



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** County Executive Jen Metzger

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Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger Announces \$586K in Grants Awarded to 9 Ulster County Farms

FIRST-EVER ULSTER COUNTY FARM VIABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY GRANTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL AGRICULTURE

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger today announced the recipients of the County's first-ever Farm Viability & Sustainability Grant Program, awarding a total of \$586,256 to nine farms across the County to strengthen farm businesses, improve energy efficiency, and build climate resilience. The program was made possible through the Agricultural Crisis Relief Program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and passed by the Ulster County Legislature in 2023.

The grant program, administered for the County by the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC), provides awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$75,000 to support local farmers in maintaining viable and resilient farms now and in the future. The program's focus on farm viability and energy efficiency/climate resiliency aligns with the County's recently updated Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, adopted in June 2025. The Plan outlines strategies to preserve farmland, support farm businesses, and promote environmental sustainability.

"Farming is central to Ulster County's economy and long-term food security, and our farmers also play a critical role as stewards of the land," **said County Executive Jen Metzger, who chaired the Agriculture Committee when she served in the State Senate.** "The purpose of these grants is to help with farm investments that support long-term economic and environmental sustainability, and this funding couldn't come at a better time, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture eliminates billions of dollars in crucial funding for our small farms."

Grant Recipients and Projects:

- **Balsam Ridge Farm** (Clintondale): Expanding from apples and Christmas trees into garlic production to diversify crops and extend market reach year-round. Infrastructure improvements include a weather-tight pole barn for storage and production space and a new irrigation well to support consistent yields and resiliency through changing climate conditions.
- **Catskill Wagyu at Hilltop Farm** (Accord): Upgrading milking operations to a modern, energy-efficient facility with installations such as a tube cooler, milking station, and clean room renovation. These improvements will reduce water usage and compressor demand while optimizing milk handling efficiency. Funds also support the construction of a more accessible and energy-conscious entryway.
- **Honeybee Sun Farm** (Kerhonkson): Responding to flood-related damage and erosion by establishing a contour chestnut orchard and an embankment pond with a spillway to manage surface runoff. A compact tractor will aid in maintaining the farm's agroforestry systems, supporting sustainable land use and climate adaptability.
- **Hudson Valley Grown** (Milton): Replacing an 80-year-old refrigeration system with energy-efficient equipment to reduce spoilage, environmental impact, and operating costs. The upgraded system improves temperature control, lowers refrigerant usage, and strengthens produce preservation — boosting both viability and sustainability.
- **Long Season Farm** (Kerhonkson): Consolidating infrastructure by constructing a fully insulated, energy-efficient four-season wash/pack facility equipped with mini-splits, coolers, and wash equipment. The project also supports a new septic system, enabling reliable year-round operations and long-term viability.
- **Prospect Hill Orchards / Clarke Farm Enterprise LLC** (Milton): Purchasing a biodiesel-powered box truck to replace two aging delivery vehicles, reducing fuel costs and emissions. This upgrade addresses transportation limitations, expands distribution capacity, and supports both economic and environmental goals.
- **Sugarshack Mushrooms Farm** (Highland): Installing solar panels on the barn and farmhouse to offset energy demands for climate control and pasteurization systems. Beginning in fall 2025, the system will generate over 22,000 kWh annually — making the semi-indoor mushroom farm fully solar powered, with surplus capacity to support future growth.
- **Treadlight Farm** (Accord): Acquiring an all-electric cargo van and charging station to expand delivery capacity and eliminate fossil fuel use from transport operations. The investment furthers sustainability goals, enables broader customer outreach, and reduces the farm's carbon footprint.
- **Westwind Orchard** (Accord): Investing in strategic infrastructure and crop diversification to adapt to climate variability. Grant funds will support overhead

frost-protection sprinklers, cider-cooling systems to extend product shelf life, and new crop varieties that help stabilize operations amid extreme weather and shifting market conditions.

"This was a very competitive grant application round, which is a testament to the level of engagement the county has with its farmers," **said Todd Erling, HVADC Executive Director.** "The projects proposed really exemplify the type of strategic thinking that the applicants have about how to ensure their businesses' viability and sustainability with a focus on improving efficiencies and resiliency."

"Agriculture is a key driver of the economy in Ulster County," **said Kevin Lynch, Director of the Ulster County Department of Economic Development.** "This grant program, funded with federal ARPA dollars through the County Legislature's Agriculture Crisis Relief Fund, is in recognition of the need to invest in our farm businesses and all they contribute to our quality of life, food security, and our future."

"These projects are very inspiring and demonstrate the diversity of farms in Ulster County — livestock, vegetable, fruit, smaller, newer, larger, and multigeneration, employing many practices," **said Deborah DeWan, Agriculture Services Administrator in the County's Department of Economic Development.** "It is very gratifying to see all the thought and effort that the farmers have made to develop these innovative projects that will have a great impact on their farms and on agriculture throughout the county for years to come."

"This program reflects Ulster County's commitment to strengthening our farms while addressing energy efficiency and climate resilience," **said Peter Criswell, Chair of the Ulster County Legislature and former Chair of the ARPA Committee.** "By investing ARPA funds in long-term, tangible improvements, we're helping farmers meet today's challenges and build a more sustainable future. I'm proud of the Legislature's role in making this possible and grateful to HVADC and the review panel for guiding the process."

"When we support our farms, we support their families, their communities and the county at large," **said Megan Sperry, Legislative Vice Chair and Chair of the Economic Development Planning, Education, Employment, Arts & Agriculture Committee.** "We are a county that is rich in agriculture and benefits from agri-tourism. Our farmers face rising costs associated with tariffs, climate change, and cost-of-living increases. Anytime we can invest in our farms, we invest in our county, and I'm looking forward to seeing this round of grants bring a cascade effect for years to come."

"Ulster County's program to provide funding to farmers for projects that boost productivity while reducing carbon emissions, protecting soils, and enhancing flood resilience should become a model for New York State and the entire country," **said Ulster County Legislator Kathy Nolan, who helped design the program.** "The diversity and creativity shown by these projects proposed by farmers in Ulster County speaks to an untapped fund of knowledge and wisdom that is deeply inspiring, and is likely to attract new young farmers as well as form a part of the area's expanding agrotourism sector. I look forward to seeing these amazing projects implemented, and to finding ways to continue supporting farmers and putting them into leadership roles on our resiliency and climate stabilizing efforts."

"The Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District (UCSWD) is proud to support these forward-thinking farms as they take on the dual challenges of economic viability and climate resilience," **said UCSWD Executive Director Jake Wedemeyer.** "From frost-protection systems and solar power to agroforestry and electric vehicles, these projects represent the innovation and grit that define Ulster County's agricultural community. Each farm is not only investing in its future, but also contributing to a more sustainable and secure local food system."

"The Rondout Valley Growers Association is extremely grateful to the County Executive and Ulster County Legislature for establishing the Farm Viability & Sustainability Grant Program," **said Matt Igoe, RVGA Executive Director.** "Despite the HUGE support from our community in purchasing locally grown food, our small family farms struggle to make the capital investments they need to stave off climate change and remain economically viable, both of which are essential in preserving our precious farmland for the next generation of farmers. The Farm Viability & Sustainability Grant Program is a vital part in making these investments a reality. Congratulations to all the awardees!"

Ulster County received 37 applications to the Farm Viability & Sustainability Grant Program. For more information about the Grant Program, visit <https://participate.ulstercountyny.gov/farm-grants>

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