Wrap-Up: Celebrating Dairy Month Across New York

Celebrated in June, Dairy Month provides us an annual opportunity to recognize New York's dairy farmers and manufacturers who produce some of the very best dairy products anywhere. This year, we took part in a wide range of Dairy Month activities to promote the industry - check out some highlights below!

Dairy Education Days

On June 23, Commissioner Ball visited Schoharie Elementary School to teach students about where dairy products come from - and the folks at Schoharie Valley FFA brought a calf along to make it a really memorable experience for the kids! This visit was part of our Dairy Education Days series, which took place in elementary schools statewide this year for the first time since the pandemic.

Did you know World Milk Day is celebrated each year on June 1? World Milk Day is an international day established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to recognize the importance of milk as a global food. This year, we were proud to our dairy education series on the World Milk Day website.
Tour of BelGioioso Cheese Manufacturing Plant

On June 17, Commissioner Ball and Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon stopped by BelGioioso Cheese Manufacturing Plant in Schenectady to discuss the State’s workforce and economic development efforts for New York’s dairy industry, including the Dairy Think Tank.

The Dairy Think Tank was created in 2020 at the advice of the Milk Marketing Advisory Council to bring together industry leaders to discuss the current challenges facing the dairy industry and the industry’s future. The Commissioners have partnered with individuals, such as BelGioioso Cheese General Manager Tim Cronin, through the Dairy Think Tank to further develop the dairy industry in New York State, with a focus on addressing the industry’s workforce needs and spurring regional economic growth. Learn more.

Dairy Products Distributed to Families in Need Through Nourish New York

Working with the Food Bank for NYC, Masbia Soup Kitchen Network in Brooklyn and Queens distributed kosher dairy products to families in need for the Jewish holiday of Shavuos. The products, including sour cream, farmer cheese, and cheese blintzes from Lamb Farm and Mehadrin Dairy, were purchased through the State’s Nourish New York initiative. Over 10,000 pounds of local dairy products were given out in total during the distributions, impacting over 20,000 New Yorkers facing food insecurity.

Alexander Rapaport, Executive Director of the Masbia Soup Kitchen Network said, “This is the third Shavuos that families in need were able to celebrate with dairy through the Nourish New York program. It was actually launched three years ago, right before Shavuos. I am extremely grateful to Governor Hochul for making this funding permanent. It is a huge help. Before this program was around, Masbia had almost no access to kosher dairy products. This initiative was a game changer and with the cost of food at an all-time high, more and more families rely on Masbia to put food on their tables.”

Dairy Resource Guide Released

In honor of Dairy Month, the Department released a new Dairy Resources Guide cataloging the programs and other resources New York State offers to
Sean Hennessey Leads the Great New York State Fair as Interim Director

Meet Sean Hennessey, the Interim Director of the Great New York State Fair, who will spearhead the state’s largest festival later this summer. Commissioner Ball appointed Sean as the Assistant Director of the New York State Fair in May. Sean’s background as Assistant Commissioner for Operations at the New York State Department of Transportation – where he led emergency response efforts; managed emergencies; and served as a mitigator between elected officials and neighbors – coupled with his role as one of the organizers of the North Country Goes Green Irish Festival – where he booked international artists – serves as an excellent foundation to take the Fair to the next level.

Sean is very passionate about all things New York State, and a big fan of all “made in New York” products. He has always been enamored with the Fair, in a personal and business sense, and looks forward to presenting a stellar showcase of all that New York State has to offer – in farming, food, fun, and family – next month. The 2022 Great New York State Fair begins Wednesday, August 24 and continues through Labor Day, Monday, September 5.

FreshConnects Checks Program Expanded for Veterans

The Department and the Division of Veteran Services (DVS) announced an expanded FreshConnect Checks Program to increase participation in the program by Veterans, Servicemembers, and their immediate families. This year, county Veterans services agencies are now able to distribute FreshConnect Checks, increasing the number of distribution sites from 31 to 59.

The FreshConnect Checks program encourages recipients to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at participating farmers’ markets. The program...
provides $2 incentive coupons for every $5 in SNAP benefits spent with the market, increasing the purchasing power of SNAP consumers by 40 percent. $200,000 in FreshConnect Checks is available at all DVS offices statewide and coupons are currently being distributed. Veterans interested in learning more should call 1-888-838-7697.

$1.1 Million Awarded Through Food Box and Community Growers Grant Programs

Nearly $1.1 million has been awarded to 32 organizations through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention (SNAP-Ed) grant programs. The SNAP-Ed Food Box and Community Growers grant programs each provide funding to eligible groups to further expand access to fresh, affordable foods in underserved communities across New York State and support New York’s agricultural industry. Funding is still available through the Food Box Grant Program and eligible organizations are encouraged to apply by July 18. Learn more.

The SNAP-Ed Food Box and Community Growers grant programs each support Governor Hochul’s 2022 State of the State priorities to make local food accessible to more residents. As part of the Governor’s vision to expand SNAP access to New York farms, the State will become a national leader in facilitating SNAP EBT purchases direct from New York farmers online. Additionally, SNAP recipients will receive a special FreshConnect benefit toward purchasing a food subscription from a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm.

Honoring World Food Safety Day

World Food Safety Day takes place annually on June 7. In honor of this Day, the New York State Departments of Agriculture and Markets and Health highlighted several actions the State has taken to enhance food safety for all New Yorkers.

First, the Produce Traceability Blue Ribbon Task Force (Task Force) is helping to strengthen the produce supply system across New York. Developed with input from Task...
Force members, the Guidance for Produce Traceability shares best practices and bolsters the tracing of produce in New York State.

Additionally, in 2018, both departments formed an interagency collaboration to determine actionable limits of contaminants commonly found in spices, particularly heavy metals. In 2022, the group’s research has been published in the Journal of Regulatory Science.

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) has also developed a new Food Safety blog series featuring NASDA members' and farmers’ perspectives. As part of the series, Commissioner Ball, NASDA President and seasoned farmer, answered the question "how is it that produce fresh from the farm and grown in the soil reaches the grocery store safe and ready to eat?" Find his responses on the blog.

Protecting Pollinator Health in New York

Following an update to Agriculture and Markets Law in 2021, the Department launched a beekeeper registration program so that beekeepers can be better assisted in maintaining their colonies in a healthy condition. To ensure that we can properly inspect bee colonies, we encourage all New York State beekeepers to complete the registration form and renew their registration annually at no charge.

Additionally, this year the Department launched an enhanced communications strategy including new updates to our website and a series of roundtable meetings with beekeepers that are aimed at strengthening the connection between beekeepers and state partners. This announcement came during National Pollinator Week, June 20-26, which was honored with a proclamation issued by Governor Kathy Hochul affirming New York’s continued commitment to supporting New York State’s pollinators.

Sixteen Farm-to-School Programs Awarded $1.48 Million

New York's Farm-to-School Competitive Grants Program launched in 2015 to increase the purchase of
local food by school districts and individual schools. This year, sixteen programs have been awarded over $1.48 million in funding. Awarded projects include Capital Roots' initiative to create aggregation points and Poughkeepsie Farm Project's plan to provide education support for staff.

We congratulate all the organizations that received funding. These groups connect students with their local farmers by creating farm-to-school programs that educate them about where their food comes from. Find the full list of awardees in our press release.

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USDA Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing up to $200 million in assistance for specialty crop producers who incur eligible on-farm food safety program expenses related to obtaining or renewing a food safety certification in calendar years 2022 and 2023.

The new Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops (FSCSC) program will help to offset costs for specialty crop producers to comply with regulatory requirements and market-driven food safety certification requirements. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will accept applications for 2022 from June 27, 2022, through January 31, 2023.

Apply for the New York Concord Grape Innovation Award
Applications are being accepted through August 1 for the New York Concord Grape Innovation Award. Funded by the Department and organized and hosted by Cornell AgriTech in Geneva, the competition will award more than $100,000 in cash prizes and packages of support from Cornell experts.

The link to apply, as well as a full breakdown of the guidelines and awards, is available on Cornell’s website: [cals.cornell.edu/concord-grape-award](cals.cornell.edu/concord-grape-award).

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**Taste NY updates**

**Taste NY is Returning to the Great New York State Fair!**

The Taste NY Vendor Marketplace at the Great New York State Fair is now open for registration. Located in the Horticulture Building, the Marketplace will showcase food, wine, cider, and spirits and give vendors the opportunity to sample and sell products to fairgoers. The hours of sampling and selling are Monday - Thursday from 10 am to 9 pm, and Friday - Sunday from 10 am to 10 pm.

Participation in Taste NY at the Great New York State Fair requires a $200 refundable deposit. Space is limited and assignments will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. Each vendor will be allowed to showcase their products for up to three days.
Please visit https://forms.office.com/g/nv1qk1PbAb to register or email joseph.ganley@agriculture.ny.gov with any questions.

Enjoy NYS Grown & Certified Ice Cream During National Ice Cream Month

Celebrate Ice Cream Month this July with some #NYSCertified ice cream! Did you know that a single cow can produce enough milk to make 9,000 gallons of ice cream? By selecting NYS Grown & Certified ice cream, you are enjoying yummy ice cream that is verified for following food safety and environmentally sustainable standards. There are several NYS Grown & Certified processors in New York State, featuring some of your favorite ice cream flavors - during Ice Cream Month, and all year round! They include:

- Adirondack Creamery at Mercer’s Dairy (Boonville, NY)
- Battenkill Creamery (Salem, NY)
- Boice Brothers Dairy (Kingston, NY)
- Byrne Dairy (Lafayette, NY)
- Eat me ice Cream (Lafayette, NY)
- Hidden Pastures gelato (Glenfield, NY)
- King Brothers Dairy (Schuylerville, NY)
- Mercer’s Dairy (Boonville, NY)
- Perry’s Ice Cream (Akron, NY)
- Ronnybrook Farm Dairy (Ancramdale, NY)
- Stewart’s Shops
- Upstate Niagara Cooperative

Find out more at certified.ny.gov.

Current Funding Opportunities
Spotlight: Commissioner Ball Takes Part in Panel to Inform White House Conference on Food Issues

On June 21, New York City Mayor Eric Adams hosted a national convening on the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health at Gracie Mansion. Commissioner Ball spoke among three other panelists: New York City Department of Education Chancellor David C. Banks, Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan, and New York City Health & Hospitals Executive Director of Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine Michelle McMacken.

During the panel, the Commissioner highlighted the need for an urban-rural connection with K-12 schools as a great starting point. He additionally spoke on the efforts of Nourish New York and the building of a food hub in the south Bronx. You can find a full recording of Commissioner Ball's statement here.

For more information on these or other funding opportunities, please visit our Funding Opportunities page.

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