

Southern Tier Agricultural Industry Enhancement Program

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If you are a farmer in the Southern Tier, you may want to consider applying for a grant under the "On-Farm Enhancement Grant Program" from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The grants, ranging from \$20,000 to \$100,000, are available to farmers located in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Alleghany, Steuben, Schuyler, Tompkins, Chemung, Tioga, Broome, Chenango, and Delaware counties.

The first application period began January 19, 2016 and ends March 7, 2016 while the second application period begins July 11, 2016 and ends September 19, 2016. There will be two additional application periods in 2017. Applications can be obtained from Soil and Water Conservation District Offices in any of those 11 counties.

The following is a brief overview of the grant program and is not meant to be a comprehensive summary of the Southern Tier Agricultural Industry Enhancement Program.

The grants are to be used to assist farm operators in implementing portions of an approved farm business or an environmental plan that will likely increase farm production, enhance profitability, and/or increase environmental compatibility of the farm operation. It is recommended that you obtain the assistance of a third party when preparing the farm business or environmental plan. The plan must be submitted with the application for funding. The grants can only be used to fund projects located on land owned and operated by an "Eligible Farm Operation". Therefore, projects located on rented land are not eligible for funding.

The Agriculture and Markets Law defines an "Eligible Farm Operation" as individuals, partnership, associations, cooperative, corporations, or LLCs that manage a "farm operation".

"Farm operation" means the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise, including a commercial horse boarding operation; a timber operation; a compost, mulch, or other biomass crops operation; and a commercial equine operation. Such farm operation may consist of one or more parcels of owned or rented land, which parcels may be contiguous or noncontiguous to each other.

Other eligibility requirements include:

1. Farm operations must document the receipt of Farmers' School Property Tax Credit in 3 of the 5 years prior to submitting an application.
2. Farm operations requesting funding for value-added projects must produce a minimum of 51% of the raw materials on the eligible farm operation.

3. Farm operations must meet one of the following criteria with respect to the NYS Agricultural Environmental Management Program (AEM):
 - a. Participated in AEM within the past 3 years from the date of application.
 - b. Participating in AEM at the time of application.
 - c. Agree to participate in AEM prior to the execution of a contract to receive funding under this program.

The grants can be used for capital costs necessary to complete the eligible project such as for construction, renovation, building, structures, irrigation, drainage, environmental enhancements, fencing, trellis systems, greenhouses, permanently installed equipment, permanent root stock, and professional services.

However, there are restrictions on what the grants can be used for. Some of the ineligible capital costs include, but are not limited to, land purchase or rent, machinery and equipment not part of a structure or that does not require installation (i.e., rolling stock, working capital, animals stock, debt, taxes, penalties, non-permanent root stock, or nursery stock).

Funding to an eligible applicant will be at least \$20,000 but cannot exceed \$100,000. For funding requests between \$20,000 and \$50,000, NYS will provide up to 90% of the eligible project cost with the applicant providing 10% of the eligible project cost. For funding requests between \$50,001 and \$100,000, NYS will provide up to 75% of the eligible project cost with the applicant providing 25% of the eligible project cost.

For additional information about the grant program, please [click here](#) to access the needed forms through the Tompkins County website or check with a Soil and Water Conservation District Office in an eligible county. Additionally, many of the Cornell Cooperative Extension offices in the Southern Tier counties have information available. You may also contact any member of our [Agricultural Services Team](#) and we would be happy to assist you or to provide you with additional information.