2020 TOMPKINS COUNTY AGRICULINARY TOURISM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Tompkins County
Strategic Tourism Planning Board
8.25.16

Acknowledgements

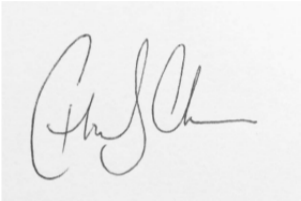
To everyone who loves Ithaca, Tompkins County, and the Finger Lakes:

Ithaca and Tompkins County are poised to be the premiere Finger Lakes destination for agricultural and culinary tourism. Tapping into the unique farming and culinary bounty in the region, Tompkins County and the surrounding areas can offer truly authentic food, beverage and farm based experiences to visitors seeking an agritourism destination. Not unlike Napa Valley in the west, the Finger Lakes can offer visitors a bountiful selection of restaurants, wineries, breweries, distilleries, artisan cheese and bread makers, and other agricultural businesses to connect with during a stay. Tompkins County and Ithaca, NY offer the infrastructure and geography to serve as a natural hub for visitors branching out to the farms, wineries and culinary destinations in the Finger Lakes.

This Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan is focused on enhancing the existing agritourism movement in the region surrounding the Southern end of Cayuga Lake with a renewed focus on developing our many local assets, products, events and resources. We've spoken with stakeholders throughout the county to take steps towards elevating the overall experience for visitors, and assisting in the curation and packaging of our offerings.

Visitors come to our region for a wealth of reasons, but culinary experiences are at the top of the list. By taking a hyper-focused approach to improving the experience for both the providers and the guests, we believe we can be a leader and model of agriculinary tourism in North America.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this Plan, especially fellow members of our Agriculinary Tourism Task Force and the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, the Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and the Tompkins County Planning Department. We are so excited to see this work continue to unfold and to experience agritourism and culinary tourism flourishing in our region.



Rita Rosenberg and Ethan Ash, Co-Chairs, Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Task Force

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Executive Summary

The area surrounding Ithaca and Tompkins County is rich with culinary and agricultural assets. Our region hosts a vibrant local food movement, one of the most famous farmers markets in the country, over 400 farms within a 30-mile radius, and world renowned wineries. Ithaca is known for having more restaurants per capita than New York City[i] and has been rated America's #6 "Foodiest Town" by *Bon Appetit* and #3 "Secretly Amazing City for Wine Lovers" by *MSN*. Craft cider, microbreweries, and spirits are blossoming. And our agritourism and culinary offerings are local, accessible, affordable, authentic, and experiential – qualities valued highly by millennials and by all types of leisure visitors.

Meanwhile, Food Tourism, already demonstrated by the 2009 "Profile of Visitors to Tompkins County" study as a motivator for travel to Ithaca and Tompkins County, is on the rise across the U.S. The 2013 "American Culinary Traveler Report," published by Mandala Research, showed that the percentage of U.S. leisure travelers who travel to learn about and enjoy unique dining experiences grew from 40% to 51% between 2006 and 2013. Locally, in 2014 visitor spending on food and beverage topped $50 million, more than a quarter of all spending by visitors to Tompkins County.

But the full potential to develop local agritourism and culinary tourism has not yet been realized. The goal of this four-year implementation plan is to leverage existing institutional capacity and our strengths and assets in local food and agritourism; and to address gaps in marketing, information, and cross-industry relationships in order to "develop Ithaca and Tompkins County as a regional hub of culinary and agritourism".

What is Agriculinary Tourism?

The combination of visitor experiences around local farms and locally-produced food and beverages.

Vision: Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism in 2020

A shared vision for the future will support our partners and everyone interested in this effort in imagining what we can achieve through our combined efforts. This is our shared vision for Agriculinary Tourism in Tompkins County in 2020:

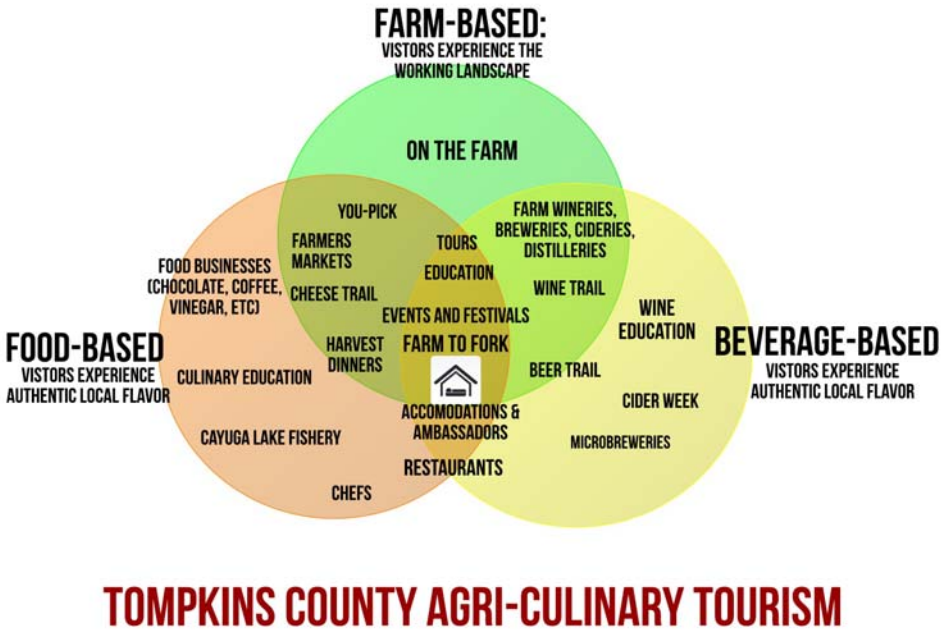
- ***Vital working landscapes***
- ***Easy access***
- ***Personal connection***
- ***Recognition as a destination***
- ***Authentic, memorable experiences***
- ***High-quality products & services***
- ***Thriving businesses & entrepreneurs***
- ***Tourism growth***

As a result of a focused local effort on developing and promoting agricultural and culinary tourism, Ithaca and Tompkins County are recognized within New York State and the Northeast as a premier destination within the Finger Lakes region for interesting, enlightening, and memorable food and farm based experiences.

With coordinated marketing, visitors find it easy to experience the area and to connect agriculinary tourism experiences with other opportunities in Tompkins County such as the community's state parks and natural areas, downtown Ithaca, events and festivals, performing and visual arts, museums, local heritage, and education. With a highly visible agriculinary brand identity, visitors develop a strong personal connection to the area. With institutional support for agriculinary tourism product development, our local farm and food assets are strengthened so that visitors can access the full variety of authentic, memorable experiences.

As a result of expanded agricultural and culinary tourism development, the community's diverse working landscapes are a valued source of economic vitality. Family owned and operated farms and locally-owned wineries, breweries, cideries and other food producers and providers of agriculinary experiences are supported in developing high-quality products and services for visitors. Innovative farm, food, restaurant and tourism industry entrepreneurs generate vital income to sustain their operations.

Based on the personal connections and authentic experiences with unique food producers, chefs, farms and restaurants during their stay, visitors generate word of mouth and social media coverage, generating additional growth of tourists to the region, more overnight stays and additional revenues in the local economy.



TOMPKINS COUNTY AGRI-CULINARY TOURISM

Strategies and Actions Summary

This Plan describes assets and opportunities for agriculinary tourism development surrounding the people, places, organizations and agriculinary tourism activities of this unique place. The 12 actions in three strategic areas listed below will strengthen this component of the Tompkins County Tourism Program. The Plan identifies possible funding and lead organizations for these actions, but does not commit future funding to agriculinary tourism initiatives. The following actions will be initiated by 2017, and completed by 2020. For a full description of strategies and actions, see this section in the full plan.

Infrastructure: Grow our local capacity to develop and promote our outstanding agriculinary tourism assets.

- **Backbone Program** - Establish a backbone program at the CVB with dedicated staff to lead implementation of agriculinary tourism branding, marketing and product development efforts and to coordinate the work of external contractors and partners.
- **Assessment, Training, and Technical Assistance** - Provide assessment, training and technical assistance to farms and agriculinary tourism businesses on business development, grant-writing, tourism and marketing.
- **Mini-Grant Program** - Establish a new agriculinary tourism mini-grant program for projects or businesses with potential to generate additional tourism and support the goals of this Plan.
- **Asset Inventory** - Maintain and continually update an internal database with an inventory of existing and emerging agriculinary tourism products, experiences, partners and facilities. Use it to evaluate tourism development potential, create new promotional efforts, and facilitate internal linkages and partnerships.
- **B2B Networking** - Establish a series of regular agriculinary business to business networking events to build relationships between farmers, producers, chefs, restaurants, tourism industry professionals, event producers, and allied organizations, and to provide information on industry best practices.

Marketing: Enhance coordinated marketing and branding platforms.

- **Branding and Marketing Strategy** - Create a comprehensive agriculinary branding and marketing strategy document which identifies priority messages, audiences, channels, partnerships, content creation opportunities, social media, SEO, automated marketing procedures, active-engagement marketing techniques, and PR with content creation and pitches across a variety of media.
- **Branding Guidelines for Partners** - Publish agriculinary branding guidelines to use in design and delivery of collective and partner marketing across multiple applications and responsible agencies.
- **Online Destination - IthacaFork.com** - Update IthacaFork.com to increase user engagement to promote food, farm, and beverage experiences across various themes and audiences.

Product: Develop new agriculinary tourism products and experiences

- **Agriculinary Tourism Events** - Establish an *Ithaca Fork Open Farm Weekend* event and grow or establish other major agriculinary focused events for visitors that tie together regional agriculinary themes, products and experiences.
- **Ithaca Fork Farm Guide** - Establish an *Ithaca Fork Farm Trail* to promote agriculinary tourism partners who meet criteria for visitor readiness and product offerings.
- **Package Development** - Develop and promote agriculinary tourism packages and tours for small and large groups around existing tourism-ready facilities and experiences.
- **Product Development Partner Support** - Support partners in establishing and expanding agriculinary tourism experiences for visitors including culinary education classes, workshops, retreats/camps, farm and culinary tours; foodie tour packages; dinner-on-the-farm type events; farm stays and B&Bs on the farm; farm-restaurant pairings; and weddings on the farm.

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Introduction

In 2014, the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, an advisory body to the Tompkins County Legislature, formed the Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Task Force to develop a focused effort around local agritourism and culinary tourism. This effort is in service of one of 15 goals established by the Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan, specifically to:

"DEVELOP ITHACA AND TOMPKINS COUNTY AS A REGIONAL HUB OF CULINARY AND AGRITOURISM."

The Task Force began meeting in early 2014 to pull together information about local culinary and agritourism assets and opportunities, and to identify local strengths and challenges. These efforts were aided by community energy and support for local food and local farms that we can leverage and help grow by working together on tourism. Relatively early in the process, the Task Force also began using the term "Agriculinary Tourism" as a way to define the scope of our efforts and to amplify the importance of the connection between visitor experiences of the local landscape and locally-produced food and beverages.

It is important early to identify the scope of the geographic region for our efforts. While this effort is driven by the Tompkins County Tourism Program and the County's Strategic Tourism Planning Board, and therefore the primary focus of these efforts is to grow tourism within Tompkins County, efforts should be undertaken with awareness of regional context, with the Finger Lakes region being the primary tourism region to which we are connected. It is also clear that the asset base for which Ithaca and Tompkins County are the natural visitor hub extends beyond County borders. We therefore have loosely adopted a geographic framework similar to that of the Ithaca Farmers Market, which encompasses an area of approximately a 30 mile radius from Ithaca.

Stakeholder outreach included an extensive online survey and culminated in a large community gathering in fall 2014 at which more than 100 local farmers, food and beverage producers, chefs, restaurant owners, tourism partners, and allied professionals generated hundreds of creative ideas for actions to advance local agriculinary tourism. The Agriculinary Tourism Task Force then undertook a thoughtful process to distill this feedback into a smaller set of possible actions and prioritize actions from among these to advance as the strategies and actions found in this plan. The full list of possible actions which were developed, along with survey results are provided in the Appendix.

In Spring 2015 while this plan was under development, the Tompkins County Tourism Program and the Task Force had an opportunity to apply for and receive a USDA grant to support Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to begin working on several of the ideas which had begun to emerge as priorities. As a result, completion of this plan document was set aside temporarily to work on the grant-funded initiatives. Further stakeholder engagement through delivery of a well-attended USDA-grant-funded agritourism training workshop in March 2016, along with the experience of developing work plans for the rest of the grant work, have made this plan better.

The rest of this document contains three sections:

1) Overview: An overview of trends and market potential for local agriculinary tourism.
2) Assets & Opportunities: A summary and analysis of local assets, challenges and opportunities.
3) Strategies & Actions: What will be done when, who will do it, and measures of success.

Overview

This section contains a summary of trends and possible impacts related to agriculinary tourism development. The importance of culinary tourism as well as direct sales to farms and agritourism are on the rise nationally and regionally. For the purpose of researching and describing trends, agriculinary tourism is commonly separated into its two main parts – Agritourism and Culinary Tourism or Food Tourism.

Agritourism is defined by the Vermont Agritourism Collaborative[ii] as:

> *The business of establishing farms as destinations for education, recreation, and the purchase of farm products; giving visitors the opportunity to connect with the working landscape and 'farm experience', and creating an additional source of revenue for the host farm.*

The Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance uses the following definition:

> *Food tourism is any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates, and/or consumes food and drink that reflects the local, regional or national cuisine, heritage and culture.*

Agritourism Trends

Agritourism goes beyond what we typically think of as a destination farm with farm direct sales like a farmstand or you-pick operation. It also includes education (such as hosting school groups on the farm); festivals and events including weddings; farmstays; and recreational activities on farms including hunting, horseback riding, cyclocross bicycle racing, etc.

Farms which play a role in the local food system may be more likely to be active in agritourism than other types of farms, so a look at trends in local food sales is helpful. According to a recent report from the Economic Research Service on *Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems*, nationally "producer participation in local food systems is growing, and the value of local food sales, defined as the sale of food for human consumption through both direct-to-consumer (e.g., farmers' markets) and intermediated marketing channels (e.g., sales to institutions or regional distributors), appears to be increasing.

Locally, "there are 31 County farms that sell to local consumers, and at least another 50 beyond our borders but within a 30-mile radius of Ithaca (required for selling at the Ithaca Farmers Market) that depend on Tompkins County outlets and consumers for product sales."[iii] Given demand for local food and farm products, there is a growing market for locally raised poultry, pigs, lamb, sheep and goat milk cheese or yogurt, and fiber[iv]. Based on sales data gathered by Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County (CCETC), the estimated value of local foods (produce, meats and specialty products) sold to and consumed by area residents is estimated to be $20 million;

this is 10% of all food sold at retail ($200 million). A full 20% of fruits and vegetables consumed by county residents come from area farms. "These numbers are considerably higher than national averages reported in the USDA Agriculture Census data where only 2% of agriculture sales are categorized as being sold for human consumption."[v]

Data for New York State compiled through the USDA Census of Agriculture also shows that agritourism is on the rise in New York State. While total direct sales and agritourism combined grew from $78 million to $131.9 million in the decade between 2002 and 2012, agritourism grew from $1.8 to $31.2 million in the same period, accounting for a much larger portion of the gain in combined direct sales and agritourism than direct sales alone.

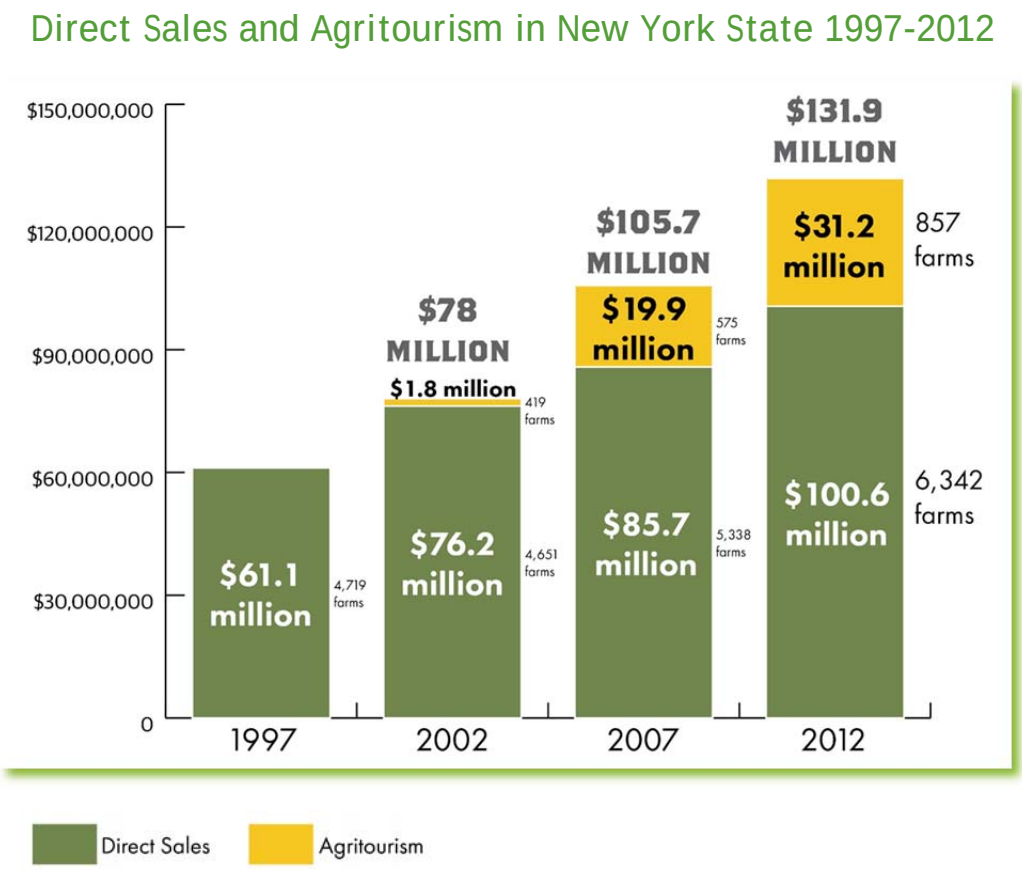

FIGURE 1 – SOURCE: USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE, COMPILED BY LISA CHASE, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT EXTENSION. DATA INCLUDES DIRECT SALES PLUS AGRI-TOURISM & RECREATIONAL SERVICES, SUCH AS FARM OR WINERY TOURS, HAY RIDES, HUNTING, FISHING, ETC.

Culinary Tourism Trends

> *"While cuisine has always been an important part of most travel experiences, the concept of traveling to a destination specifically for its food and beverage product is a relatively recent mainstream consumer trend"*[1]

According to the 2013 *American Culinary Traveler Report* produced by Mandala Research, 77% of the American leisure travelers (the 170 million people who have taken a recent vacation) have participated in culinary activities such as such as dining out for a unique or memorable experience, taking cooking classes, or attending food festivals, while traveling over the past three years. The report also indicated that, "about half of all leisure travelers travel to learn about or enjoy unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences (51%), a notable gain from 2006 when 40% said they traveled for these reasons." The report further categorizes culinary travelers based on the importance of the culinary experience in their motivation to travel. As a portion of the 77% of leisure travelers, Culinary Travelers are further broken into:

- Deliberate, 30%
- Opportunistic, 26%
- Accidental, 19%
- Unclassified, 25%

The report estimates that 39 million U.S. leisure travelers choose a destination based on the availability of culinary activities (the 'deliberate' group), while another 35 million seek out culinary activities after a destination is decided upon (the 'opportunistic' group). For certain consumers, wine and beer play an even more important role in the decision to travel. One out of five culinary travelers participated in a wine-related activity on a trip in the past three years (18%). However, 70% of those who did engage in wine-related activities say those activities were a factor in driving the destination decision. One out of four Culinary travelers have participated in beer-related activities on a trip within the past three years (25%), and four out of ten Culinary travelers who participated in a beer-related activities say those activities were a driver of their trip (40%).

The report further breaks down the importance of Culinary Tourism based on generation, with a full two-thirds of Gen Y and Gen X leisure travelers saying that they are interested in taking a culinary trip in the next year. And according to the report *The Rise of Food Tourism* by Skift and the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, millennials especially but all generations of travelers are most interested in **local** and **authentic** foods and experiences.

Finally, the role of social media platforms in culinary tourism cannot be overstated:

> *"Every traveler today has the ability to digitally share their culinary experiences with friends and strangers around the world, fueling a veritable social media arms race to determine who has the most unique F&B experiences."* [1]

> *"Driving these travel trends immeasurably, culinary tourists share millions of F&B-themed photos daily across social platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and especially Flickr. This increases travel consumers' awareness of different cuisines and cultures, and it fuels their desire to experience them."* [1]

1 -The Rise of Culinary Tourism, Skift and Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, 2015

Market Potential

What is the current and potential impact of agriculinary tourism in Tompkins County?

In 2012, it was estimated that tourism expenditures on food services in the U.S. topped $201 billion, nearly a quarter of all travel income. That makes food service the highest category of traveler spending nationally, according to the University of Florida report: *A Flash of Culinary Tourism.* Locally, food and beverage-related spending is the highest spending category among visitors to Tompkins County, according to the 2010 *Profile of Visitors to Tompkins County* study. The chart below identifies average spending patterns. As an average of all visitors, $65 out of $185 in total per trip spending, or 35%, was on food and beverage. In a separate study commissioned by Empire State Development/I Love NY, Tourism Economics estimates that 26.3% of all tourism-related spending in Tompkins County is on food and beverage, for a total of $50.2 million out of $191 million in 2014. This is at the same level as visitor spending on lodging. Converting even a small portion of these existing food and beverage expenditures to local food could have a big impact on direct sales from local farms and food producers.

Table 2.16: Average Spending Per Visitor Per Trip in Tompkins County

	Stay with Family Friends	Stay in Hotels	Other Lodging	Day Trippers	Average All Visitors	Average Overnight Visitors
Food & Drink	$86	$99	$81	$19	$65	$92
Lodging	$0	$136	$71	$0	$52	$83
Shopping	$59	$71	$43	$21	$47	$63
Local Transportation	$15	$20	$17	$3	$12	$18
Entertainment & Attractions	$8	$5	$5	$3	$5	$6
Other	$3	$3	$0	$5	$4	$3
Total	$172	$335	$216	$51	$185	$265
Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics						

FIGURE 2 – CHART DRAWN FROM 2010 PROFILE OF VISITORS TO TOMPKINS COUNTY REPORT

It is difficult to estimate what portion of visitor food and beverage sales are currently of locally-produced food and beverages or what the contribution of agritourism is to Tompkins County, but we can make some rough estimates working with assumptions from other data.

The USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service estimates the amount of direct sales plus agritourism & recreational services, such as farm or winery tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc. in Tompkins County to be between $2.5 and $5 million (see figure 3). However, given CCETC's local research, this may underestimate the value of visitor food and beverage consumption to local farms. If the same ratio of 10% estimated by Cornell Cooperative Extension for the portion of local food out of all retail food sales by residents were to hold for visitors, then we could assume that approximately $5 million of the $50 million visitors spent on food and beverages was spend on locally-produced food and beverages alone.

One way to estimate the contribution of agritourism to the Tompkins County economy would be to assume a similar ratio as in the figures from the USDA Census of Agriculture for New York State in 2012, where there were estimated to be $31.2 million in total sales from agritourism and $100.6 million direct sales. If there are $20 million in direct sales from local farms in Tompkins County, then one might assume based on this ratio of approximately

31 to 100 that there could be $6.2 million in additional agritourism sales in Tompkins County, above and beyond the $20 million in estimated direct sales from farms to local consumers. These are rough estimates, and we would like to have better data to support evaluation of our agriculinary tourism efforts, by showing change in direct farm sales due to visitors and agritourism activities over time. As such, CCETC is currently collecting data from surveys of local farms as part of the USDA-grant funded activities referenced earlier in this report.

Clearly agriculinary tourism already contributes significantly to the local tourism economy and to local farms, food and beverage producers, and restaurants' bottom lines, and we expect as a result of the efforts laid out in this plan that those impacts will increase over time.

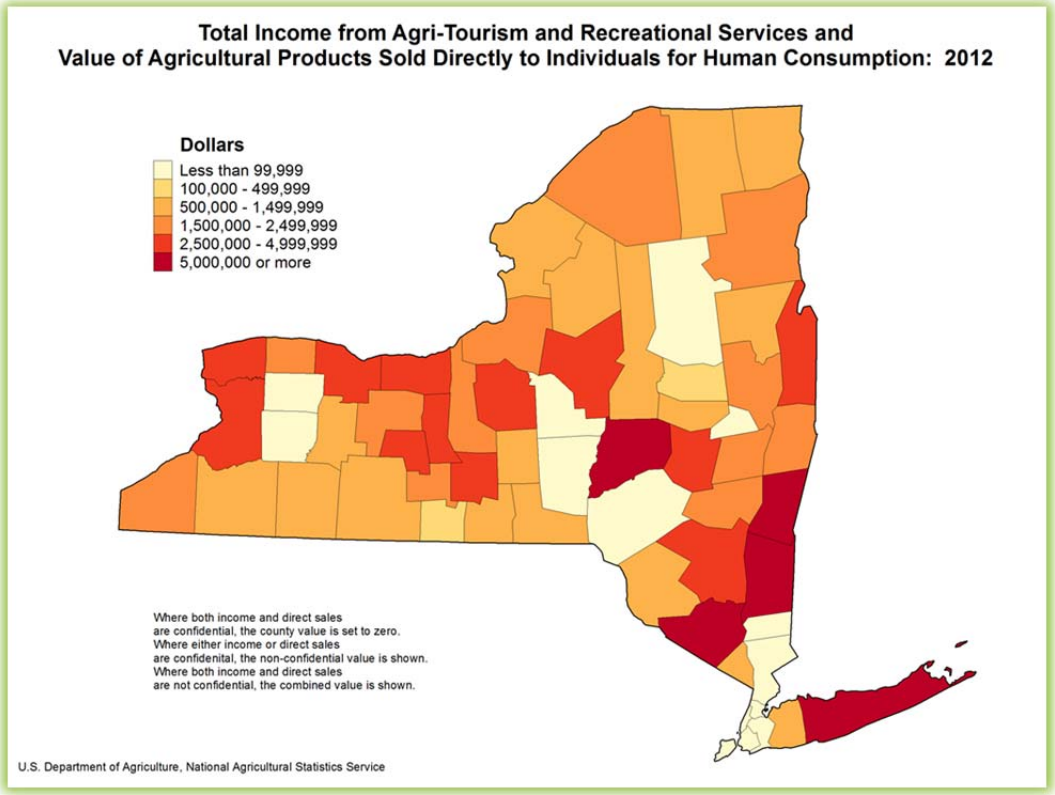

FIGURE 3 - CHART PROVIDED BY LISA CHASE, UVM EXTENSION

Assets & Opportunities

This section contains a detailed description of local agriculinary tourism assets as well as overarching strengths and challenges related to developing Tompkins County as an agriculinary tourism destination.

Current agriculinary tourism assets description and evaluation

Assets are categorized as follows:

1. Working Landscape
2. Farms
3. Farm Marketing Outlets
4. Food Enterprises/Manufacturers
5. Retail Food Stores as Draws
6. Food Establishments
7. Wine, Brewery and Cider Destinations
8. Farm Trails
9. Group Touring Market/Packaging
10. Farm-based Lodging
11. Events
12. Engaged Organizations and Resources

Asset 1: Working Landscape

Ithaca and Tompkins County offer a unique blend of urban attractions and activities surrounded by natural areas in state lands and parks interspersed with actively farmed fields and forests all within a 15 minute drive from downtown Ithaca. A day or more exploring the countryside offers many opportunities including farm wineries, farm stands and markets, scenic vistas, hiking, biking, and more. The working landscape is preserved by viable farm operations both large and small; viable farms are key to maintaining the working landscape as a tourism asset. Agritourism provides additional revenue for farms that increases their viability.

Approximately one third of the County's land area (90,000 acres out of 305,000 acres total) is owned and operated by approximately 558 farms (about 100 are full time farms, the balance are small and part time farms). Rural towns have a role in preserving agriculture and working landscapes as an integral part of the local economy and for their tourism value. Several towns [Ithaca, Ulysses, and Lansing (in progress)] have farmland protection plans and agricultural zoning in place to help preserve agriculture.

In addition, the County has conducted a scenic resources inventory which reflects in part the open views that working lands provide across the countryside.

Quality of the asset:

High overall

Challenges:

Maintaining a scenic working landscape as part of the overall agritourism appeal is dependent on viable farming operations and visionary local zoning policies. Farms can derive additional revenue from agritourism activities;

however, local laws can add to the cost of doing business through regulatory burdens, for example zoning that would limit on-farm lodging. Roadside signage can also be an asset or detriment to scenic views. Directional signage is important for wayfinding; however, too many signs can become clutter in the landscape. Rural routes that take you to agritourism destinations and past attractive farmsteads could be developed.

Opportunities:

- Farmers need to be made aware of how they might increase revenue through agritourism enterprise development.
- Municipalities need education about how they can promote agritourism development.
- Agritourism directional signage could be incorporated into the overall Tompkins County wayfinding plan.
- Rural routes could be mapped to guide visitors on self-exploration of agritourism destinations and past scenic farmsteads.

Asset 2: Farms

SWEET LAND FARM

Within a 30 mile radius of Ithaca, there are approximately 400 diverse small scale farms engaged in direct marketing to local residents and visitors. Farms include: small scale diversified livestock producers (poultry, beef, pigs, goats, sheep); vegetable and fruit production; vineyards and hop yards; agroforestry enterprises including maple and mushrooms; honey; greenhouse/nursery and specialty cut flowers; Christmas trees; horse farms with stables and riding; fiber animal farms; and many beginning farmers with innovative ideas for new niche products not yet available in the area.

In addition to the small scale direct market operations there are exemplary commercial dairy and crop farming. Organic farming is practiced on 16,000 acres or one third of the county's harvested land. There are 7 organic dairies, and at least 3 organic crop farms producing grains and beans, as well as a flour mill where local grains are processed.

Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Science operates several research farms in the county that are visited by international researchers as well as educators and farmers.

Quality of the asset:

While there are many farms, only a fraction are effectively direct marketing and even fewer provide a full scale visitor experience (e.g. attractive farmstead, regular hours, guided tours, retail sales, product sampling, etc.). There is much more potential to be realized.

Challenges:

A key challenge is that many farms have limited time and resources to turn a working farm into a destination farm. Another challenge is that farms off the beaten path may not draw enough visitors to warrant the investment required. There is uncertainty about the concept "if you build it, they will come". Some farmers feel they do not have the time or staff available to host visitors, and some simply are not interested in agritourism as part of their overall farm business plan. For those who are interested in agritourism, training on how to host visitors and what to offer would be beneficial.

The cost of marketing to get an agritourism destination noticed is also a barrier to small farms.

Opportunities:

- Focus on the farms already hosting visitors and assess opportunities for improvements, expansion and marketing.
- Identify and work with farms interested in agritourism to guide them in assessing and evaluating options. CCETC has an assessment tool and is providing the assessment for 40 farms in 2016 and 2017.
- Develop training programs based on needs.
- Develop marketing tools to expand outreach and attract customers.
- Designation of rural routes to farms or farm trail maps to include bike tours and hiking routes.
- Provide expanded local support for agricultural economic development, including possibly technical assistance, support for grant-writing, and a new revolving loan fund.

Asset 3: Farm Marketing Outlets

Area direct market farms sell their products using a variety of strategies both on and off the farm. On farm marketing may involve self-serve sales from a freezer/cooler or stand, staffed farm markets, pick your own crops, and CSA farms (Community Supported Agriculture). Farmers Markets are abundant and popular. The Ithaca Farmers Market (since 1973) with 120 vendors operates on Saturdays and Sundays attracting between 3000-5000 customers during the height of the season with at least 30% of the visitors being tourists. The market is in the top 10 county tourism destinations, is often rented for weddings and other private events, and has recently added a Night Market on Thursdays with Tourism Program support. The next most popular market is located in the Village of Trumansburg (since 2001) with 45 vendors that attract a loyal customer base every Wednesday evening from June to October. Customers include locals, seasonal lake residents and visitors to the Cayuga and Seneca wine trails. Several other markets operate in rural towns serving local consumers but with potential to expand. The farmers market at the Triphammer Mall in the Village of Lansing offers convenient shopping for people visiting the fresh fish truck every Friday morning.

ITHACA FARMER'S MARKET

All totaled, the Ithaca/Tompkins County area is one of the most robust small farm and local foods marketing communities in upstate NY and possibly in the country. Our unique local food system emerged from having a viable and ever expanding Ithaca Farmers Market where farmers and other vendors enjoy above average sales. A viable market and receptive consumer base has allowed farm

numbers to grow and farm businesses to expand, and has created a colorful and competitive marketing environment contributing to an ever increasing array of local products. CSA farms have also increased at a rapid rate from when there were only 3 CSA's in 2000 to 43 CSA's today that serve 4,700 households (about 10,000 people eating local foods) in the area.

Quality of the asset:

Farmers Markets – High; Farm Stands – Average; PYO farms – above average; CSA's – these farms are not generally open to the public beyond members, but these are some of the most attractive farmsteads and agritourism could provide additional revenue for some.

Challenges:

The Ithaca Farmers Market has its own set of challenges, mainly limited parking during peak season. Other markets are not plagued by parking issues, but lack customers. PYO and CSA farms range from being highly manicured and organized to being more organic or natural. Signage to markets, PYO farms, and other such destinations is also limited. Direct marketing farms are finding it harder to attract customers given the competition from retail food stores.

Opportunities:

- For the Ithaca Market, a shuttle from the Third St. Plaza parking lot would help and a water taxi shuttle from Cass Park could be an added tourism feature. Promoting biking and walking to the market on the newly completed Cayuga Waterfront Trail is another way that parking challenges can be addressed and partnership with the Ithaca Youth Bureau's new Ithaca Bike Rental project is one potential way to support this.
- Use of the Ithaca Farmers market for other agriculinary events could be expanded.
- Long-term, a four season structure for the Ithaca Farmers Market could be explored.
- PYO and CSA farms as well as farm stands are potential stops for a farm route, tour, or trail program.
- Grow the indoor winter market

Asset 4: Food Enterprises/Manufacturers

ITHACA HUMMUS

Food entrepreneurship is growing in Tompkins County. Food enterprises include added value processed farm products including maple syrup and honey, baked goods and chocolate, beverages including coffee roasting and alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, cider), dairy products including cheese, yogurt and milk, tofu, as well as packaged food products sold locally, regionally or nationally. Tompkins County Area Development is leading a project looking at opportunities to expand food processing as a regional economic development strategy. Some of the existing enterprises are quite invisible to the

public, while others sell from retail locations. The array of products produced in the county is quite astounding and merits attention for its agriculinary tourism potential. Wineries are masters at hosting visitors and offering educational tours about the wine-making process; and the County hosts two – Six Mile Creek and Ports of NY. Other processes like coffee roasting, making cheese and yogurt, hummus, and tofu could be equally as interesting to culinary visitors. As an example, the Finger Lakes Cheese Trail is finding great success with nearly 5000 visitors to their annual festival and between 50 to 400 visitors at farms during their open house weekends. Finally, the many high-quality food products produced in the area (for example, Ithaca Beer, Ithaca Hummus, Ithaca Tofu, Emmy's Organics, Piggery, Purity Ice Cream, Moosewood), may create an opportunity for a shared Ithaca-themed food brand to be developed.

Quality:

Mostly unknown by visitors other than the cheese trail and specific local products.

Challenges:

Food safety is a concern any time visitors enter a food production facility. Some facilities may not be suitable for touring. Special arrangements need to be made with key staff or owners to arrange tours and staff may need training in what to impart to the public as part of an educational tour, and costs/risks may outweigh benefits of agriculinary tourism to many establishments.

Opportunities:

- Identify and evaluate which food enterprises would be willing to host visitors.
- Evaluate facilities; provide suggestions for how and when to host visitors.
- Market assessment and strategies need to be developed.
- These venues might be part of a foodie tour group package.
- Sampling, retail packaging and mail order sales provide direct business benefits.
- Explore the development of a shared Ithaca food brand.

Asset 5: Retail Food Stores as Draws

Local foods are prominently featured at several food retail stores. Greenstar Cooperative Market, operating since 1973, has always featured local as part of its natural food grocery offerings. On a larger scale, Wegman's offers a unique European market format for produce, meats and deli along with local farm and food products. Wegman's and Greenstar are unique among food retailers and a common stopping point for visitors. P&C Fresh on East Hill in Ithaca and Shursave in Trumansburg offer local foods but are less of a visitor destination. Small scale retailers like Brookton's Market in Brooktondale and Good to Go in Trumansburg have recreated the country store as a community hub featuring local products, convenience grocery, and in store deli. The Piggery offers a unique local butcher experience close to the Farmers Market.

GREENSTAR COOPERATIVE MARKET

Quality:

High

Challenges:

Wegman's and Greenstar are already busy venues; smaller rural stores see less traffic.

Opportunities:

- Marketing the rural stores as a connection to community.
- Partnering with Wegmans and Greenstar on agriculinary tourism promotion initiatives.

Asset 6: Food Establishments

MELISSA OF SWEET MELISSA'S ICE CREAM

Food vendors at farmers markets – There are 20 food vendors and 12 artisan bakers offering at least that many unique cuisines as food to eat at the Ithaca and Trumansburg farmers markets. The Ithaca Market has been named the best place for lunch in the county. A few of the market food vendors have restaurants or do catering, but most are only operating at the market.

Food trucks have recently emerged on the local food scene, though the original food truck, Louie's Lunch truck, has operated on campus for more than 90 years. Currently there are 5 active food trucks and others in the making. The Ithaca Children's Garden piloted a weekly "Food Truck Roundup" in summer, 2015 which could be revitalized and reformatted.

Deli/coffee shops – Ithaca Bakery (around since 1901) was relaunched as a deli/bakery and has become the standard for the deli/bakery/specialty food format. Ithaca Coffee Company (2 locations) offers a similar format of specialty foods and craft beers but with a less extensive menu. Gimme Coffee features their locally roasted coffee in 3 locations. All offer a place to stop/relax/regroup as an alternative to fast food.

Ice Cream - Purity Ice Cream, an 80 year institution in Ithaca, is the number one destination for homemade hometown flavors not to be missed. Smaller local homemade ice cream makers like Sweet Melissa's, Dennis', and Cayuga Lake Creamery (up Rte 89 in Seneca County) add great flavor to the local ice cream mix.

Diners – While there is no classic diner car, there are several diners in Ithaca and nearby with standard fare for breakfast and more. Diners are a good place to meet up with locals. In Ithaca, State Street and the Lincoln Street Diner stand out. Linda's in North Lansing is a favorite rural gathering spot.

Restaurants - Ithaca is said to have more restaurants per capita than even New York City[vi]. Variety is the spice of life and it can be found at delis, pizza, Mexican, to pan-Asian, European and upscale Ithaca inspired cuisine at over 179 Ithaca restaurants listed in the Ithaca/Tompkins County visitor guide. Many restaurants (approximately 30) in Ithaca and Tompkins County go the extra mile to find farmers that can provide a stream of local foods. There have been many successful relationships created between the two parties. Restaurants that have been able to build

these relationships are founded on a fresh, seasonal menu that can change daily based on what's available. This takes more work on the restaurant side – menu planning, menu changes frequently, and an adaptive and creative kitchen staff. It elevates many of the farm-to-table restaurants because of their fresh, changing, seasonal menu offerings which are characteristic of restaurants that use local food. *Moosewood Restaurant* with a 42 year history was among the first restaurants in the country to feature vegetarian only cuisine. The restaurants listed on IthacaFork.com each have a list of the local farms from where they source, though it changes often. This up-to-date list of restaurants that serve local is available at: http://ithacafork.com/restaurants/

Cornell School of Hotel Management – This community resource is overlooked as a tourism asset. Students from all over the world come to the school to learn hospitality skills and management.

TC3 Farm to Bistro Experience/Colitvare – This new venue opened in 2014 provides student training in culinary and restaurant skills, and provides a larger venue for group visitors to Ithaca. It is complemented by an on-campus farm at TC3's main campus in Dryden.

Quality:

Mostly high

Challenges:

Feedback from farmers and chefs indicate that distribution is a weak link; simply said, farmers can't spend their time delivering food and restaurants can't drive all over for pickups either. Because of the number of restaurants, there is a fairly high turnover in terms of chefs and the establishments which makes it hard for farmers to build relationships. Restaurants also tend to have difficulty participating in tourism meetings and activities, which can make coordination more difficult.

Opportunities:

- Explore delivery options and streamlined ordering from farm to restaurant, such as a through a local food online "marketplace" through Ithacash.
- Bolster restaurant week.
- Continue to build the Ithaca Farm to Fork brand.
- Form a local restaurant association as a way to strengthen linkages, build events, and share in promotional efforts.
- Establish a weekly Food Truck Roundup event at a high-traffic location such as one of the summer outdoor concert sites.

ITHACA BEER COMPANY

Asset 7: Wine, Brewery, Cider, and Distillery Destinations

Ithaca is the gateway to the Cayuga Wine Trail and near the east side of the Seneca Lake Wine Trail. Tompkins County is home to two just wineries – Six Mile Creek, and Ports of NY. The brewery scene is popular here. Ithaca Beer is an anchor destination with a new tasting room and restaurant. Two other brewers are located in Dryden (Hopshire Farm and Bacchus Brewing) and Bandwagon brews and sells via their downtown Ithaca pub.

Craft cider is undergoing a significant local boom, with many local ciders receiving recognition for their high quality. Finger Lakes Cider Trail has emerged and is engaging many area producers to join together to sponsor Finger Lakes Cider Week in October, and the Finger Lakes Cider House, a tasting room with local food offerings and numerous events was recently established just north of Trumansburg on the Good Life Farm. Six Mile Creek vineyard also distills spirits and Myer Farm Distillery is also just outside of Tompkins County in Ovid, NY.

Quality:

High

Challenges:

As the gateway to the Cayuga Lake Wine Trail, much of the wine visitor traffic is outside of Tompkins County.

Opportunities:

- A growing number of high-quality craft breweries and cideries offer a unique marketing and PR angle.
- Providing educational programming on food and beverage pairing could foster stronger business linkages.
- Joint events between beverage makers and food establishments to team up for events like restaurant week.
- Supporting the trails and collaborative marketing efforts.
- Identifying opportunities to support the establishment of new cideries, wineries, distilleries, and/or breweries in Tompkins County.

Asset 8: Farm Trails

Beyond the popular wine, cider and brewing destinations and trails, there is limited farm trail activity; however, families visiting the area have indicated interest in farm destinations. The Finger Lakes Cheese Trail hosts open houses but not all of the cheesemakers have regular hours for visitors. Cornell Cooperative Extension has organized "Farm Trail Weekends" which included at least 6 farms in proximity per day that open to the public. These have been a popular event attracting about 600-1000 visitors.

LOCAL U-PICK FARM

Quality:

Under-developed

Challenges:

The farms themselves are not able to spend the time it takes to initiate such programs. Cooperative Extension has played a major organizing role for the Cheese Trail and the Farm Trail Weekends held in the past. Funding for staff time and promotion is needed.

Opportunities:

- Create rural farm routes/trails/guides to feature those businesses with regular hours.
- Organize annual trail weekends.

- Tie in with other events.
- Provide support to farms wishing to expand to become significant agritourism attractions.

Asset 9: Group Touring Market/Packaging

As a key launch for wine touring, there are tour companies that take visitors from Ithaca to visit the trails. Many tour companies are also seeking agriculinary options beyond wine touring.

Quality:

Under-developed

Challenges:

There are few if any restaurants with seating to serve bus tour groups. Most farms are not able to host tour groups.

Opportunities:

- Coltivare has developed a full service restaurant in downtown Ithaca with ample seating and venue space. In addition, they have a teaching kitchen and culinary classroom which could potentially be used to host cooking workshops and classes that could be promoted to groups or individual visitors.
- Packaging for group tours.
- Training for farm and food establishments in hosting group tours.
- Pilot culinary walking tours as a new group tour experience.

EXPERIENCE! THE FINGER LAKES GROUP TOUR AT THE COPPER OVEN

Asset 10: Farm-based lodging

There are a few bed and breakfast operations that promote their farmstead as part of the experience. Rosebarb Farm, located in Caroline, is one that stands out. They experience strong demand for on farm stays which means this is an opportunity for other farms to offer. Others in the region include Brookton's Farm B&B; Humble Hill; and Forget Me Knot Farm. Lodging on farms can take a variety of forms from rooms in the main house, to cabins or tents. Opportunities to educate customers about farming adds to the attraction.

Quality:

Medium to High with more potential

Challenges:

Most farms would need to invest in facility upgrades to host visitors in their homes. Concerns about risk management/insurance impacts. Not having time to host visitors and provide farm tours or hands on experiences.

Opportunities:

- A diversity of lodging is possible on farms from tent camping, cabins, to actual farm house lodging.
- Expand the glamping concept successfully established at Firelight Camps to an area farm location.
- Assessment and education efforts; training in hosting visitors.
- Funding for facility upgrades.
- Tie in with hiking and biking groups.
- Package with nearby B&Bs

Asset 11: Events

There are many community events which either intentionally focus on agriculinary themes or include a farm or food component. Some of the more intentional Downtown Ithaca events that feature food as a theme are the Chili Cook-off, the Ithaca Festival, and the Apple Harvest Festival. Brooktondale also hosts an Apple Harvest Festival which is a popular community event. Savor the Finger Lakes is a culinary-themed event that was organized in fall 2015 for the first time by the Healthy Food For All program as a means of showcasing regional products. Plans are underway to bring a reformatted 'Savor' event back as an annual event in 2017. The Ithaca Brew Fest was a very well-attended event organized by Ithaca Beer and featuring a large number of local beers; however it has been not been held for several years.

Farm Based events

Cooperative Extension organizes farm based events such as the Healthy Food for All Harvest Dinners, Farm City Day, Farm Trail Weekend (not annual), Spring Garden Fair & Plant Sale, and the CSA Fair. The Ithaca Farmers Market is a major agritourism and culinary event held every Saturday and Sunday on the waterfront. The Trumansburg Farmers market is similarly event-like in that it includes the market and weekly musical acts. Wine and cheese trail events are also major draws for visitors to the area. There are a few farm based events organized by farmers at Littletree Orchards, Indian Creek Farm, Bakers Acres, and the Good Life Farm; plus NYS Maple Weekend open house at Sapsquatch Maple and other maple houses in the region. There is opportunity to enhance farm based events by assisting the farmers in planning, execution and promotion. Weddings and other private parties and events are another important opportunity for expanding revenues to local farms. One local farm that has done an excellent job developing wedding business is Silver Queen Farm in Trumansburg.

Food Based events

Food based events like Chili Cookoff, Ithaca Festival and the Apple Harvest Festival include food vendors, some of which offer wine and beer tasting, in which case a farm component is required.

Quality:

High to Moderate

Challenges:

Most of the farm events are organized by Cooperative Extension and have a good following. Events organized by the farmers themselves seem to get less attention given limited time and money for adequate marketing, with some exceptions. Some have a good following, though there is more potential with improved facilities, marketing and activities. A general challenge for any event is that it takes a lot of staff time to organize and cost to pull off a successful major event.

Opportunities:

- Training and support for farms to plan and improve farm based events.
- Establish new theme based events and or major festival such as bringing back a brew fest and a culinary education, chef-focused event to showcase local chefs.
- Grant funding to grow existing events and establish new major event(s) during the off season.
- Expanding harvest dinners on farms, which consistently sell out.
- Link agriculinary branding with existing major festivals.
- Closer integration of farm and food based events.

Asset 12: Engaged organizations and resources

A number of local and regional organizations are committed to advancing agriculinary tourism and have staff and other resources to contribute.

Tourism Program / STPB:

In addition to administering the County hotel room occupancy tax fund and its grant programs and other program, the Tompkins County Tourism Program has staff resources provided through the Planning Department to convene, plan, research opportunities, develop projects proposals, apply for outside funding, and lead agriculinary tourism initiatives. The County's Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) has highly engaged volunteer capacity to provide oversight and strategic direction for these efforts.

Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce / Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau:

The CVB developed the original Ithaca Fork website, has relationships with businesses county-wide including restaurants and lodging, and has strong capacity and funding for overall destination marketing for the community. The Chamber has further expertise in business development, regional funding mechanisms and program administration.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County:

CCETC has links directly to farms and many food establishments; experience organizing on farm events; and experience working with farmers on agritourism business development.

Downtown Ithaca Alliance:

The DIA organizes many downtown events that feature food establishments, and hosts the Tompkins Festivals Program which provides shared equipment and technical assistance to a wide variety of area events.

Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD):

In developing the County's Economic Development Strategy, TCAD has recognized food processing as an area of focus, which has potential connections to agriculinary tourism. In addition, TCAD administers the County's Tourism Capital Grant Program and provides business development support to businesses in Tompkins County selling to non-local markets. TCAD President also serves on the Regional Economic Development Council and provides a local link to related funding and regional economic development planning processes.

Regional Organizations:

The Cayuga Lake Wine Trail; Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty (FLCB); Finger Lakes Cheese Alliance; Finger Lakes Cider Alliance; Finger Lakes Beer Trail; Finger Lakes Tourism Association; Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway; and New York Wine & Grape Foundation all have regional programs with which we could partner as part of our local agriculinary tourism efforts.

State Resources:

Agritourism is a theme in the Southern Tier Region's strategic plan for the Upstate Revitalization Initiative (URI) for which the region won $500 million to be distributed over the next five years. The Market NY Program and other state grant programs offered through the annual CFA (Consolidated Funding Application) process is another major potential source of support for implementation of aspects of this plan. The Southern Tier Start Up Alliance, Rev and Start Up NY provide a variety of resources to entrepreneurs, which several local food businesses including Ithaca Hummus have accessed.

Quality:

High

Challenges:

Consistent support and resources and focused effort on agriculinary tourism specifically necessary to build a strong agriculinary tourism base

Opportunities:

- Working together to share our collective knowledge, talent and resources
- Establishing an agriculinary tourism 'backbone' program to provide ongoing support to development and promotion efforts.

Overarching Strengths & Challenges

The asset summary above lists opportunities related to each asset category. The Task Force has also identified the following overarching strengths and challenges that we have as a destination for agriculinary tourism experiences. These strengths should be leveraged to grow agriculinary tourism, and strategies and actions should also be chosen based on their potential to overcome challenges.

Overarching Strengths

Quality and Authenticity

We have really good farms and restaurants. We have accessible experiences; in many cases you can actually talk directly with the farmer, winemaker, cidermaker, cheesemaker and chef. Finally, interest in the local food movement is genuine, personal, strong, and growing. There is innate enthusiasm for our efforts.

Affordability and Accessibility

The Finger Lakes, including the area around Ithaca and Tompkins County, are affordable compared to other destinations with similar quality. Visitors can get here by car and air from major NE feeder markets and other

target markets. And local agriculinary experiences are close in proximity to one another, making a rich variety of experiences accessible within a short amount of time with limited travel hassle.

The College Town Effect

Cornell University and Ithaca College alumni have strong emotional ties to this area, and often are looking for reasons to return. Being a college town has also led to the "more restaurants per capita than NYC" phenomenon, by which our efforts are supported.

Institutional Resources

The support of the growing room-tax funded Tourism Program and institutional capacity of partners including the CVB, CCETC, and DIA is extremely valuable. Cornell's Ag and Food programs and TC3s Farm to Bistro program represent strong opportunities for partnership.

Overarching Challenges

No Statewide Program

Some states like Oregon and Vermont benefit from a statewide program focused on agritourism and/or culinary tourism which includes technical assistance and funding specific to these sectors. While I Love NY promotes agritourism and culinary tourism in limited ways, New York does not have a statewide agritourism or culinary tourism program to which we can turn specifically for support. However, agritourism projects are eligible for state grant funding, and the Taste of NY program exists to promote NY State food and beverage products. Future advocacy for increased support for statewide programs might best come from Farm Bureaus. Also, the Appalachian Regional Commission could be evaluated as a potential regional program partner.

Visitor-Readiness Deficit

In many cases, local farms, food producers, and restaurants lack experience catering to visitors and what they want; facilities may not be adequate; staff lack training. Visitor readiness is a difficult topic for those in agritourism. Generally, getting a farm ready is a large undertaking that takes away time from completing more important farm tasks. People have stated in recent local agriculinary meetings that hosting visitors is often not worthwhile. With the small amount of goods that individual visitors buy, it can take more staff time than it is worth to be profitable having visitors. Therefore, the number of farms which may be in a position to scale up to fully benefit from agritourism may be limited to just a few. Other farms can accommodate on-farm sales as is beneficial to their bottom line and might be part of a Farm Trail/Guide and/or Open Farm Weekend.

Heads-in-Beds Policy Focus May Limit Investments

In the past, the focus on investing limited room tax funds on those investments most likely to produce additional overnight stays in the short term may have placed limits on potential investments in agriculinary tourism product development and marketing. Food and beverage spending is the largest area of spending for all visitors to Tompkins County, including Day-trippers and those visiting friends and relatives. This means the economic impact from food and beverage is actually higher than hotel room nights, there is just no dedicated revenue source to support county tourism efforts from dining.

B2B Relationships, Partnerships, and Communication

A perceived lack of business to business relationships, partnerships and communication limits the potential to develop productive and profitable agriculinary tourism partnerships and programs.

Venues for Large Groups

Currently, there are very few venues in Tompkins County that have the ability to host large groups. In 2015, the opening of Coltivare, a Tompkins Cortland Community College venture, brought a new space on line that can offer lecture-style space, banquet space, and also food learning labs. The center has a culinary focus, and will be used for educational and recreational purposes – for both residents and visitors. Outside of Coltivare, the only large venues in Ithaca/Tompkins County are those on Ithaca College and Cornell University campuses. To do business on these campuses in relation to events, the event generally must be affiliated with the college, making it difficult for other organizations to find large space.

Fragmented Information and Marketing

IthacaFork.com was created as a hub for both culinary tourism and agritourism in Tompkins County. While there are other organizations that offer farm-to-table concepts on a larger scale (like Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty) the current local hub is IthacaFork.com. The site serves to pull in information from small restaurants and farms, as well as the large wine and cheese trails, farmers markets and events. Yet, while we have many wonderful existing agriculinary tourism products and marketing initiatives, and IthacaFork has been established to fill some of the gaps, we continue to lack a unified marketing approach for agriculinary tourism.

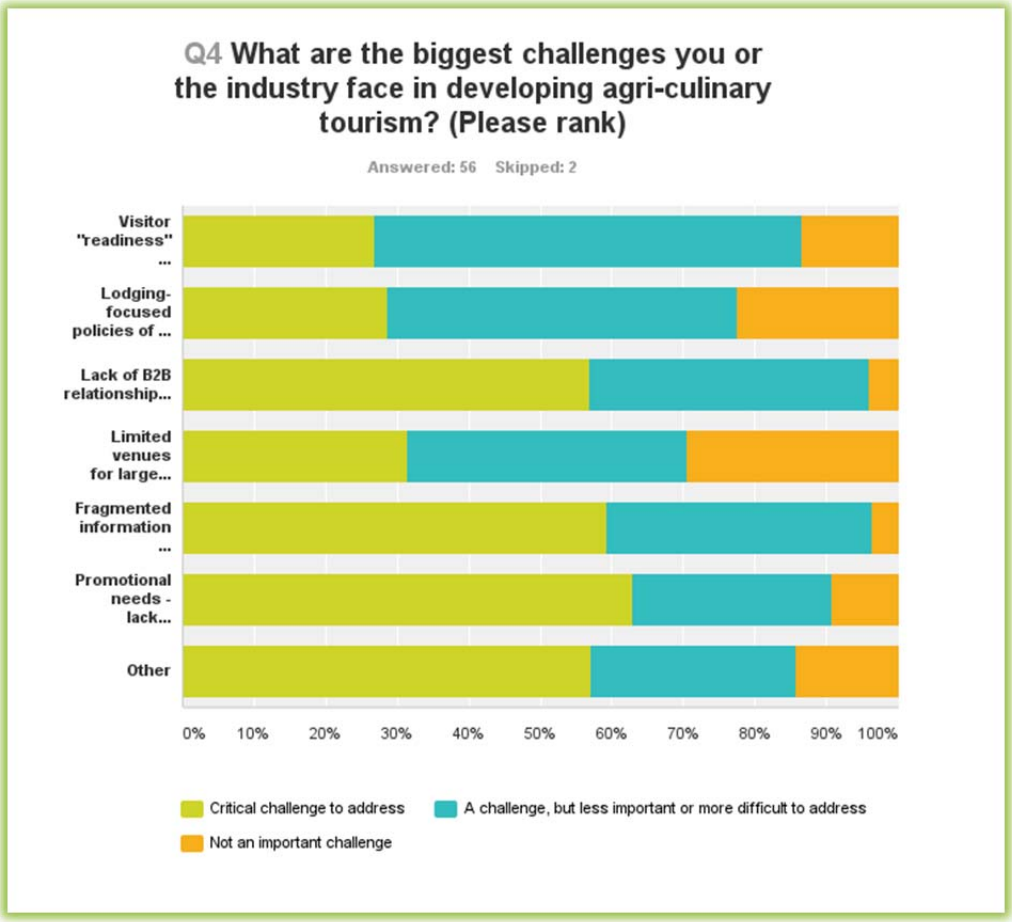

FIGURE 4 - NOVEMBER 2014 AGRICULINARY TOURISM STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Strategies & Actions

A handful of actions in each of three strategic areas have been chosen as strategic priorities to advance local agriculinary tourism. The three strategic areas are:

1. **Infrastructure:** Growing our local capacity to develop and promote our outstanding agriculinary tourism assets.
2. **Marketing:** Enhancing coordinated marketing and branding platforms.
3. **Product:** Developing new agriculinary tourism products and experiences.

Each of twelve selected actions were drawn from a long list of possible actions that were generated by several means: by the Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Task Force, by the 100+ attendees of the November 2014 Agriculinary Tourism Plan launch event, and by an online stakeholder survey. A lengthy list of possible actions was compiled and categorized into the list found in Appendix A of this Plan. From there, the Task Force further distilled and prioritized the list based on relative feasibility and importance to identify a small number of key actions. A summary list of selected actions is provided in the Executive Summary of this Plan. The full tables below also include one or more responsible organization, timing, possible funding and measures of success for each selected action. All of these actions will be initiated by 2017 and completed by 2020.

Tourism Program Support for Agriculinary Tourism Initiatives

The Plan identifies possible funding and lead organizations for these actions, but does not commit future Tompkins County hotel room occupancy tax funding to agriculinary tourism initiatives. Funding is expected to come from a variety of sources, including federal and state grants as well as support from local and regional foundations. The Tompkins County Tourism Program, which is funded by Tompkins County hotel room occupancy tax, and for which the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) provides oversight and strategic direction, hosts several grant programs which are possible funding sources for agriculinary tourism initiatives.

Upon adoption of this plan, lead organizations will be encouraged to draw up funding proposals and detailed scopes of work for those actions that will require additional funding to advance. Funding proposals will be reviewed according to processes set out for the relevant sources.

Additional details about the following programs may be found on the Tourism Program's website: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism.

New Tourism Initiative Grants and Tourism Project Grants support tourism projects that demonstrate likelihood of generating significant visitor participation and overnight stays in County hotels, motels and Bed & Breakfasts. Tourism Project Grants are for projects that have been in active operation for more than three years at the date of application, and New Tourism Initiative Grants are for projects that have occurred less than three years in a row and that support implementation of the County's 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. The maximum award is $25,000.

Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grants provide a dollar for dollar match for marketing and advertising expenses for campaigns that target potential tourists whose visit is likely to result in an overnight stay. The maximum award is $5,000.

Tourism Capital Grants provide support for feasibility studies and up to one third of capital costs for attractions. Tompkins County Area Development administers this program on behalf of the County Tourism Program. The minimum award is $25,000.

Community Celebrations Grants provide assistance to events and programs endorsed by a municipality that are free and open to all and planned by community members as a benefit to the community. Community celebrations grants have a particular focus on celebrating aspects of a community's local history. The maximum award is $2,000.

Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding is a flexible funding source which primarily supports implementation of Critical Actions identified in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and local tourism research in support of strategic planning. Certain actions identified in this Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan are eligible. Approximately $200,000 is expected to be available in total for 2016 and 2017.

Lead Organization Glossary

The following organizations are identified as "Lead Organizations" for implementation.

- **CVB** – Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce. The CVB will provide backbone support for agriculinary tourism initiatives, with particular emphasis on tourism marketing.
- **TCTP** – Tompkins County Tourism Program, with staff support housed in the Tompkins County Planning Department. The Tourism Program will provide overall leadership and support for project planning and development, budgeting, fundraising and evaluation.
- **CCETC** – Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Cooperative Extension will work closely with the CVB and Tourism Program on a number of areas, with particular focus on tourism product development and technical assistance.
- **Private Event Organizers** will be encouraged to establish and/or expand agriculinary themed events and festivals.
- **Businesses** will be encouraged and supported in establishing and expanding a variety of agriculinary tourism experiences.
- **Tour Companies** will be encouraged and supported in developing and promoting agriculinary tourism packages and tours.

Possible Funding Glossary

The acronyms for the "possible funding" sources identified in the tables below are as follows:

- **USDA-FMPP** – USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Farmers Market Promotion Program. This grant in the amount of approximately $50,000 was secured by the Tourism Program in September 2015 and goes

through September 2017. Where listed in the tables below, these actions will be funded in part or in full by this grant.

- **STI** – Strategic Tourism Implementation funding. A Tompkins County room tax funded program to support implementation of the 2020 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan.
- **CFA** – New York State Consolidated Funding Application. Several sources of state funding for which local agriculinary tourism initiatives may be eligible in the future, use the CFA. Applications are typically July annually in July.
- **Room Tax** – Where listed as a "possible funding" source in the tables below, "room tax" refers to the annual budget of the Tompkins County Tourism Program which is funded by county hotel room occupancy tax.
- **CCETC –** Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County supports a number of initiatives which are closely allied to agriculinary tourism efforts. Where possible existing resources at CCETC will be aligned to support implementation of this plan.
- **CVB –** The Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau receives an annual room tax allocation from Tompkins County to support tourism marketing. Where possible, annual budget allocations to the CVB will be aligned support a number of the actions described.
- **Existing Tourism Grant Programs –** See the list of programs described above.
- **State and Federal Sources** for Re-Grant Programs – State and Federal resources will be sought out to fund an agriculinary tourism minigrant program once it is successfully piloted.

Strategy: Infrastructure

Growing our local capacity to develop and promote our outstanding agriculinary tourism assets.

To fully capture the opportunities for agriculinary tourism development, a program will be established to provide ongoing backbone support and coordination; and targeted mini-grant support will boost the efforts of local allied organizations.

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)	Timing	Possible Funding	Measure of Success
Backbone Organization	Establish a backbone program at the CVB with dedicated staff to lead implementation of agriculinary tourism branding, marketing and product development efforts and to coordinate the work of external contractors and partners.	CVB, TCTP	2016-2020	USDA-FMPP, STI, CFA	Detailed one year work plan for backbone organization completed by fall 2016, and annually thereafter. Review annual performance towards meeting objectives.
Assessment, Training, and Technical Assistance	Provide assessment, training and technical assistance to farms and agriculinary tourism businesses on business development, grant-writing, tourism and marketing.	CCETC and CVB	2016-2017	USDA-FMPP	By September 2017, 40 area farms or rural landowners have received in-depth technical assistance on agritourism, and 10 farms will have taken steps to implement recommendations. Events, food and beverage products, chefs and restaurants, farms, markets, and partnerships such as the culinary trails meeting specified criteria will be added to the Ithaca Fork website.
Mini-Grant Program	Establish a new agriculinary tourism mini-grant program for projects or businesses with potential to generate additional tourism and support the goals of this plan.	TCTP	2017-2020	STI; room tax; state and federal sources for re-grant programs	Pilot mini-grant program in 2017 with a partner and support at least five projects per year. Success measurements will also be listed in the individual grant proposals and reporting from each grant recipient.
Asset Inventory	Maintain and continually update an internal database with an inventory of existing and emerging agriculinary tourism products, experiences, partners and facilities. Use it to evaluate tourism development potential, create new promotional efforts, and facilitate internal linkages and partnerships.	CCETC and CVB	2016-2020	USDA-FMPP	Growth of the list over time and the value of an email list for marketing.
B2B Networking	Establish a series of regular agriculinary business to business networking events to build relationships between farmers, producers, chefs, restaurants, tourism industry professionals, event producers, and allied organizations, and to provide information on industry best practices.	CCETC and CVB	2016-2020	USDA-FMPP, CCETC	By September 2016, build on three past successful events organized by CCETC, the CVB and the Tourism Program to establish and execute an annual calendar of at least four annual networking events and or educational programs.

Strategy: Marketing

Enhancing coordinated marketing and branding platforms.

A comprehensive branding strategy and marketing and communications plan for local agriculinary tourism will prioritize future marketing investments; branding guidelines for partners will be established to leverage our agriculinary communications plan; and IthacaFork.com will be improved as the primary digital content hub.

Action Title	Action Description	Lead Organization(s)	Timing	Possible Funding	Measure of Success
Branding and Marketing Strategies	Create comprehensive agriculinary branding strategy and marketing and communications plan documents which identifies priority messages, audiences, channels, partnerships, content creation opportunities, social media, SEO, automated marketing procedures, active-engagement marketing techniques, and PR with content creation and pitches across a variety of media.	CVB	2017	USDA-FMPP, STI, CVB	A written branding strategy and a marketing and communication plan are developed by spring 2017. The marketing strategy to be developed will identify timeline and metrics for different market segments.
Branding Guidelines for Partners	Publish agriculinary branding guidelines for partners to use in design and delivery of collective and partner marketing across multiple applications and responsible agencies.	CVB	2017	USDA-FMPP, CVB	Following completion of the marketing strategy an external branding guidelines document will be shared with agritourism partners in the county.
Online Destination – IthacaFork.com	Update IthacaFork.com to increase user engagement to promote food, farm, and beverage experiences across various themes and audiences.	CVB	2017	USDA-FMPP, STI, CVB	Launch updated website by mid-2017 in synch with branding guidelines and maintain ongoing content strategy to support freshness of site.

Strategy: Product

Agriculinary tourism products, packages and experiences will be established and grown by the Tompkins County Tourism Program and by partners in the community.

Action Title	Action Description	Lead(s)	Timing	Possible Funding	Measure of Success
Agriculinary Tourism Events	Establish Ithaca Fork Open Farm Weekend(s) and grow or establish other major agriculinary focused events for visitors that tie together regional agriculinary themes, products and experiences.	CVB and CCETC, private event organizers	2016-2020	USDA-FMPP, existing tourism grant programs	Event experience and attendance surveys will be gathered, and success measured on attendance growth, visitor spending, visitor source data (zip code/postal code) and net promoter score (participant satisfaction).
Product Development Partner Support	Support partners in establishing and expanding agriculinary tourism experiences for visitors including culinary education classes, workshops, retreats/camps, farm and culinary tours; foodie tour packages; dinner-on-the-farm type events; farm stays and B&Bs on the farm; farm-restaurant pairings; and weddings on the farm.	CVB and CCETC, businesses	2018-2020	USDA-FMPP	A growing list of diverse and complementary agriculinary tourism products are established in the county.
Ithaca Fork Farm Guide	Establish an Ithaca Fork Farm Guide to promote agriculinary tourism partners who meet criteria for visitor readiness and product offerings.	CVB and CCETC	2017	USDA-FMPP	Minimum of 7 destinations at all times of diversified and complementary experiences are promoted through IthacaFork.com and related marketing.
Package Development	Develop and promote agriculinary tourism packages and tours for individual leisure visitors as well as small and large groups around existing tourism-ready facilities and experiences.	CVB, tour companies	2017-2020	USDA-FMPP, STI	Three new packages successfully launched by 2017.

Appendix

A. Possible Agriculinary Tourism Actions (list from planning workshop results)

B. Agriculinary Tourism Asset Inventory List

C. Agriculinary Tourism Asset Maps

D. Agriculinary Tourism Stakeholder Survey results

Endnotes

[i] Visitithaca.com/dining
[ii] http://www.uvm.edu/vtagritourism/
[iii] Tompkins County Ag and Farmland Protection Plan
[iv] Tompkins County Ag and Farmland Protection Plan
[v] Tompkins County Ag and Farmland Protection Plan
[vi] Visitithaca.com/dining