

Dutchess County Agricultural Snapshot

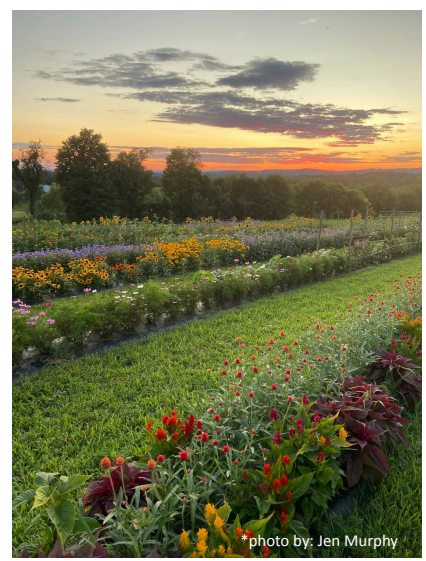
Amanda Bergin - Agricultural Navigator - agnavigator@dutchessny.gov



Farm Landscape

Farms in Dutchess are generally smaller today than in the past, reflecting the decline of large dairy herds and the rise of more diversified operations. Many farms now focus on vegetables, livestock, specialty crops, and direct-to-consumer sales through farm stands, markets, and CSAs. Equine operations also play a visible role across the county, with horse farms and stables dotting the landscape and contributing to both the rural economy and scenic character.

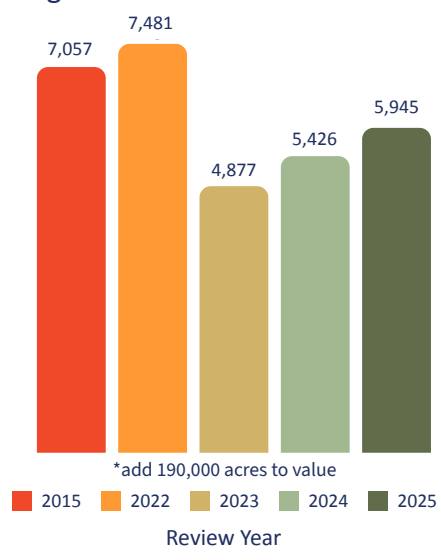
The county's natural foundation continues to be one of its greatest strengths. Nearly two-thirds of farmland acres are classified as Prime Farmland Soils or Soils of Statewide Importance, among the most productive in New York State. These soils support everything from hayfields and pastures to vineyards, orchards, and vegetables. Together, the adaptability of smaller farms and the richness of the land provide resilience in the face of changing markets, climate pressures, and development.



*photo by: Jen Murphy

Agricultural District Enrollment

- Total Enrolled Parcels: 4,177
- Total Acres in District: 195,945
- Average Size of Enrolled Parcels: 47 acres



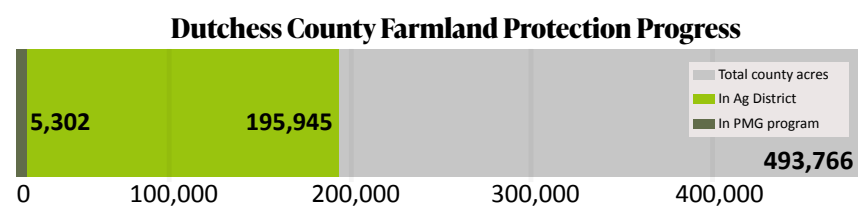
The chart illustrates Agricultural District enrollment acreage by review year. Enrollment has varied, with higher totals in 2015 and 2022, a noticeable dip in 2023, and projected growth in 2024–2025. The 2023 decrease reflects the consolidation of districts and removal of parcels during the 8-year review cycle (next is 2031). Overall, the trend shows continued commitment to farmland enrollment and protection across Dutchess County.

Farm Numbers & Production (USDA 2022)

- Total Farms: 620
- Total Farmland Acres: 99,652
- Average Farm Size: 161 acres
- Top Commodities: Hay/forage, Corn (grain & silage), Soybeans, Apples (and other fruits/berries), Nursery/greenhouse

Conservation & Land Use

- 5,302 acres of Ag. District parcels, preserved through Partnership for Manageable Growth program (PMG)



This chart shows the relationship between total land area in Dutchess County, acres enrolled in Agricultural Districts, and agricultural acres permanently protected through the county's Partnership for Manageable Growth (PMG) program. Out of the county's 493,766 land acres, about 195,945 acres (40%) are in Agricultural Districts, and 5,302 acres (3%) have been permanently protected by PMG. The progress bar highlights how farmland protection builds step by step—from broad enrollment to long-term preservation.



Agritourism

Agritourism is a growing part of Dutchess County’s farm economy, connecting residents and visitors with local agriculture through farm markets, pick-your-own operations, wineries, breweries, farm stays, and seasonal events. These activities not only provide supplemental income for farm families but also help strengthen community connections to farming, preserve rural character, and support the county’s tourism industry.

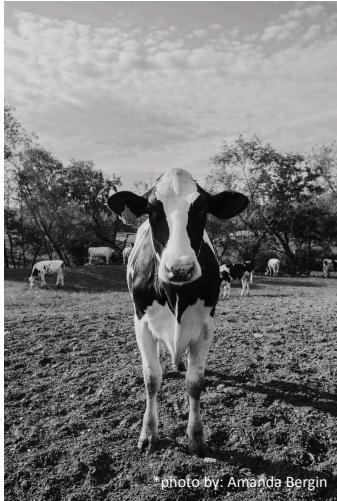


photo by: Amanda Bergin

Farm Friendly Audit

In 2019, Dutchess County reviewed every town, city, and village through a Farm Friendly Audit to measure how well local policies support agriculture. The audit examined five areas: planning, zoning, right-to-farm protections, economic development, and education/outreach. The countywide results highlight both strengths—like comprehensive plans that recognize agriculture—and opportunities for improvement, such as making zoning codes more consistent with farmland protection. This snapshot serves as a baseline to track progress and guide municipalities toward more farm-friendly practices.

For full audit →



Education & Workforce

FFA Growth: Dutchess County is home to five active FFA chapters, giving students opportunities for leadership, career exploration, and hands-on agricultural experiences.

Schools & BOCES: Local schools with FFA Chapters and Dutchess BOCES offer ag-related programming, preparing students for both technical trades and higher education pathways. For example, the Dutchess BOCES Agriculture program introduces students to multiple career paths in animal and plant sciences, combining classroom learning with hands-on projects and FFA leadership opportunities.

Youth & Community Programs: Beyond the classroom, programs such as Dutchess County 4-H and the CCE Green Teen initiative engage hundreds of local youth in agriculture, gardening, sustainability, and community service. These opportunities provide hands-on experiences, leadership development, and career exploration while ensuring students can connect with agriculture through many different pathways.



photo by: Jen Murphy

Emerging Careers: Because Dutchess County supports more than 620 farms and 5,400 agribusiness jobs. Careers in ag mechanics, horticulture, agribusiness management, and value-added production are not theoretical—they’re essential to the local economy.



photo by: Amanda Bergin

Farm Friendly Countywide Results				
Topic	Summary Explanation	County Results		
		Yes	Maybe	No
Identify/Acknowledge Agriculture	Does the plan explicitly recognize agriculture as a community element?	38%	3%	59%
Agricultural Statistics	Are maps or data on farmland included in the plan?	57%	0%	43%
Agricultural Impact	Is the value of agriculture incorporated into visions and goals?	61%	10%	29%
Agricultural Policies	Are there concrete preservation policies or supportive development tools?	54%	3%	43%
Barriers	Do zoning codes or regulations create obstacles for farming?	26%	2%	72%

