

November
2014

Town of Copake Agricultural and
Farmland Protection Plan
Part 1



Town of Copake Agricultural and
Farmland Protection Plan Committee

Town of Copake – Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

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Acknowledgements

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Committee

- Lia Babitch
- Marcia Becker – Resigned 5/14
- George Beneke, DVM, Co-Chair
- Ejay Eisen
- Christie Hegarty, Secretary
- Bill Kiernan
- Edgar Masters, Co-Chair
- Jeanne E. Mettler (Town Board Liaison)

Town of Copake Town Board

- Jeffrey B. Nayer, Supervisor
- Jeanne E. Mettler
- Kelly Miller-Simmons
- Susan Winchell-Sweeney

Consultants

- Community Planning & Environmental Associates
Nan Stolzenburg, AICP CEP
Don Meltz, AICP
Adam Yagelski



Photographs in the Plan and Summary by George Beneke, DVM, Marcia Becker, Lorraine Strohmer, Ejay Eisen, Patricia Placona, and Lia Babitch

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Summary

Agriculture in New York State has a long and rich history, and the history and development of the Town of Copake are closely connected to agriculture. Today, farming in Copake remains an important land use and a significant aspect of the local economy. Copake has demonstrated this commitment by adopting a Comprehensive Plan in 2011 that identified and celebrated the role of agriculture in the Town.

The Town of Copake sought and received a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop a town-level plan to protect and enhance agriculture. The grant tasked the Town to locate farm areas that should be protected, look at the value of farmland open space and the agricultural economy to the municipality, evaluate consequences of possible conversion, and describe activities, programs and strategies to promote continued agricultural use. A local committee was established to develop this Plan for Copake.

This Plan is designed to offer the Town a toolbox of ideas and actions that can be implemented over time to improve agricultural opportunities in Copake, preserve important farmlands, and maintain open lands as part of the landscape. Overall, this Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan will give the Town:

- policies to enhance agriculture as a critical land use in Town;
- opportunities to promote new farm operations;
- mechanisms to help the Town to promote agriculture that produces healthy and locally available food and a diversity of agriculturally-related products.
- tools the Planning Board can use during project review to protect farms to the maximum extent practical;
- a framework for the Town and interested landowners to promote farming and agri-tourism in Town;
- additional leverage and success in receiving future State aid;
- a timetable for the Town to implement recommendations;



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The planning process began with the formation of a Committee, composed of farmers, interested citizens, and Town representatives, and the hiring of a planning consultant to assist. A data base of information, including maps, was developed to support the identification of farmlands, issues and trends affecting agriculture in Copake. The Plan is informed by input from both farmers and the general public.

Public input included meetings of the committee, the development of a farmer/farmland owner survey, interviews, and a public meeting. From these activities, agricultural issues, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in Copake were identified. Farmer input was also critical to the development of a vision and specific goals, and a prioritized list of actions to achieve this vision for agriculture in Copake.

This Plan is a record of this process and outlines steps the Town of Copake can take to support farming and agriculture. In summary, the following items are included in the Plan:

Role of Agriculture in Copake

The Plan discusses the prominent role of agriculture in Copake's economy, open space, rural character, sense of community, and overall quality of life. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan establishes that the people of Copake show that they hold farms in high regard because agriculture contributes to the small town and rural character of the area, and shapes the working landscape they value. Farms in Copake also provide fresh, safe, local food and products. This Plan also builds on the 2011 Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan vision statement, which explicitly speaks of agriculture as integral to the Town's future.

Current Status of Farming

The Plan documents changes in agriculture over time and identifies key trends and pressures facing farmers today.

Vision and Goals

The Plan establishes a long-range vision for agriculture in the Town. Elements of this vision include

- protecting working landscapes as an integral part of life in Copake;
- supporting a diverse set of agricultural enterprises;
- financial sustainability of farms;
- developing a new generation of farmers; and
- increasing the availability of local, affordable food.

Specific goals to support this vision are identified. They are aimed at maintaining rural land use patterns, improving cooperation and communication among agencies and farmers, and promoting environmental sustainability, community character, and economic viability.

Strategies

The heart of the Plan is its comprehensive toolbox of potential actions to address the many issues facing agriculture. The strategies are focused at the town-level.

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The actions are grouped under the headings of farmland protection, agricultural economic development, new farmers and next generation of farmers, enhancement of farm operations/practices, marketing, promotion, sales, and partnerships, collaboration and cooperation. Among the recommendations is formation of an Agricultural Advisory Committee. This committee will help guide the implementation of the strategies identified in this Plan. It is also important to increase communication and cooperation among all people and organizations that will have a role in enhancing agriculture.

Implementation All recommendations are included in a table to help the Town Board implement this Plan. The table is action-oriented with specific project components, time frame, and general funding needs identified.



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The Planning Process

The planning process began in May 2013. The following steps were taken to develop this plan:

1. Town Board receives New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Farmland Protection Planning Grant and appoints volunteer members of the community to serve on the Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan Committee.
2. The Committee developed a Request for Proposal and selected Community Planning & Environmental Associates as a consultant for the planning process.
3. The Committee developed a Farm and Farmland Inventory (Appendix 2) to document current types, conditions, and characteristics of farms and farmland in Copake. A set of GIS-based maps were developed to accompany this information (Appendix 1).
4. Farmer and farmland owners were surveyed to identify attitudes towards agriculture, issues, needs, and future plans. Additionally, several personal interviews were also conducted.
5. A farmer focus group meeting was held to discuss issues and opportunities in December 2013.
6. Public input and information about farms and farmland were analyzed, and a list of issues, needs, and possible project opportunities were identified.
7. A long-term vision and a set of goals were established based on public input.
8. Specific strategies were identified that can help the Town meet the long-term goals.
9. A full plan document was drafted that meets the statutory requirements of Section 324-a of Article 25 aaa of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law, along with Circular 1500.
10. A public meeting was conducted to present the plan and hear comments from the public and farmers.

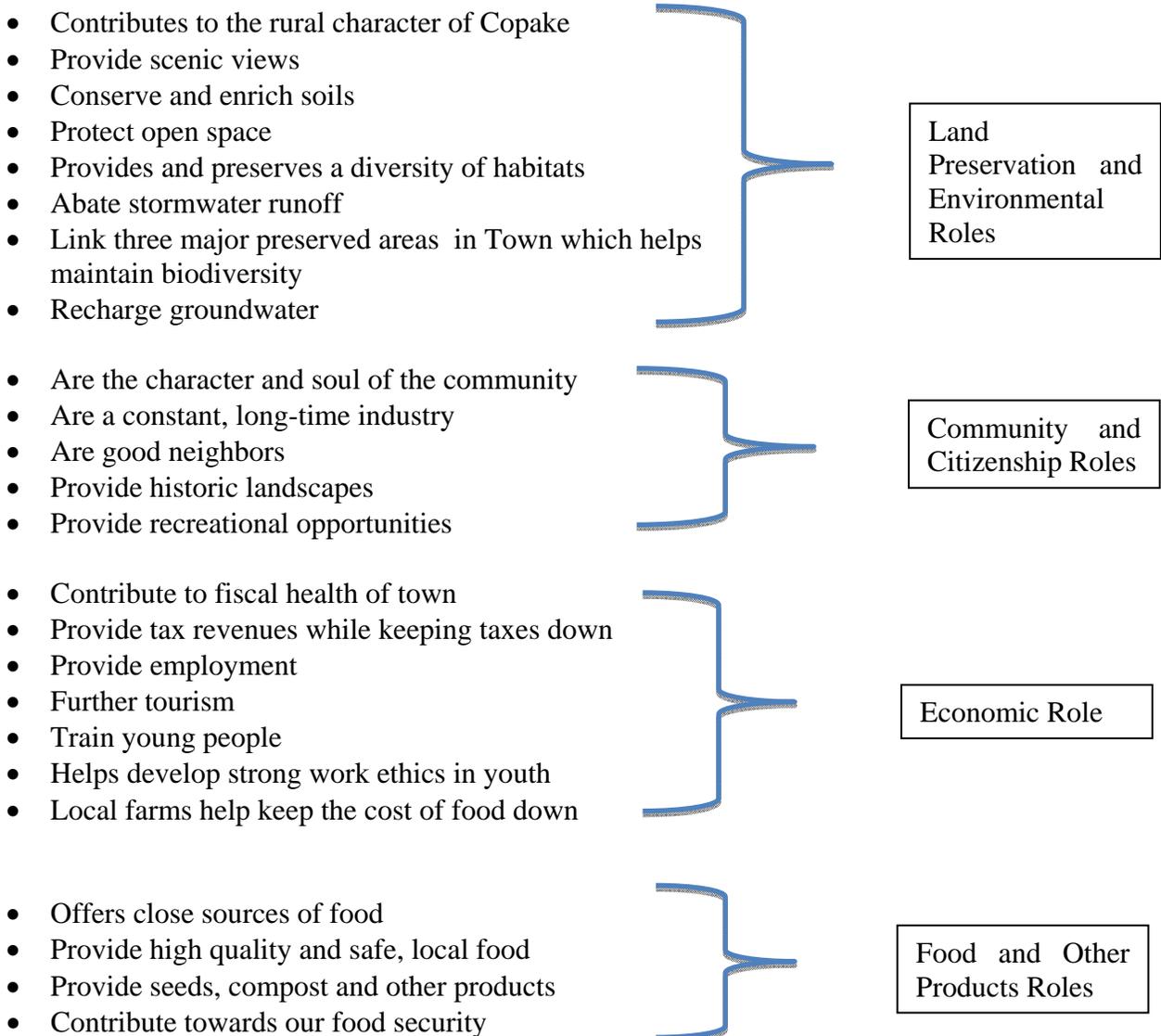


Agriculture in Copake

Role of Agriculture in Copake

Agriculture plays many roles in the economy, environment, and quality of life in Copake. The Town recognizes the importance of agriculture and this is memorialized in the 2011 adopted Comprehensive Plan. That plan recognizes agriculture in a significant way by firmly rooting agriculture as part of the long-term vision for the Town and establishing the goal of having thriving farms in the future. The Comprehensive Plan states that "...Farming is our heritage and foundation. Copake's farms prosper with fertile land, abundant water and strong regional and urban markets..." Building on the Comprehensive Plan, this Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan further details the important role agriculture has in the Copake community.

Farms and farmland in Copake are important because they:



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Snapshot of Agriculture in Copake

- About 40% of all land in Town is used for agriculture.
- Farms and land used in agriculture contribute about \$13 million in Copake of assessed land value. If land that is part of a residential parcel but used for agriculture is added in, then agriculture contributes about \$26 million of assessed value.
- There are 14,054 acres in the NYS Agricultural District, 78% is in active farming (10,914 acres). There are about 149 farmed parcels located within the NYS Agricultural District.
- There are 9,199 acres in Town that receive an agricultural assessment as part of the New York State program. That represents about 84% of all farmlands.
- There are about 35 farms in Town.
- The average size of a farm in Copake is 65 acres. However, there are a wide variety of farm sizes, some are very large.
- About half of Copake’s farms have prime farmland soils or soils of statewide importance.
- Farmers in Copake rely on rented land to support their operations. About 40% rent from other landowners.
- Agricultural products in Copake are diverse: dairy, beef, hay, horse, a variety of livestock, poultry, fruit, vegetables, corn, grain, wood products, nursery plants, bees, maple syrup, hops, alfalfa, soybeans, and seeds.
- Dairy, beef and hay are the predominant agricultural products.
- 13% of farms are organic.



See Appendix 1 and 2 for maps and the full set of information on farm and farmland characteristics

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Trends Facing Agriculture in Copake

- The number of farms in the Copake area are increasing. Between 2002 and 2007¹, six additional farms were recorded by the Census of Agriculture. This was an increase of 22%, which is more than double the rate of increase for Columbia County over the same period. Recent estimates for the County indicate that farm numbers have remained stable since the last Census of Agriculture in 2007.
- Mirroring state and national trends, small operations—measured by sales or area operated—are a big part of recent growth in the number of farms in Copake. Between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms with \$50,000 or less of agriculture sales grew by 56%. Farms with this amount of sales make up 76% of all farms in Copake. In addition, while most farms in Copake operate between 50 and 999 acres, it is likely that Copake added a number of farms operating less than 50 acres between 2002 and 2007.
- Copake’s agricultural sector rests upon animal-related agriculture practices. In 2007, 73% of farms in Copake had sales of animals, which were diverse and included cattle, horses, hogs, dairy, eggs, and sheep and goats. Most (86%) of larger operations (i.e. with sales greater than \$50,000) in the Copake area are dairy farms. While some cattle sales are likely related to the dairy sector, 21% of farms also had beef cow inventory.
- Crops are important sectors in Copake too. Of those farms with crop sales in 2007 (18 farms, or just over half of all farms in Copake), 83% sold field crops, which includes hay, and many farms harvested corn for silage (21% of all farms) and hay and haylage (61% of all farms).
- Diversification in the animal sector is a significant change taking place. When compared to 1997, a greater proportion of farms had sales or inventory of eggs and chickens, sheep and goats, and hogs and pigs in 2007. More farms had inventories of horses and ponies. A 35

¹ 2007 is the latest year US Census of Agriculture Information is available at the zip code level.

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percentage point increase in the proportion of farms with pastureland is the most significant crop-related change to have taken place over the same time period. Dairy farming is still a key sector in Copake, yet farms with a greater mix of different types of animal practices—whether measured by sales or inventory—can be found in Copake, such as sheep and lambs, hogs and pigs, chickens, and horses and ponies, though the number of farms with equine sales mirrors County data.

- Rising land prices and population growth may signal increasing pressure to convert farmlands to non-farm uses. This can create barriers to entry of new farms and discourage farm expansion. Home values and, thus, land prices increased markedly between 2000 and 2010. These increases coincided with 10% population increase as well as the addition of 136 new households; since 1990, Copake’s population has grown faster than surrounding towns, and much faster than Columbia County as a whole. Still, in terms of their effects on the local agricultural industry as a whole, high land prices may be a mixed blessing. By discouraging establishment of new operations, high prices may also insulate Copake farmers from competition.² Finally, as a measure of increasing affluence, increasing home values can signal a stronger local market for agricultural products.
- The second home industry may also be causing additional conversion pressure in Copake. Of the 197 housing units added in Copake between 2000 and 2010, 45% were classified as being for seasonal or occasional use, according to census data, and seasonal units made up about 35% of all housing units in the Town in 2010. The rate at which seasonal homes were added between 2000 and 2010 was also greater than that of owner-occupied homes.
- Like other areas, Copake’s farm operators are aging. This calls attention to farm succession and transition issues. Between 2000 and 2011, the overall population’s median age increased from 41.7 to 48.9, and between 2000 and 2010, those 75 and older left the population at higher rates than typical demographic changes would suggest. In 2007, the average age of farmers in Columbia County was 58.7. In 2012, the average age of farmers nationwide was 58.3 years.
- Some farmers rely on rented land in, but most own the land they work. Many farmers in the Copake area operate only land that they own outright. This trend has increased over the past two decades: The proportion of full owners increased from 37% in 1992 to 64% in 2007. Conversely, 27% of farmers do rely upon rented farmland. One large concern of the farming community is the instability that reliance of rental land brings.



² See *Agricultural Economic Development for the Hudson Valley*, American Farmland Trust, 2004, p. 25-26. Available at http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/29796/Hudson_Valley_AED_Complete_

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- Farming does not always provide farmers here with enough income. Only 64% of operators in the Copake area said that farming was their primary occupation, though this percentage has increased slightly since 2002. Also, a majority of operators reported working off-farm for 200 days or more in 2007.
- The Copake area still has several ag-related businesses to support agriculture in the region but less than used to be here. A large animal veterinary practice, agricultural trucking services, permanent farm stands and others are located in the Copake area ZIP codes, and these types of businesses form part of the infrastructure that makes farming possible in the area. However, many farmers have to travel far for support, products, and services they need because they are not available locally.

Priority Farmlands in Copake

The Farmland Assessment Map identifies land areas that are important to maintain for farming in Copake. Although all lands that are actively used for farming are important, knowing which ones are priority farmlands can help the Town support those farmland owners and put in place programs and strategies to slow or prevent conversion of those land to non-farm uses. These priority lands were identified using existing knowledge of the Town, local soils, and local land use and farming conditions.

This chapter provides a systematic and objective approach to identify areas in order to help people make decisions on where to target farm enhancement and farmland protection programs. For example, knowing where priority lands are located can be useful to determine if there should be support for purchase of development rights monies that may be available.

Priority farmlands have been defined to include:

Priority Farmland Criteria	Rationale
Lands that are actively farmed	These lands are already important to maintaining farm profitability. Lands that are currently being farmed are more likely to stay in farm use than lands that have already gone fallow or grown to brush.
Lands having prime farmland soils	Prime farmland soils are the most productive with the least amount of fertilizer, drainage, or other costly treatments needed.
Lands have soils of statewide importance	Soils of statewide importance are also very productive.
Lands that are already or adjacent to protected lands	Lands that are already protected through State ownership or easements that prevent development are important farm resources and should be maintained as active farmland. Lands adjacent to these areas can serve as buffers and can help form a critical mass of farmland.
Lands that receive agricultural assessments	Lands that receive an agricultural assessment show a high degree of commitment of farmer and landowner to farming.

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Farmer owned properties	Rented lands are important to farming in Copake and many farmers rely on these lands for their farm operation. However, they also are more risky for continued farm use as non-farmer landowners may have other long-term objectives for the land. Lands that are owned by the farmer are more likely to stay as farmland.
Lands having flood hazards or hydrologically sensitive features	Farmlands that also have flood plains or that are identified in the Comprehensive Plan as being hydrologically important serve other critical functions for the Copake community.



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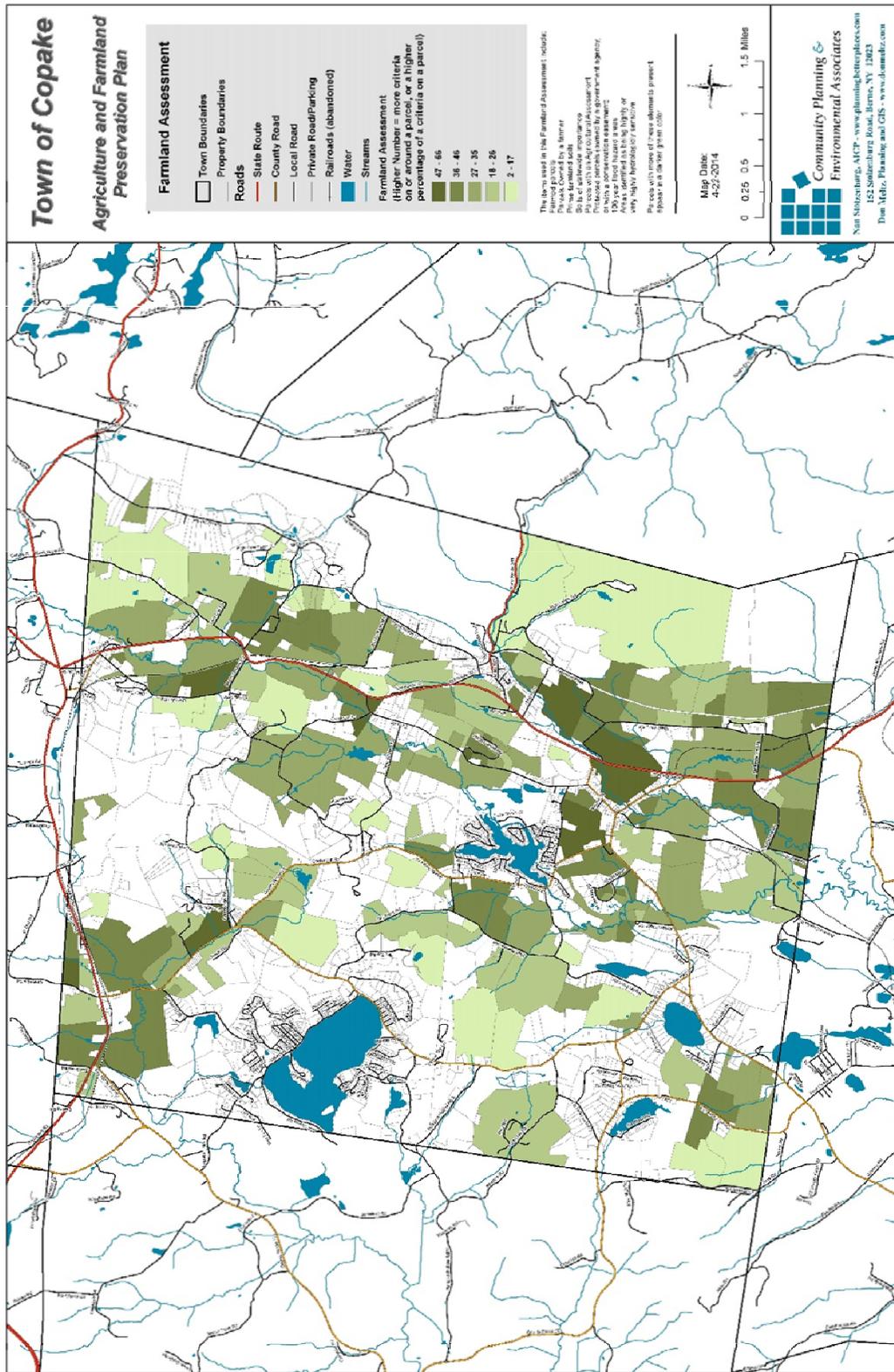


Figure 1. Farmland Assessment Map showing Important Farmlands

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Columbia County Priority Farmland Model

The Columbia County Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan includes a similar effort to identify priority farmlands. The entire Columbia County LESA Model can be viewed and downloaded using this link:

http://www.columbiacountyny.com/CCAFPB/documents/plan/CCAFPP_Ch4.pdf

The following table summarizes the County ranking system. The Columbia County Agricultural Plan Priority Farmlands Map (Appendix 1) illustrates the results using the following criteria.

Weighting of the Major Categories	Criteria
Soils - 33%	
	Prime Farmland
	Soils of Statewide Importance
Commitment to Farming - 13%	
	In an Agricultural District
	Enrolled in Agricultural Assessment
Long term viability - 17%	
Area within ½ mile of the parcel	Surrounding Farmland (> 50%)
Area within ½ mile of the parcel	Surrounding protected land or municipal park land (any at all)
	Size of the parcel is > 25 acres
	Working farm
Conversion Pressure - 12%	
	Recent surrounding development (> 5 new homes or subdivisions within ½ mile within the last 10 years)
	Outside of, but within ½ mile of a water or sewer district
	Zoning District is farming friendly
Open Space Value - 25%	
	Identified in another plan for protection
	Scenic Value
	Scenic By-way or Scenic Road (adjacent to)
	Historic Value
	Water Resources – wellhead protection area, wetland, protected stream present
	Habitat – contains critical environmental area or NYS Natural Heritage Register listing

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities for Agriculture

The following lists the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities related to farming in Copake. These were identified through input from committee members, farmers, and analysis of trends, maps and agriculture-related information.

Strengths Related to Agriculture

Land Preservation/Environment

- A high percentage of land is still available and used for agriculture in Town even though the number of farmers has decreased.
- Lots of landowners still make their land available to rent to farmers.
- There is currently decreased development pressure.
- Soils are suitable for farming. Flat lands in town are very valuable.
- Farms contribute to the environmental health of the community.
- The initiation of the Copake Agricultural Center (NE Farm Access) has expanded farming opportunities in Town and maintains an important parcel of land in farming.

Community/Citizenship

- Agriculture plays large role in Copake’s rural character and that is highly valued by the community
- There is a base of farms and farmers that have been here long-term and there is a strong base for agriculture in the community.
- Farmers are recognized for their neighborliness and willingness to help others in the community.

Economics

- The NYC markets are nearby and not tapped yet to fullest potential.
- Farms contribute to the fiscal health of the town.
- There is an interest among farmers to diversify, grow, increase their sales, or transfer farm to the next generation. There were generally positive attitudes about the future of farming in Town.



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Food/Products

- There is a diversity of products grown and operations in Copake.

Weaknesses

Land Preservation/Environment

- Large amounts of rented land in Copake introduces uncertainty and instability for land access and can also create conflicts between farmers and land owners over preferred agricultural practices. Loss of rented land could significantly impact ability of farms to continue.
- Much of the farmland in Town is controlled by a few farmers. This has benefits but also makes it harder for smaller farms to operate.
- There is a lack of communication between farmers and non-farmers.
- Cost of land is high.
- Low density residential development fragments farming areas.
- Farming does not always mix well with residential land uses.
- Farmers perceive land use and State and Federal environmental regulations as burdensome.
- There has been a loss of farmland.
- Use of conservation easements doesn't necessarily mean the land will stay in active agriculture.
- New or young farmers have difficulty finding affordable housing.



Community/Citizenship

- Farmer relationships with non-farmers is not always good or conducive to farming. Neighbors don't always like being next to farm operations. There is some sentiment that the community wants to see farms but not hear or smell them.
- Lack of understanding about food processing can be a challenge to livestock growers.
- There is a lack of educational opportunities to attract new farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs. Students who participate in agricultural high school programs are not likely those who will go on to college for additional ag-management classes and there is lack of new farmer training.

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- There is a disconnection between young and old farmers, between existing and new farmers, and disconnect between people who want to farm and those who have the land to farm. Lack of education and communication are barriers.
- There is a lack of farm laborers and Federal immigration policy is an issue.
- There is a lack of understanding about agriculture among non-farmers in the community.

Economics

- Lack of processing of farm animals in this region has been a barrier to expanded livestock operations.
- A lack of agribusiness related services lost from the Town over the years, impacts efficiency and ability to farm. Agribusinesses such as feed and equipment are gone and it is harder now for farms to obtain these products and services easily
- High taxes are seen as a significant issue and barrier.
- High production costs makes profitability difficult. Some examples are feed, fuel, insurance, labor, and housing.
- High land prices make buying or attaining farmland difficult. When a farmer needs cash their only option is often to sell their land for non-farm uses. This drives the price of land up and high land prices prevent new farmers from entering farming.
- There is unfair or lack of uniformity in tax assessments. Assessors put a lot of weight on farm buildings older than 10 years that influences taxes farmers pay.
- Lack of succession planning makes it difficult for the next generation.
- Lack of affordable land and access to land, is a large barrier, especially for small or new farmers.



Food/Products

- There is a lack of aggregation and transportation options to get local produce to market.
- Generally, there is perceived to be a lack of access to new customers in the area.

Opportunities

Land Preservation/Environment

- Get small landowners together so that larger acreages of land could be offered to farmers. This was seen as a ‘pool’ of land available for farming, where size of the parcel needs to be taken into consideration.
- Utilize state owned farmlands in Town for start-up farm operations.

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- Establish a program and funds to place conservation easements on properties to preserve lands without penalizing landowner value.
- Establish a Copake Community Fund from use of a real estate transfer tax to support purchase of development rights programs to preserve farmland.
- Do an inventory of all possible land that could be farmed in town – especially for small farmers.
- Connect unused farmland with farmers – a farmland bank.
- Establish a local development corporation (LDC) oriented to agricultural economic development to promote farms and help make farmland more affordable.
- Find ways to help renters of farmland to have a long-term option to own that land if it comes up for sale.
- Ensure that zoning in Town is farm friendly.
- Support PDR at the state level; consider a local PDR program.
- Develop a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program that moves density from important farmlands to hamlet areas or other locations suitable for higher density.
- Reduce the deer population.
- Relax building setbacks to allow for farm buildings.
- Find ways to make it less onerous to get and keep agriculture assessments.

Community/Citizenship

- Create collaborative relationships between farmers and non-farmers within the community including offering education centered on farming practices.
- Create a method for regular sharing of information between farmers. There is little interaction among farmers now. Establish mid-day meetings again so farmers can get to know each other.

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- Encourage farmers to participate more in Town planning and other efforts to ensure there is a voice for agriculture in Copake. Place farmers on Planning Board and ZBA so they have a voice. More farmers need to get involved in Town business.
- Educate the public on acceptable farming practices.
- Start a mentoring program between established and new farmers.

Economics

- Find ways to decrease tax burden on farmers. Increase exemptions on farm buildings.
- Farmers should be allowed to farm uninhibited using accepted and best practices on land benefiting from agricultural assessments.
- Educate the labor force – there needs to be a career and technical skills programs in agriculture at the high school level.
- Build positive attitudes and affordable land and housing to attract small farmers.
- Find programs to help new farmers start businesses here in Copake – develop a new farmer program.
- Encourage farmers to work together to form buyers co-ops to reduce their prices/costs.
- Small farms will be more common and this will create opportunities for niche operations, increased diversity of agricultural products, and value-added products that cater buy-local and direct sale opportunities.
- Train assessor(s) about agriculture assessments – have a farm friendly attitude.
- Promote the town to new farmers.
- Provide for new tax incentives.
- Encourage innovative dairy marketing, processing, and specialty dairy products.
- Use Facebook and other social media for advertising products better.

Food/Products

- Diversify products and take advantage of NYC markets.
- Take advantage of other venues in the area to sell agriculture products.
- Develop stronger links with area restaurants so they use more local products. Build on the farm to table/buy local programs.
- Work with farmers to make local food more affordable.



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Vision and Goals

The 2011 Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan recognized the important role agriculture plays by including it as part of the Towns' overall vision and goals. Building on that, the Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan Committee established the following agriculture-related vision.

Agriculture is integrated into nearly every aspect of life in Copake. The town has a strong history rooted in the traditions of community, local economy, land stewardship and dairy production- which helps inform our thoughts as we plan for the future.

We envision that Copake will remain an agricultural cornerstone through preservation of our substantial natural resources, and by actively fostering stability in agricultural enterprises of all varieties.

Our goals will center on promoting a vibrant farming culture, with our citizens' engagement and access to farms and farm products in the forefront.

We envision a bustling local economy--rich with our farmers' efforts, backed by a town both eager and able to support them.

Equally, we will focus on the preservation of Copake's character which emphasizes stunning open scenery and rural retreat.

We seek to advance the next generation of agricultural entrepreneurs, ensuring that those with the ambition to farm in Copake have the necessary skills and support, including succession planning.

Copake has the historical background and the future potential to set the standard as a harmonious, cohesive community.

We believe in a Copake where local products abound, the natural resources are valued and tended to, food security is evident, and farming is a proud and supported asset to all those who work, live and play here. We intend to steward this potential into reality for generations to come.

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Goals describe future expectations. The following goals are established to help Copake attain its agricultural vision:

1. Increase the stability and financial success of farms to ensure a long-term vibrant farming community in Copake.
2. Increase the diversity of agricultural operations and expand opportunities for value-added, niche, agri-tourism, and other locally-grown specialty crops.
3. Enhance the availability of locally-grown, affordable food.
4. Widen public knowledge of, support for, and engagement with agriculture.
5. Enhance public/private partnerships that support and promote agriculture in Town.
6. Improve communication, collaboration, and cooperation among all those involved with agriculture.
7. Ensure farmlands are affordable and accessible to farmers.
8. Increase the number of new and young farmers actively involved in agriculture to form the next generation of farmers.
9. Maintain a critical mass of farmland in Copake.
10. Promote environmentally sustainable farm practices to protect water and soil quality and open spaces.



Recommended Strategies

This section details a variety of actions that the Town of Copake can implement over time. The actions are listed below in the tables in priority order within each topic, with the highest priority actions highlighted. There is a close connection between this plan and the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. While all the recommended strategies outlined below serve to meet the overall Comprehensive Plan goal of promoting thriving farms, some are specifically tied to a specific action outlined in that plan. These are noted in the tables below with a ✓ symbol and page reference to the Comprehensive Plan.

The topics of importance to Copake are:

- Farmland Protection
- New Farmers and Next Generation of Farmers
- Economic Development
- Enhancement of Farm Operations and Practices
- Marketing, Promotion and Sales of Agricultural Products and Services
- Enhancing Partnerships, Collaboration and Cooperation

1. Farmland Protection Strategies	
Action	Description
<p>a. Establish a farmland protection program and a community preservation fund oriented to protecting important agricultural lands</p> <p>✓Page 22, 2a; Page 23 3i; Page 29, 3c</p>	<p>This can be funded via donations, annual budget appropriations, bonding allocations, and through adoption of a real property transfer tax through the Community Preservation Act process. The Community Preservation Act gives municipalities the power to voluntarily create a Community Preservation Fund to preserve natural areas and water resources, working farms, and historic structures and heritage. Supported by locally generated revenue from a real estate transfer tax, a municipal bond, donations and gifts of land, towns across New York have generated more than \$300 million to protect natural areas, working farms, and historic heritage. In order to participate in the program, the Town would be required to prepare and adopt a preservation plan that identifies areas to protect. Many communities generate revenue for the fund by adopting a local law to create a real estate transfer fee (two percent maximum). The fee on real estate transfers must be approved by voters through referendum. The fee only applies to properties whose value is over the median sales price of residential property within that county, helping to ensure that housing for working families remains affordable. Properties protected via this program could be fee-simple purchased or preserved through conservation easements.</p>
<p>b. Enhance Columbia Land Conservancy local Farm Link Program</p>	<p>Work with Columbia Land Conservancy and work to create and keep updated an inventory of land that is available for farming uses and that could be made accessible to farmers. This is a local farm link program oriented to farmland that is available in Copake. As a first step, conduct an inventory of available, or potentially available land that could be used for farming.</p>

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1. Farmland Protection Strategies	
Action	Description
c. Support farmers applications for State or Federal PDR funding	The NYS program purchases the development rights on farms using a legal tool called a conservation easement. Farmers can use the income generated by the sale of development rights to save, to invest or to buy new equipment and buildings. The purchase of development rights (PDR) by either the state or Federal Government can help where agricultural districting and other planning tools may not be sufficient to overcome local development pressure and other issues affecting farmland. The Town can encourage use of this program through education, outreach, and by supporting local landowner’s applications for the PDR program. Some communities provide funding to help with the local match to the state dollars funding the purchase of development rights. This program has been very effective across the state in preserving farmland and farming and could provide similar a positive outcome for Copake. The Important Farmlands Map, included in this Plan could be used to help identify lands that would be valuable to preserve through this program.
d. Advocate for more funding of the States PDR program	Advocate to the State to continue the state-level PDR program and to protect additional farmlands with expanded funding. Further, use this plan and the Important Farmlands Map to enhance the ability of a local farmer who wants to participate in the program to be successful.
e. Consistency with New York’s Smart Growth Law ✓Page 23, 3f	Be consistent with and ensure that the New York State smart growth principals are followed for state agency or state funding projects. The State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (the Act) of 2010 requires that state agencies make a determination that a project meets relevant smart growth criteria, to the extent practicable, in order to provide financial assistance. The Act is intended to augment the state’s environmental policy by maximizing the social, economic and environmental benefits of public infrastructure development while minimizing unnecessary environmental degradation, disinvestment in urban and suburban communities and the loss of open space resulting from sprawl development.
Establish a Lease of Development Rights Program ✓Page 29, 3c	There are multiple ways that land can be made more affordable. One is through establishing a local program to enhance long-term leases of land for farming. Use of temporary or term easements is one way. The Town can offer incentives to landowners who wish to do this, of work with Land Trusts to fund ‘rent’ subsidies to keep agricultural rentals lower.
f. Reduce the Expense of Land and Availability of Leases	Farmland in Copake is under intense price pressure, as the cost per acre is set by residential real estate value, not agricultural value, creating a significant obstacle for start-up farm operations. There is also strong competition for leasable land. If the Town wishes to foster diversity among its farms, it might identify smaller plots (10- 40 acres) of good land that would be available on medium to long-term leases to farms raising vegetables and other specialty crops. Over time, as these farms become established, they are much more likely to be able to raise the capital required to purchase farmland in Copake.

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1. Farmland Protection Strategies	
Action	Description
g. Provide for ongoing training of the Planning Board and ZBA about farming	Both the Planning Board and ZBA make critical decisions about land uses that impact farmers and farmland. Copake should take the following actions steps:
1. Develop a Farm Smart Review Checklist for the Planning Board and ZBA.	The Planning Board and ZBA have important roles to play in ensuring that new development in Copake is consistent not only with the local laws, but does not negatively impact farming activities. The Town could develop a “Farm Smart” checklist that the Boards could use in their analysis and review phases to help them determine impacts of a project approval on agriculture. (See box below for sample questions that could be part of this checklist). The tool can guide informal discussion to help the Board in making their decision, and is not meant to be a substitute for or an additional legal requirement.
2. Require and provide for training	Current NYS Law requires regular training of all planning board and ZBA officials. The Town could enhance this by passing a resolution that also encourages some of that training be oriented to agriculture. Boards should take advantage of locally available expertise for that training such as through Cornell Cooperative Extension, Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Columbia Land Conservancy.
3. Appoint farmers to serve on Planning Board and ZBA’s	As per New York State Town Law 271 (11), the Town Board should work to appoint an agricultural member to the Planning Board. It is important to provide an agricultural perspective for the deliberations of those boards.

2. New Farmers and Next Generation of Farmers Strategies	
Action	Description
a. Support Agricultural Education	Work with the Taconic Hills Central School District to ensure that there are career and technical programs in agriculture at the high school.
b. Establish a Mentor Program	There is a great need to connect new farmers with existing farmers through a mentor program. Work to establish a mentorship program to partner with students and new farmers with established farmers. Work with Glynwood Center and Farm, Hawthorne Valley Farm Beginners Program or the New Farmer Development Project for example. Consider consulting with the Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corporation for assistance. As a first step, develop a list of landowners and farmers willing to participate in a mentor program.
c. Advocate for a Farm Internship Program.	Work collaboratively with the Taconic Hills Central School District and seek funding for an on-farm internship program for high school students that allows them to gain high school credit.
d. New Farmer Incentives	Establish a program that would defer taxes for young farmers for a

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	certain time period and use other incentives (See Young Farmer Materials for other ideas and see NYS Beginning Farmer Program).
e. Work to promote affordable housing for new farmers	<p>To remove affordability of housing as a barrier for new or young farmers to come to Copake, consider programs that offer incentives to landowners that rent their housing at below market rates for farmers.</p> <p>Another option is to work with the County or State agencies to establish a first-time home buyers program. Explore the feasibility of having a Housing Trust Fund as a vehicle to provide more affordable housing options.</p>
f. Work with existing new farmer programs	There are a variety of new farmer programs that provide assistance, training, and support. There is no need to re-invent the wheel. However, the Town can advocate, advertise, and help potential new farmers learn about these resources. This would be another role the Agricultural Advisory Committee could play.
g. Fund Ag-Related Scholarships	Work with the Taconic Hills Central School District to offer a scholarship program for youth in our High School as an incentive for them to come back to Copake to farm.
h. Establish Low Rental Land Opportunities for New Farmers	<p>Use the Community Preservation Fund (discussed above) to buy farmland and then establish realistic rental rates for new farmers as a subsidy program.</p> <p>Farmable land exists on state-owned lands at Taconic State Park that are currently rented out to a single farmer. Copake should work with administration at NYS OPRHP to develop a program whereby some of that state arable land is allowed to be rented in smaller parcels to new farmers in Copake. This would allow for diversification of farm operations as well as provide affordable land opportunities for new and young farmers.</p>
i. Support and Promote Farm Succession Planning	Sponsor training (through the Agricultural Advisory Committee) to bring in experts on estate and farm succession planning. Find links and add information to website on farm succession planning. Don't reinvent materials that already exist but promote use of existing ones.
j. Support and Welcome New Farmers	Dairy farming in particular is under intense economic pressure. Working with non- profits and foundations, the Town could help farmers to transition from dairy by disseminating information on alternative types of farming, serving as a clearing house for information on transitioning and continuing to support agriculture in the wide range of ways outlined in this inventory. A farm-friendly town will be in a position to help farmers adapt to changing economic, regulatory and price environments and to discover and transition to new types of agriculture or new variations on the use of agricultural fields they currently control.

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3. Economic Development Strategies	
Action	Description
<p>a. Expand buy-local campaigns and Increase and enhance access to markets. ✓Page 31, 3a</p>	<p>The interest in local food is growing nationally. It has been most successful in areas where a local organization has pushed the idea. A central component of a buy local campaign is the placement of local farm products in local and regional supermarkets, schools, restaurants and other outlets. If demand increases for fresh, high quality local produce, then stores will have an economic incentive to place these products on their shelves. The more a buy local campaign is successful in changing shopper's preferences, the easier it will be to convince food retailers to feature local farm products on their shelves.</p> <p>A buy local campaign in Copake and the surrounding area could build on the success of existing local farm marketing campaigns such as Hudson Valley Fresh. A "Copake Grown" program similar to the successful "Chatham Grown" program could be another way to market and advertise a local brand of fresh farm produce.</p> <p>Attention should be paid to continually nurturing the Farmers Market in Copake, involvement of farmers to aggregate and transport produce shipments to NYC and other urban markets, local farm stands, community supported agricultural operations (CSA's), farm festivals, Hudson Valley Fresh, and buy local food efforts. A website that expands on the farmers market and Front Porch Market is a tool that should be implemented to assist in a buy-local effort.</p>
<p>b. Promote Diversification for Local Products</p>	<p>Most of the farmland in Copake is worked by four dairy farms or by dairies from neighboring towns. Most of the milk produced is shipped into the conventional pool, with farmers receiving a hundredweight price. The resulting danger for Copake is that one set of market forces bears directly upon the economic viability of most of the farmland in Town. Other emerging markets have opportunities for local farmers in Town including organic, vegetables, eggs, pork and lamb.</p> <p>From the point of view of current agriculture in Copake, organic vegetables, eggs, lamb, pork and chicken are specialty crops that are in demand at the farmers market. Vegetables net significantly more revenue per acre than forage crops. Fresh eggs, chicken and pork and pastured lamb are in perennial short supply at farmers markets and would make an excellent add-on for farmers planning to sell retail in Copake and at larger markets in the region.</p>
<p>c. The Town should partner with farmers, local organizations</p>	<p>Support development of commercial kitchens in Copake such as at the Copake Front Porch Market, and establishment of a food hub.</p>

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4. Enhancement of Farm Operations/Practices Strategies	
Action	Description
<p>a. Update and strengthen the Town’s right to farm law. ✓ Page 23, 3d</p>	<p>Currently the law includes only a right-to-farm statement as follows: “It is the policy of Columbia County and the Town of Copake to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of farm operations within our borders for the production for food and other products. Existing and prospective residents of the Town of Copake should be aware of the inherent potential conditions associated with farm operations. Such conditions may include but are not limited to noise, odors, fumes, dust, smoke, storage and disposal of plant and animal waste products and the application of fertilizers, soil amendments and pesticides by ground or aerial spraying or other method. Property owners and residents within the Town of Copake should be aware that farmers have the right to undertake generally accepted agricultural practices, and one should expect such conditions as a normal and necessary aspect of living in such an area.” However, this could be more effective if it were expanded to include agriculture-related definitions and establish a local mediation procedure to address conflicts. A model right-to-farm law is included in Appendix 5.</p>
<p>b. Amend local laws to be farm friendly: Update the Zoning Law</p>	<p>One of the most influential roles the Town can play in promoting farming in Copake is to ensure that there are no barriers to agricultural development imposed by local land use regulations. The Town should strive to be a farm-friendly community. The following specific recommendations address legitimate concerns about existing policies and if implemented, would be very supportive of agriculture.</p>
Zoning Update Action	Description
<p>1. Include more Agricultural Related Definitions</p>	<p>Include a wider set of terms to clarify definitions for farm related activities. Terms that could be defined include Agricultural Disclosure Notice, Brewery/Distillery/Winery, Agricultural Structure, Farmland, Agricultural Product Processing, Farm Market, Farm, Farm worker Housing, and Stable.</p>
<p>2. Require Use of Agricultural Data Statement</p>	<p>Protect agriculture from conflicts with new development. Support the LURC suggested change that requires that applicants for site plan review, subdivision, or special use permits include in their application submissions the Agricultural Data Statement, as required by NYS AML. See Appendix 4 for a model agricultural data statement.</p>
<p>3. Update Use Table to Allow for more Agricultural Uses without a Special Use Permit ✓ Page 23, 3e</p>	<p>Update the use table to allow for a wider range of farm-based businesses and allow as a permitted use in the R (proposed by LURC to be renamed to Ru – Rural)_district, or at the most with a modified site plan review. These should include on-farm uses of solar and wind facilities; farm stand; brewery/distillery/winery; processing, storage, packaging, warehouse; grain facility; private and public stables; on-farm processing; and other direct sales of on-farm produced products. Current zoning defines farm stands but this use is not listed in the use table. Similarly, text allows as a permitted use</p>

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4. Enhancement of Farm Operations/Practices Strategies	
Action	Description
	for the processing, storage, packaging, and warehousing of agricultural products, but that is not in the use table either.
4. Clarify Use of Multiple Businesses on Farm	Clarify in regulations that farms are allowed to have farm-related businesses on the farm parcel such as direct sales and agritourism. This is not identified in the law.
5. Allow for Solar Panels and Wind Use on Farms	Address agricultural use of wind turbines, and for solar panels that are not mounted on roofs, which is a solar use not addressed in the zoning.
6. Add Density Bonuses and Buffering	Support LURC recommendations to add density bonuses as incentives, use of buffering to minimize conflicts, and requirement for submission of agriculture data statement and agriculture disclosure notices. Further, support the LURC recommended changes to the site plan law and the flexible lot subdivision as these changes are farm-friendly updates already.
7. Require placement of Agricultural Disclosure Notice on Approved Plans and Plats	Support LURC recommendation to require that the agriculture disclosure notice be included as a note on all final subdivision plats, approved site plans, and special permits. See Appendix 5 for sample agriculture disclosure notice.)
8. Add Modified Site Plan Review Section	Support LURC recommendations to add to the Site Plan Review section, a new subsection that incorporates and clarifies a modified site plan review. The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets recommends a modified site plan review as the process to cover those farm uses that are required to have some level of review by the Planning Board. Copake’s slaughterhouse law also refers to a modified site plan review. This section needs to be included in the zoning law, updated and clarified. Use the State model for this section.
9. Use Density Averaging Zoning	<p>To better protect agricultural lands from over-development, some communities have turned away from the traditional zoning approach of setting very large minimum required lot sizes. Experience has shown that setting higher lot size minimums of 5 acres, 10, acres, 20 acres or more is ineffective, creating lots that "are too big to mow and too small to sow." Density averaging zoning is another option which allows farmers adequate opportunity to subdivide and convey the occasional house lot to a family member or sell it. In addition to preventing fragmentation of agricultural land, such a policy also limits the potential for the conflicts that can arise between the farm and non-farm community over agricultural practices. It establishes a total number of lots that can be created as per the density of the zoning district, but allows the lot sizes to be flexible and averaged to equal the minimum lot size required for the district. Density averaging should be required for minor subdivisions. Major subdivisions already can take advantage of this through the flexible lot subdivision process.</p> <p>Use of an average density for minor subdivisions would allow</p>

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4. Enhancement of Farm Operations/Practices Strategies	
Action	Description
	flexibility to preserve farmland on minor subdivisions as well. For example, an 18 acre lot that was going to be subdivided 4 times (a minor subdivision) would yield 4 – six acre lots. That subdivision would use up all the land and no farmland would be maintained. Use of average density would allow the same four lots, but three could be 2 acres each and the third 12 acres that could be maintained for farm use.
10. More emphasis of Site Plan Review on Agriculture	Site Plan currently focuses on parking, access, landscaping and other development features, but it could be modified to ensure that new facilities and structures avoid impact on farmland. Criteria could include locating development away from farm areas on a given property, ensuring buffers between development and farmland and clustering development.
11. Improve Agricultural Uses within a Flexible Lot Subdivisions and Allow for Agricultural Use on Preserved Lands	The LURC has already suggested other improvements that would strengthen the role of agriculture in a flexible lot subdivision and should be supported for adoption by the Town. The use of flexible lot subdivisions should be maintained as a critical tool for preserving farmland when major subdivisions occur. Consider improving by describing specific preservation techniques such as providing buffers and locating development away from prime farmland or farm operations.
12. Clarify and enhance opportunities for affordable Farm Housing ✓Page 43, 3a and 3b	Affordability of homes is seen as a barrier for young and new farmers from starting agriculture in Copake. Zoning should evaluate and remove barriers to use of affordable housing options on farms such as ‘tiny houses’, apartments, and other options.
13. Minimize Use of Special Permits for Farms	Update the use table to minimize the need for farmers to get a special use permit for agricultural or on-farm ag-related businesses.
c. Support Sustainable Farming Practices	The Town can support sustainable farming practices as a way to both reduce environmental impacts and to promote the long-term economic viability of farms. Sustainable farming also improves the quality and image of local products which have a higher reputation for freshness, quality and wholesomeness. The Town could support education, grants and collaboration with State programs that provide education or financial support for improving the sustainable character of farms. A number of educational and financial incentive programs exist to help farms improve the environmental aspects of the operation.
d. Start a buying co-operative to reduce costs	Farmers can join together to for a buying cooperative to buy needed supplies in bulk at reduced costs. Although this is not a Town-function, this action is included in this Plan as a reminder to farm groups to explore this option.
e. Advocate for safe roads for agricultural traffic	Because farmers rely on State, County and local roads for movement of farm equipment and products, road safety is critical. The Town Highway Department should take whatever steps necessary to make

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4. Enhancement of Farm Operations/Practices Strategies	
Action	Description
	the roads safe for agricultural traffic (tractors, wagons, machinery) and farm animals (crossings). Consider placing appropriate signage on Town highways to slow traffic and alert drivers to farm activity in the vicinity. Advocate to State and County transportation departments to lower speed limits or install signs where needed.

5. Marketing, Promotion and Sales Strategies	
Action	Description
<p>a. Form a Permanent Town of Copake Agriculture Advisory Committee ✓Page 22, 3b</p>	<p>This group can play a huge and important role in marketing, promotion and assisting in the expansion of sales. It could play many roles to support agriculture in Copake through education, communication, conflict resolution, regulatory guidance, and promoting the economic viability of farming.</p> <p>This committee would give farmers a forum to express their concerns and to coordinate with Town officials on important policy, advocacy and marketing opportunities. This committee could also serve as the mediator for farm/non-farm conflicts. In essence, this could also act as an ombudsman committee to advocate for and assist farms and farmers in Copake. They could bridge the gap between non-farmers and farmers. The Town Board can form, and appoint members. Farmers must be represented on the committee but also people that represent different areas of interest related to agriculture would be helpful too. When formed, the Town should identify tasks and duties. (See Appendix 7 for sample committee formation resolution.) The Town could also consider offering a small budget to support the work of this committee, or at the least, give them authority to fund raise and grant write to fund programs.</p> <p>The ‘scope of work’ for this committee focuses on these high ranked priorities (in order):</p>
Scope of Work for Copake Agriculture Advisory Committee (In Priority Order)	
Provide education programs for non-farmers	There is a critical need to help non-farm landowners understand agriculture and agricultural practices. This effort should be a primary emphasis since it can directly impact farmers by reducing conflicts and promoting more land to be rented to farmers.

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5. Marketing, Promotion and Sales Strategies	
Action	Description
Help with zoning changes	Ensure that the Town follows through on the recommended farm-friendly zoning changes so that farm stands, on-site sales, on-site processing, and other expanded or innovative direct sale operations are allowed.
Update Town website information	Work with the Town to develop and add in information about farms and farm products available in Copake on the town website.
Farms to business program	Develop a farm to business program that markets local agricultural products to local/regional restaurants. Copake farmers, with the support of the community, can take advantage of this trend by marketing local farm products to restaurants and food service outlets throughout the region. A local Copake label can be used to identify foods or businesses that use local produce.
Promote local products	Develop a public education program to reach out to the second home community and promote local agricultural products.
Create a Farming Website	Develop a Farming Website: The Town of Chatham has a successful website devoted to local farming (www.chathamkeepfarming.org) that disseminates information which helps current and prospective farmers enter into mutually beneficial relationships with landowners. A “Copake Grown” website could also advertise fresh farm products for sale, sale of used farm equipment, farm vacations and circulate farm-related news.
Organize farm visits, tours and other public relations efforts	Organize farm visits/tours. Visits to local farms by community, 4-H and school groups can also broaden the understanding of agriculture. The New York State Farm to School Program helps promote the involvement of young people in agriculture and can continue to be a major part of Copake's efforts to promote stronger support for agriculture. Consider developing a brochure or website as part of effort.
Hold community events related to agriculture	Support farm-related community events that expose residents to farming.
Advertise economic benefits of farm to Town	Develop and then mail, email, or make available a brochure designed for residents explaining the fiscal benefits of agriculture in Copake. Use some of the data in this plan to develop those materials.
Start a Come Farm With Us Effort	Promote and market Copake’s agricultural resources. This should include developing materials to develop a local “Come farm with Us” program to attract new farmers to Town.

6. Partnerships, Collaboration and Cooperation Strategies
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Action	Description
<p>a. Provide leadership to coordinate and collaborate.</p>	<p>Collaboration with private, non- profit land conservation groups such as the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) and the American Farmland Trust (AFT) or other organizations such as the Hudson Valley Agricultural Development Corporation is critical. There are many programs and projects ongoing in the Hudson Valley that already, or could benefit Copake. Copake needs to work to collaborate and coordinate better with agencies, organizations, and farmers.</p> <p>There is a need to actively tie into the Farming the Future Seminar being conducted in the winter of 2015. Long-term the Town should facilitate, possibly through the Agriculture Advisory Committee) an ‘Agriculture Summit’ that brings farmers, agencies, and organizations together on a regular basis. These summits should be constructed to inform everyone on ag-related programs, identify needs, and assign projects to different agencies or people to fill in the gaps without duplicating efforts.</p> <p>Further, the Town can enter into partnerships with these groups to help farmers, jointly apply for grants and foundation support with these groups, and it can assist with outreach, education and environmental protection programs with the non-profit sector.</p>
<p>b. Form a permanent agriculture advisory committee.</p>	<p>See above action.</p>
<p>c. Require Assessor Training</p>	<p>Provide for additional assessor training on agricultural assessments and work to ensure uniform assessment practices related to agricultural land and facilities.</p>

Action Plan

The chart below outlines an action plan to implement the many strategies identified as important in this Plan. The Town Board has the ultimate responsibility for implementing, or causing certain projects to become implemented. Leadership from both the Town Board and the farm community is critical for success. A critical role the Town Board can play is to provide leadership, coordination, direction, and possibly funding, but they should rely on help of others to work out implementation details.

Implementing this Plan will require a series of Town Board policy decisions, program initiatives, and coordination with local, county, regional and state organizations and agencies. Success will be based on the Town Board setting the right priorities and allocating scarce resources –people and funding – to the most important priorities. Various grants may be available to help carry out the actions in this Plan, and the Town Board can be supportive of grant seeking efforts.

Town Board Action Step 1: The first implementation step recommended for the Town Board to take is to appoint a permanent Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC). See Appendix 7 for a sample organization for formation of this Committee.

This committee is envisioned to be the key group of people who will help with implementation. The Town Board should establish this committee in a way that allows them independence to get the job done, but with maintaining close ties and communication with the Town Board on their activities. It is further recommended that once formed, the AAC and Town Board should annually determine which projects should be priority and concentrate on one or two projects at a time. One key role this committee can play is to help seek funding necessary for implementing the priority projects.

There are many agencies and organizations in the Hudson Valley whose goal is to promote agriculture, farmland preservation, and agricultural economic development. The AAC should enlist the help of many other organizations and efforts already in place in the area. **The Town Board and Agriculture Advisory Committee should coordinate implementation of priority projects with:**

1. Town Planning Board
2. Columbia County Agencies
 - a. Office of Real Property
 - b. Columbia County Planning Department
 - c. Columbia County tourism efforts
 - d. Industrial Development Agency (IDA)
 - e. Farmland Protection Board
3. Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC)
4. Columbia County Land Trust
5. Cornell Cooperative Extension
6. Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District
7. Federal farm agencies including USDA, NRCS, Rural Development, and Farm Service Agency

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8. Farm Bureau
9. Farm Credit East
10. New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
11. NYSERDA
12. Numerous other organizations (See Appendix 8. Resource List and Contacts)

Town Board Action Step 2: Adopt this Plan as an Addendum to the 2011 Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan. This Agricultural and farmland Protection Plan will serve the Town better if it can become formally part of the Town’s comprehensive planning effort. Like the town-wide hydrology study, this Agricultural Plan should be adopted pursuant to Town Law 272-a to become an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan. This would require a public hearing, County Planning Board Approval, and SEQR prior to adoption via a resolution of the Board.

Town Board Action Step 3: Ensure that the public and Town officials are familiar with this Plan.

1. Provide all board members (Town, Planning, Zoning Board of Appeals, and CAC) with copies of or links to this Plan so that they can become familiar with it.
2. Maintain a paper copy of this Plan in Town Hall and place electronic copies of this plan on the Town’s website.
3. Maintain and utilize the maps created through the GIS for this Plan online and on paper so that Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals can use them.

Town Board Action Step 4: The Town Board should organize a ‘State of the Town’ meeting annually where the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, CAC, and ACC get together to describe work accomplished for the year, identify new issues that may have arisen, and set an agenda for the next year.

Town Board Action Step 5: Seek the assistance of a professional grant writer to search for and prepare grant applications for programs as outlined in the Plan. For improved success, the Town may want to consult with an experienced grant writer familiar with the CFA’s and other funding sources. Prepare for next year’s NYS Consolidated Funding Application for funding. Three projects have been identified as critical to continued farming in Copake. These are described below. Further, it will be critical to foster partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and perhaps neighboring municipalities in order to be successful.

Project 1: Improve young farmers’ access to land.

Project 2: Provide for young farmer training programs.

Project 3: Expand the buy local program and build on the existing three-town farm-to-business program working with Hillsdale, Ancram and Copake.

The chart below can be used to help prioritize projects.

Action	Plan Reference	Action Steps	Time Frame to Implement ³	Funding Needs ⁴
Step 1: Adopt as addendum to Comprehensive Plan			Short	No
Step 2: Appoint a permanent Agriculture Advisory Committee	5a	See above for details on these foundational implementation steps	Short	No
Step 3: Disseminate plan			Short	No
Step 4: Hold annual meeting			Ongoing	Yes Limited
Step 5: Prepare for funding request			Short	Yes Limited
Start a local farmland protection program and provide funding through a community preservation fund	1a, 1c, 1d, 1f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a farmland protection program that seeks to preserve lands for farming. • Establish a community preservation fund. • Seek a diversity of funding mechanisms for effort. • Support landowners who wish to apply for State PDR funds to protect their farmlands and consider use of the local fund as leverage to help support match requirements. • Establish a lease of development rights project as one mechanism to protect lands. • Use the important farmlands map included in this plan as a guide to important properties that should be protected long-term. 	Medium to Long	Yes More

³ Short Time Frame = First year after plan adoption

Medium Time Frame = Second to fifth year adoption

Long Time Frame = Fifth year onwards

Ongoing Time Frame = A project that should continue on an annual or ongoing basis

⁴ Yes/Mo = funding will or is not necessary to implement the recommendation and limited = a small amount of funding is needed; More = a larger amount of funding is needed

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Action	Plan Reference	Action Steps	Time Frame to Implement³	Funding Needs⁴
Provide for ongoing training and support of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals	1h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Farm Smart Review Checklist for project review, with help from County Planning or some of the farm-related organizations in the Hudson Valley. • Pass a resolution that directs regular training of ZBA and Planning Board related to agriculture. • Appoint active farmers to both the Planning Board and ZBA 	Ongoing	No
Improve access to farmland	1b, 1g, 1h	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory smaller plots of land that are suitable for farming. • Work with CLC to enhance the FarmLink program in Copake. • Use proposed community preservation fund to buy farmland and establish program for rental with option to buy for new farmers. • Work with Taconic State Park to develop a new farmer land access program on arable lands there. 	Medium	Yes More
Establish an intern and mentorship program in Copake	2a, 2b, 2c, 2f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Taconic Hills Central School District to provide career and technical training programs in agriculture. • Partner with Glynwood Center and HVADC to start intern and mentorship programs. Start by compiling list of willing farmers. • Work with Taconic Hills Central School District and 4-H clubs in the area to create an on-farm internship program for high school students. Seek funding for this initiative. • Seek funding for ag-related scholarships. 	Medium	Yes More
Establish Come Farm with Us and New Farmer Program	2c, 2d, 2e, 2g, 2i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a website, develop a “Come Farm with Us” program and information clearinghouse on ag-related opportunities, services, and locations as a farm business attraction effort. • Develop incentives to attract young farmers to Copake. • Provide incentives or first-time homebuyer program for new farmers. Consider establishing or working with a housing trust fund as a vehicle. • Work to expand existing new farmer programs offered by the 	Long	Yes More

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Action	Plan Reference	Action Steps	Time Frame to Implement ³	Funding Needs ⁴
		<p>State and other organizations in Copake.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop marketing tools to promote Copake as a great place to attract farmers that will work in emerging markets such as organic, vegetables, eggs, pork and lamb. 		
Arrange for farm succession planning	2h	Work with CCE, Farm Credit East and others to arrange for farm succession planning or training for Copake farmers.	Ongoing	No
Expand buy-local programs	3a, 3b, 3c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory farms, products, and crops that are available locally. • Develop marketing program to advertise these farms, products, and crops. • Develop local ag-tourist events and opportunities where farmers can sell or market their products or services. • Create a ‘Copake Fresh’ local initiative to allow businesses and restaurants to identify themselves as using local, fresh food. • Explore methods to aggregate and transport local agricultural products to market. This should include at least a regional food hub that Copake farmers can participate in. • Develop community kitchen(s) to help farmers process their food crops. 	Short	Yes More
Update and Strengthen the Town’s Right to Farm Law	4a	See Appendix for model to be adopted by Town Board.	Short	Yes Limited
Amend local zoning and subdivision law to be farm friendly	4b	See items listed at 4b to be incorporated into the zoning law.	Short	Yes Limited
Promote other programs that benefit farms	4c, 4d, 1d, 1e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town can lend its support and leadership in being a partner to promote education and implementation of sustainable and environmentally protective farming methods • Advocate for state programs that benefit farms • Ensure that Copake’s long-term growth is consistent with NYS 	Ongoing	No

Town of Copake – Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

November 2014

Action	Plan Reference	Action Steps	Time Frame to Implement³	Funding Needs⁴
		Smart Growth Law • Support local efforts to initiate farm buyer-cooperatives that help reduce costs to farmers.		
Provide for Assessor Training related to Ag	6c	Work with NYS Real Property, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and other organizations to provide local training on an ongoing basis to the assessor.	Ongoing	No
Hold an annual Town Meeting	6a	Hold an annual town meeting for the Town Board, Planning Board, ZBA, AAC, and CAC to communicate, collaborate, and ensure issues are addressed in a timely manner.	Ongoing	No
Hold an annual Agricultural Summit	6a	Tie into the Farming for Future Seminar or other efforts to gather farmers, potential farmers, and ag-related agencies together annually to discuss projects, needs, issues, and opportunities, and to plan for mutually beneficial programs that can be carried out.	Ongoing	No

See Part 2 for:

Appendix 1: Maps

Appendix 2: A Profile of Agriculture in Copake

Historical Trends

Soil Data

Parcel Data

Agricultural Districts

Farm Operations and Farm Characteristics

Farm Characteristics from Survey

Census of Agriculture Background

Columbia County Comparison

Agricultural Support Infrastructure in Copake Area

Population Characteristics and Change

Housing Trends

Appendix 3: Farm Focus Group Results

Appendix 4: Model Agriculture Disclosure Notice and Agriculture Data Statement

Appendix 5: Model Right to Farm Law

Appendix 6: Farmer Survey Results

Appendix 7: Samples for Formation of Agriculture Advisory Committee

Appendix 8: Resource List and Contacts