over the past decade New York milk production per cow has gone up about 2% per year.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from National Agricultural Statistics Service
Number of New York Dairy Farms by Size of Herd

Most of New York’s dairy farms are small. To be accepted and effective, sustainable strategic planning for NY will need to benefit all sizes of farms.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from 2007 Ag Census
Both New York’s largest and smallest farms contribute an important amount to New York’s milk production. A successful dairy strategic plan for New York will need to help both small and larger farmers prosper.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from 2007 Ag Census
Gross income per cow tends to increase with herd size. In 2007, farms with over 1000 cows received 45% more income per cow than farms with 20-49 cows. In general, large farms are able to have feeding, cow comfort and breeding situations that are more favorable to higher milk production per cow than smaller farms.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from 2007 Ag Census
Milk Production Per Cow by State 2011

Increasing New York’s average milk production to Michigan’s average (10.6%) would be the same as adding 65,000 cows to our herds.

Source: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County using data from USDA Milk Production ISSN: 1949 - 1557