

Rensselaer County Agricultural District No. 3 Eight Year Review June 2024

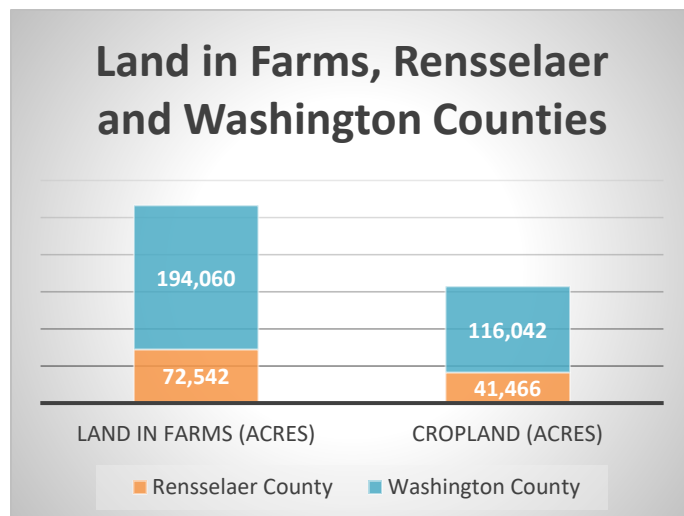
Pursuant to Article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Markets Law of New York State, the Rensselaer County Planning Office has conducted an eight-year review of the Pittstown-West Hoosick Agricultural District.

The Pittstown-West Hoosick Agricultural District is located in the towns of Pittstown, Hoosick, Grafton and Schaghticoke and encompasses a total of 38,525 acres. A majority of the parcels in the Hoosick-West Pittstown Agricultural District are comprised of both state-wide significant and prime agricultural soils, thus supporting the importance of agriculture in this area of Rensselaer County. The fertility of the agricultural land base in the district is paramount to the continued viability of farming in the area.

NATURE AND STATUS OF FARMING AND FARM RESOURCES

Agriculture is the largest single land use within this district encompassing 9.2 percent of the County's land base. This district is experiencing similar trends that are happening throughout the New York State. As counties with large agricultural operations get larger, they expand into neighboring counties. An increasing amount of farmland in the county is being utilized as support land for large dairy operations in Washington County.

According to the 2022 Agriculture Census, the average size of farms in Washington County increased 28 percent and the average size of farms in Rensselaer County decreased 15 percent. The amount of land in farms increased 5 percent in Washington County and decreased 12 percent in Rensselaer County. Although the decrease is not limited to Pittstown and Hoosick, a significant amount of the farmland in the county is in both of these towns. Agricultural District Number 3 has a significant farmland base which will continue to be important to the agricultural industry in Rensselaer as well as Washington county.



In addition to land being used to support dairy farms, farmland is also being utilized for hay, livestock production, cash crops and field crops. Please see the chart below.

Primary Use	Number of Farms
Apples	1
Apiculture	2
Beef	10
Berries	1
Cash Crops	9
Christmas Trees	1
Dairy	7
Field Crops	5
Greenhouse/Nursery	3
Hay	12
Horses	3
Maple	2
Pigs	1
Poultry	3
Sheep	2
Vegetables	2

Approximately 6,500 acres of farmland in the towns of Hoosick and Pittstown are now protected. This contiguous block of farmland strengthens the long-term agricultural viability of the area as well as the individual farms.

Agriculture continues to be an important industry in the county. According to the 2022 Agriculture Census, the market value of products increased 51 percent from 2017 to \$ 61,879,000 and net cash farm income increase 23 percent. Farmers continue to invest in their operations with \$619,709 per farm for land and buildings and \$107,314 per farm for machinery and equipment. This investment is evident throughout the county, but especially in the more agricultural areas in the northern part of the county. Agricultural District Number 3 has a significant farmland base which will continue to be important to the agricultural industry in Rensselaer as well as Washington county.

EXTENT IN ACHIEVING ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES

The original objectives of the Pittstown-West Hoosick Agricultural District were to provide benefits and protections to agricultural operations in order to promote the continuation of farming and the preservation of agricultural land. As indicated by the information obtained from the Agricultural District Review Worksheets, both farm and non-farm property owners realize the importance of maintaining a strong agricultural land base in the district. As more and more farmland is converted to residential uses, it is imperative that the agricultural land base remains intact in the district. Almost thirty percent of the farmland in the county is in the Pittstown-West Hoosick Agricultural District, indicating the importance of agriculture in this area. A strong agricultural land base and viable farms indicates that the district has achieved its original objectives.

EFFECT ON COUNTY AND LOCAL PLANS

The towns of Hoosick, Schaghticoke and Pittstown in which the Pittstown-West Hoosick Agricultural District is located have land use zoning controls. Although all of the zoning laws vary, most towns in which this district is located have some residential/agricultural zoning with large lot sizes and fewer restrictions of uses. Most of the farms are located in such zoning. The towns of Pittstown, Hoosick and Schaghticoke have not adopted Master or Comprehensive Plans since the last recertification of the Agricultural District. Each community has identified agriculture as a land use, although strategies dealing with agriculture vary. Most communities are supportive of agriculture in their Comprehensive Plans and actions of the Town Boards. The Town of Hoosick adopted their Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan in September 2013. The plan identifies farmland as an important resource and includes recommendations to protect farmland and grow the agricultural economy.

The Rensselaer County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board updated their Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for Rensselaer County, which was approved by New York State in September 2017. This Plan provides a working strategy to maintain an agricultural base and enable Rensselaer County farmers to remain profitable. The Rensselaer County Master Plan supports agriculture, and recognizes it as an important part of the County's economy. The Master Plan also supports the preservation of prime agricultural soils, and incentives to maintain agricultural operations.

COORDINATION OF LOCAL ACTIONS ON AGRICULTURE

Under General Municipal Law Section 239 l & m, certain land use actions must be referred to the county planning agency through review. This includes special use permits, site plans, or use variances on property lying within 500 feet of an agricultural operation within an agricultural district. New zoning laws, comprehensive plans and most amendments to zoning law and comprehensive plans also require referral to the county planning agency. Actions located near active agricultural lands are reviewed for their impacts on the agricultural use, and recommendations made to provide relief from possible damages from the use. County recommendations are not final and can be overridden by a supermajority of the local board. On several occasions, the Rensselaer County Economic Development and Planning Office has made recommendations that actions, especially land use law amendments, not occur without changes which lessen or remove negative impacts to agriculture.

Agricultural Data Statements are now being used by most of the communities with Agricultural Districts within Rensselaer County. These data statements apprise the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and the farmers, surrounding certain land use actions of the possible actions occurring. It is often a signal to the towns that an action is occurring near an active agricultural use.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

This office recommends that the Rensselaer County Agricultural District No. 3, otherwise known as the Pittstown-West Hoosick Agricultural District be recertified for an additional eight-year period. This office also recommends that the boundaries be amended to include those mentioned for

inclusion. As recommended, the following parcels should be added to Agricultural District No. 3:

Tax Map I.D. No.	Property Owner	Municipality	Acres
5.-3-15.113	Thomas W Allgaier, Jr	Buskirk	7.56
55.-1-4.21	Calvin Bryson, Jr	Hoosick Falls	36.27
55.-1-4.1	Calvin J Bryson, Jr	Hoosick Falls	48
27.-1-16	Katherine L Bugbee	Hoosick Falls	28.21
24.-2-34	Campbell Service & Supply Inc	Valley Falls	33.92
55.-3-45	Dale Cornell	Hoosick Falls	8.55
27.-2-1	Anthony J Davendonis, Jr	Hoosick Falls	32.73
56.-2-47	Linda L Fitzsimmons	Hoosick Falls	20.55
56.-2-48.111	Scott Goldstein	Petersburgh	134.54
32.-5-11	Janet Martin	Valley Falls	23.46
54.-8-19	Robert C Provost	Valley Falls	24
63.-2-2.11	Jason Sprague	Hoosick Falls	45.56

Total Acres to be Added: 443.35

Prime Agricultural Soils and Soils of Statewide Importance

