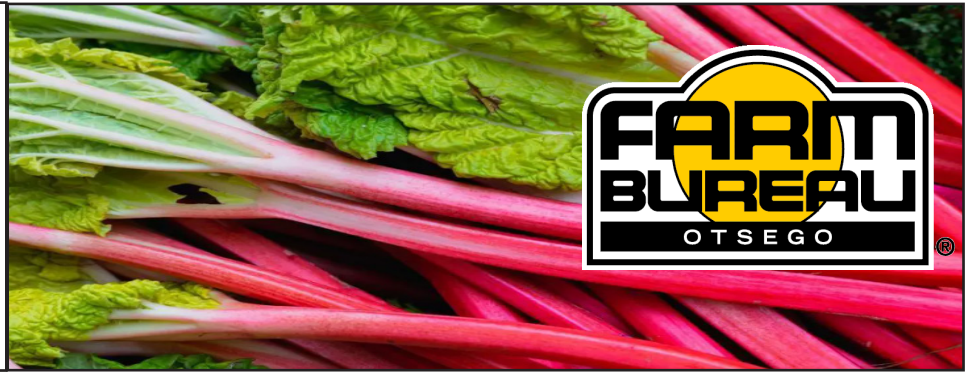


# Otsego County Farm Bureau News

May 2026



## Vice President's Message

*The Value of Farm Bureau: Seeking to Serve All*



Farm Bureau means many things to many people, but more than anything, it is the largest, most inclusive general farming organization in the country and here in New York. That means we serve a broad, diverse range of members, from shellfish farmers on Long Island to Dairy, livestock and crops growers in Otsego County, and everyone in between. While it's always a challenge to represent the best interests of all members, we rely on our grassroots approach to make sure all our members' voices are heard. It's truly a democratic process that has stood the test of time since our humble beginnings in 1911.

Recently, New York Farm Bureau President David Fisher wrapped up a series of listening sessions in regions across the state. The idea began at NYFB's State Annual Convention last year, where President Fisher shared updates on New York Farm Bureau's financial landscape and the need to prepare for future challenges. Needless to say, County Farm Bureaus are an integral part of our organization, so he wanted to directly involve county leaders and members in that process.

As President Fisher traveled around the state, he was reminded of the diversity of our members' agricultural endeavors and their economic situations. As he noted, we need to hear from as many members as possible as we discuss policy, finances, the structure of Farm Bureau, and funding opportunities. We cannot support and grow our County Farm Bureaus without the input of those who have boots on the ground. That includes Otsego County. We need our members to actively share their perspectives and help us increase engagement at the local level. Our voices matter.

I also encourage you to become directly involved in advocacy. In March, President Fisher accompanied members, staff and board members on an advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., where they met with legislators and cabinet members to discuss labor, the Farm Bill, WOTUS, PFAS, biosolids, animal care, and technology, among other topics. County Farm Bureau members were an essential part of that team, telling authentic stories that resonated with elected officials and their staff.

## Burger Night with Farm Bureau at High Burl Brewing

**Friday, June 5**  
**High Burl Brewing**  
**2803 NY-80**  
**Burlington Flats**  
**4 p.m. - 8 p.m.**



All members are invited to a members' appreciation evening. Your Otsego County Farm Bureau is offering FREE burgers for you and a guest as a token of our appreciation for your membership and support of our agricultural advocacy. Each member and their spouse/guest will receive a \$15 coupon to be used at the food truck for the tasty treat of your choice.

Come out and appreciate the camaraderie with your fellow members while you are enjoying a great grilled burger and the beverage of your choice.

There will be a variety of door prizes and giveaways throughout the evening.

*Continued on back*

## The International Year of the Woman Farmer

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations officially launched the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF) 2026 with an opening ceremony held in late 2025, officially setting the stage for global action in 2026.

Women farmers are central to food security, nutrition and economic resilience. The International Year of the Woman Farmer spotlights the essential roles women play across agrifood systems — from production to trade — while these roles often go

unrecognized. IYWF 2026 aims to raise awareness and promote actions to close gender gaps and improve women's livelihoods worldwide.

“Progress on women's empowerment in food systems has largely stalled in the last decade,” said Dr. Máximo Torero Cullen, chief of economics for FAO. Dr. Cullen added that women continue to earn less than their male counterparts, often working more hours and under harsher conditions with fewer protections.

According to the most recent Census of Agriculture in the U.S., women in agriculture saw a slight decline in representation within the farming and ranching industries, even

as the data shows they have a greater role on family operations.

IYWF 2026 seeks to address the challenges women in agriculture face, such as land tenure, financial and technical constraints, and limited access to services and education. It also seeks to encourage policies and investments that empower women in agrifood systems, and to promote greater synergies among international initiatives supporting women farmers.

Know a female farmer or ag professional who's doing great things? Email Melanie Contreras at [mcontreras@nyfb.org](mailto:mcontreras@nyfb.org) and see how she could be featured in a social media campaign!

---

## Partner Spotlight – Otsego County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

This year's Otsego County Fair will mark the 21st anniversary that the Otsego County Farm Bureau and the Otsego Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs formed an alliance to work jointly on issues that would benefit each organization's members.

The current Federation in Otsego County is comprised of ten Rod & Gun Clubs, plus Trout Unlimited and Farm Bureau. Each club is entitled to send one club member as a voting Federation Delegate to the monthly meetings. The function of the club delegate is to take issues back to the clubs for further discussion and to relay the club's stance on the various issues to the Federation. The Federation then sends that feedback on to the Conservation Council for further discussion and action.

The Federation is a member of the New York State Conservation Council, which represents over 300,000 sportsmen and women from sportsmen's groups across New York State. The Council represents the sportsmen in NYS by taking their concerns to Albany and in turn bringing pending legislation back to the sportsmen, so they can voice their concerns to their representatives.

Currently the Council is urging members to contact their legislators to vote against Bill A10352 & S9473, which would prohibit the donation of game harvested with lead ammunition for human consumption. If passed, these bills would significantly reduce the amount of venison donated each year—tens of thousands of pounds that currently go to families in need through programs, Feeding NYS, the Venison Donation Coalition, Hunters Helping the Hungry and numerous local organizations. It would also risk undermining deer population management by discouraging harvest, especially among hunters who rely on donation programs to make full use of their tags.

The Federation also offers programs for area youth including:

- A conservation exhibit at the Otsego County Fair
- Sponsoring youth to attend DEC Camp
- Supporting area high school clay target teams
- A one day fishing clinic in Neahwa Park
- Providing an annual \$350 Karker Scholarship



*In recognition of his years of service representing Otsego County agriculture, board member Steve Sinniger (right) receives a certificate of appreciation from Bob Pierce, president of the Otsego County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.*

# History and Economic Impact of the Cattle Industry in Otsego County

The cattle industry, including both dairy and beef production, has played a major role in the historical and economic development of Otsego County. Since the county's establishment in 1791, cattle farming has shaped the landscape, economy, and rural culture of the region. Although dairy farming became the dominant sector, beef production also remained an important part of local agriculture. Together, these industries reflect broader changes in American farming, including advances in technology, transportation, and agricultural specialization.

In the early years of settlement, farmers cleared forests and converted the land into productive farms. By 1860, nearly all of the county's land was devoted to agriculture. Farms were generally small, family-run operations practicing mixed agriculture. Cattle were especially valuable because they provided both dairy products and beef. Dairy cows supplied milk, butter, and cheese, while beef cattle contributed meat and hides. The county's rolling hills, fertile soil, and favorable climate made it particularly well suited for grazing and forage crops, encouraging the growth of cattle farming.

The cattle industry expanded significantly in the late 19th century with the arrival of the railroad. Rail transportation allowed farmers to ship fresh milk to large urban markets, especially New York City. This shifted local agriculture from small-scale subsistence farming to commercial dairy production. As creameries and cooperative marketing systems developed, farmers gained more efficient ways to process and distribute milk. During this time, Otsego County became part of the larger dairy-producing region of upstate New York. In the 20th century, technological advances transformed the industry. Mechanization, improved breeding

practices, and better animal nutrition greatly increased productivity. Average milk production per cow rose dramatically over time, allowing farms to produce more with fewer animals. Agriculture also became more specialized, with dairy farming remaining dominant while other livestock sectors declined. Beef production continued, often as part of diversified farming operations.

Despite these advances, farmers faced increasing economic pressures. Dairy producers had little control over milk prices, while the costs of feed, equipment, and supplies continued to rise. Smaller farms often struggled to remain profitable, leading to consolidation within the industry. Larger farms absorbed smaller operations, creating a more concentrated agricultural economy.

Even with these challenges, cattle farming remains an important part of Otsego County's economy. Dairy production generates millions of dollars annually and supports related industries such as feed production, equipment sales, veterinary services, transportation, and food processing. Agriculture also contributes to agritourism and local food systems through farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture programs.

Although the number of farms has declined in recent decades, the cattle industry continues to influence the county's identity and economy. Dairy and beef farming remain closely tied to the region's rural heritage and continue to play a significant role in sustaining agricultural communities throughout Otsego County.



**Otsego County Fair**  
August 4–9, 2026 at the Otsego County Fairgrounds, 48 Lake Street, Morris.

New York Farm Bureau  
 159 Wolf Road, Suite 300  
 Albany, NY 12205  
 Otsego County Farm Bureau



*Vice President’s Message, continued*

I encourage you to join on such trips, whether to D.C. or to Albany. You can also help by e-lobbying. It takes only a few minutes to send a letter to your legislator. To view current issues, visit [nyfb.org/engagements](http://nyfb.org/engagements).

Farm Bureau opens its doors to anyone, from the smallest hobby farmer to the largest commercial grower, and friends of farming as well. We couldn’t be where we are today without that diversity, and I hope you share my pride in the way Otsego County Farm Bureau serves as a valuable resource for all.

We always welcome you at our table. Your voices are the lifeblood of our organization, and we value your stories and your active engagement. Together, we will grow a stronger Farm Bureau.

*Tina Douglas*

**OTSEGO COUNTY FARM BUREAU  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- PRESIDENT: ..... vacant
- VICE-PRESIDENT: Christina Douglas ..... 315-272-9189
- TREASURER: Ed Schoene, DVM ..... 607-267-0068
- SECRETARY: Aimee Hill..... 607-242-6216
- DIRECTORS:**
- Darin Hickling ..... 607-267-0703
- Shawn Miller ..... 315-985-1626
- Luke Pullis ..... 315-263-7422
- Julie Stannard ..... 607-264-3090
- Christine Tausel ..... 607-638-5518
- YF&R CHAIR: Megan Richards ..... 607-376-3922
- PRO-ED CHAIR: Steven Sinniger ..... 607-988-7071
- STATE DIRECTOR: Steven Smith ..... 518-207-7112
- COUNTY MANAGER: Todd Heyn ..... 518-431-9338

*The Otsego County Board of Directors usually meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Otsego County in Cooperstown, NY.*