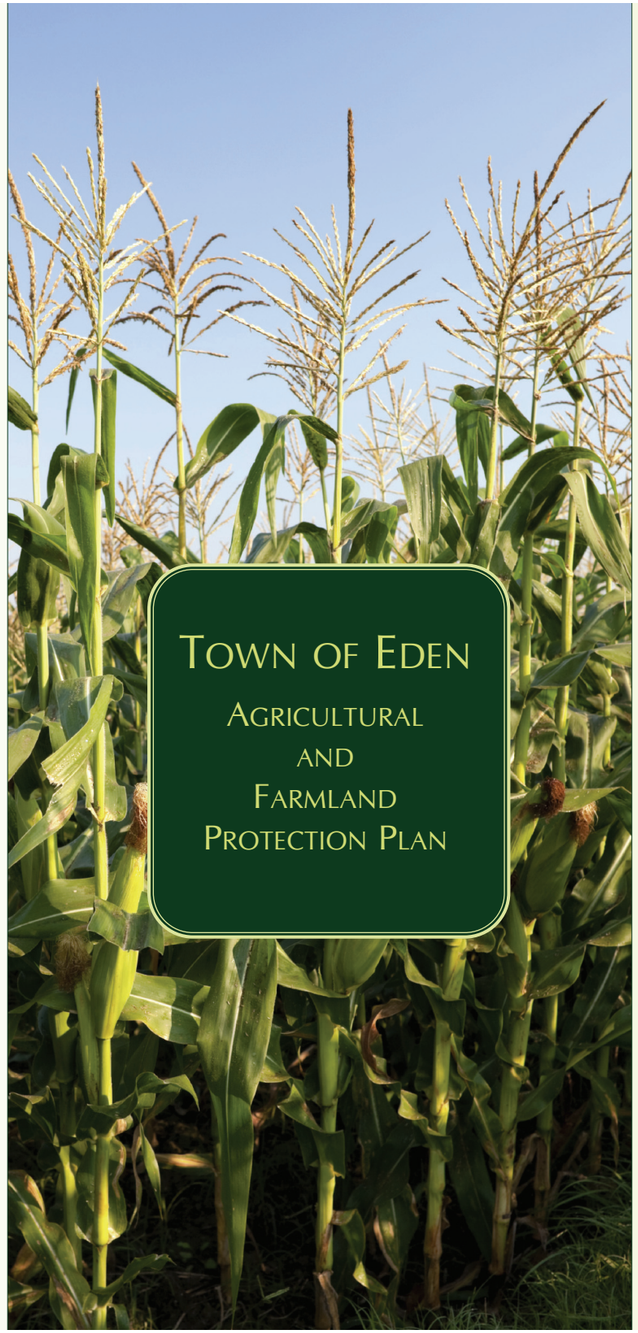
Eden Town Hall
2795 East Church Street
Eden, NY 14057



Town of Eden

Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

In August 2009, Eden adopted an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan to guide the town in support of its farms and efforts to protect its farmland. The Plan addresses both land use and economic development opportunities to strengthen the long-term viability of Eden's agriculture.

Why are Eden farms important to the community?

Farming supports the local economy. Eden's more than 40 active farms contributed to the $117 million of agricultural products sold in Erie County in 2007 (Census of Agriculture). One of the most successful small grower cooperatives in the state is Eden Valley Growers. Beyond the direct revenues Eden's farms generate, the local economy benefits further from farm dollars paid to workers and farm supply and service businesses, who in turn spend some of those dollars locally, creating a "multiplier effect."

Farmers are stewards of the land. Half of the town's total acreage is in active agricultural production or in woods and open space associated with farms. These lands provide wildlife habitat, can serve as buffers to protect water quality, and add to the rural character and scenic beauty of our town.

Farmland helps Eden balance its budget. Farmland uses less in services than it pays in property taxes thus providing a "tax profit" for the town. Residences do the opposite, requiring more in services than they pay in property taxes. Eden's working farmland helps to balance tax income and expenses.

Eden's heritage is intertwined with the history of its 4th and 5th generation farms. Eden's farm families are integral to the community's rural character. They serve as volunteers in community organizations, as leaders in local government and as supporters of the Welch Farm Museum and events like the Eden Corn Festival.

Eden's residents have ready access to fresh farm products, grown by our neighbors. Vegetable and greenhouse farms may be most visible in town, but dairy farms, sheep, beef, alpacas, chickens, turkeys, horses, grapes, Christmas trees, hay and more are among Eden's agricultural offerings.

Photos: David Eckhardt and Diane Held; iStock photos: cover–Enviromantic, pumpkins–Rich Legg; dairy cow–USDA

Eden's Vision

In order to protect farmland and preserve the open space and rural character of the town, Eden is striving to maintain the viability of the local agricultural economy and support the vibrant farming community that enhances the lives of its residents.

Recommendations

Each of the Plan's recommendations is supported by a number of actions, which are summarized below. (For the detailed list of actions, please contact the Town Supervisor.)

1. **Stabilize the town agricultural land base and maintain land in active agricultural use. Maintain 95 percent of the current active agricultural land in production through the next 10 years. Support Eden farmers as stewards of the land and other natural resources.**

   Actions

   - Implement Eden's conservation easement law and raise funds dedicated to agricultural land protection to create town programs that protect Eden's farmland.
   - Explore programs that make farmland ownership more affordable for beginning farmers and that match sellers and buyers of agricultural land—to help keep Eden's farmland in production.
   - Encourage new development in the areas of town where infrastructure currently exists and follow guidelines and recommendations that conserve the town's fiscal and natural resources.

2. **Maintain a supportive business environment for farm operations.**

   Actions

   - Support farmland protection and the business of agriculture; support the development of an Erie County agricultural and farmland protection plan.
   - Raise awareness among local, state and federal officials about issues affecting Eden's farms; encourage farmer participation on all town boards.
   - Collaborate with agricultural agencies and organizations to pursue financial incentive programs and to advance policy agendas supportive of agriculture.

3. **Educate the non-farm public about agriculture. Facilitate an ongoing dialogue between the farm community and other Eden residents. Encourage appreciation of the agricultural resources located in the town.**

   Actions

   - Organize special agricultural events that promote Eden's farms and raise awareness of their contributions to the community.
   - Promote Eden's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.
   - Continue Eden's participation in the Southtowns Community Enhancement Coalition. Looking for ways to leverage the communities' rural resources to boost local revenue and jobs, the Coalition's Agribusiness project is helping farmers develop agritourism strategies.

What can you do?

- Support Eden farms by buying local farm products and encourage others to do the same.
- Be more understanding of farm practices and slow-moving farm vehicles.
- Inform local, state and federal officials about the importance of supporting farmland protection and farm viability initiatives.
- Learn about Eden farms: take a farm tour when offered, visit a farm market, support the Welch Farm Museum.

The Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan was prepared by the Town of Eden with assistance from American Farmland Trust.