CADE
Center for
Agricultural Development
& Entrepreneurship

Sowing Seeds
Thirty Years - A Retrospective
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CADE is delighted to present this 30 year anniversary publication highlighting the organizations’ contributions – since our founding in 1991 – towards a sustainable, vibrant local food system built around thriving small and medium-sized New York State agribusinesses.

The publication not only highlights key achievements and contributions over the years, but also connects them to larger movements within the food system in each decade.

The most important contribution we see from CADE’s work over the decades—led by staff and Board members who have come and gone, and sometimes returned—is our ever present eye toward the future and what opportunities lie ahead for our agribusiness community. This “eye” has given us a readiness to innovate, think outside the box, live our values, work across the supply chain, and go to bat for small scale producers and what works for them.

We are proud that CADE is still going strong—a testimony to the continued need for our work, which is just as important now as it was when we opened our doors 30 years ago. The innovation and values-driven agriculture and entrepreneurship that created a model of success for CADE over the last 30 years will continue to be the foundation of its success in the next 30 years to come.

We thank all those who were part of the CADE family—staff and Board, clients, funders, partners, and the larger community that continues to value New York’s agricultural assets—from farmers to the land they steward.

Ever onward and upward,

Phoebe Schreiner
CADE Executive Director

Erin Summerlee
CADE Board Chair

Carlena Ficano
CADE Treasurer
"LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IS NOT JUST A CUTE OR CHIC CONCEPT, BUT IT IS THE FUTURE OF FOOD PRODUCTION."

- ANNIE FARRELL
CADE's first executive director
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we thank CADE’s co-founders, Kevin Hodne and Gary Turitz.

Gary Turitz passed away in 2018, but his commitment and passion for NY agriculture and the local food movement that led to his conception of CADE in 1991 lives on as an important legacy of his life and good work. Gary helped establish CADE in 1991 at a time when new approaches were needed to keep NY farms thriving. CADE’s former Board members and staff remember him as an innovative leader who recognized and acted upon new opportunities within the evolving agricultural economy. Through this publication, we honor his memory.

We also thank all of CADE’s current and former staff and Board members who led the work over the decades, and in particular, those who were interviewed for this publication: Marty Broccoli, Mark Davies, Carlena Ficano, Kevin Hodne, Christina Hunt-Wood, Carolyn Lewis, Wayne Mellor, Phil Metzger, Phoebe Schreiner, Karl Seeley, and Erin Summerlee.

Finally, we thank this publication’s lead author, Mark Simonson, the Oneonta Town Historian, a journalist at the Daily Star, and staff of the Farmer’s Museum. He was not only an archeologist and private investigator digging through CADE’s old files, library and newspaper archives, but a writing enthusiast whose thoughtful writing makes the publication a pleasure to read.

REFERENCES - SOURCES OF ATTRIBUTION:

The Daily Star
The Cooperstown Crier
The Press & Sun Bulletin
The New York Times
UpRiver/DownRiver Magazine
An extensive collection of CADE publications; including strategic plans, annual reports and program descriptions.
CADE remembers its founder and long-time Board member, Gary Turits, who passed away Thursday, December 6, 2018 at the age of 74. Gary helped established CADE in 1991 at a time when new approaches were needed to keep NY farms thriving. CADE’s former Board members and staff remember him as an innovative leader who recognized and acted upon new opportunities within the evolving agricultural economy.

Former Executive Director, Kevin Hodne remembers encountering Gary at a meeting of community leaders developing a vision and plan for Otsego County in the early 1990s: “he laid out a vision of reversing the decline of agriculture through direct marketing of value added products to New York City and local markets. This was not a vague, idealistic idea [but] about successful niche marketing farm ventures. That was the starting point for Gary to bring like-minded people together to start CADE, obtain grants and move from an idea to a reality.”

Under Gary’s leadership, CADE was instrumental in introducing the meat goat industry in New York in the 1990’s according to former Director of Marketing, Marty Broccoli. CADE published two meat goat marketing manuals and introduced Boer Goat genetics, now found in most breeds of meat goats.

Today, the goat meat industry is one of the fastest growing segments of livestock production in the United States.

In the words of Phillip Metzger, one of its founding Board members, “Gary was a genuine, bright and ambitious man [with] vision to support farms in Central NY. Gary’s passion for agriculture was evident”.

Today, CADE continues to build on Gary’s legacy, identifying new and innovative ways for NY farms to thrive, enhancing a strong regional food system, and promoting sustainable farming practices.
A trend had begun in the 1970s and ‘80s, across upstate New York. The once highly productive dairy farms and farming in general had been in decline, with many disappearing from local landscapes.

Little, if anything had been done to stop it. But in the early 1990s, an effort got underway to face the trend and work at reversing the decline.

Thirty years ago, Otsego County had nearly 400 working dairy farms. In 2019, that number had dwindled to 66.

Those numbers were according to CADE, the Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship, an organization marking its 30th anniversary in 2021, to address this problem and create new agricultural opportunities across the region.

“Imagine Otsego County with a demonstration farm that helps local farmers produce specialty fruits and vegetables. Or a local compost heap, beside a community recycling center, that serves an entire town or region,” The Daily Star reported on June 20, 1990.

“Local officials are so serious about these ideas they’re having meetings to discuss whether they would work. The ideas germinated at a recent series of workshops at the State University College at Oneonta entitled ‘Building Government and Community Capacity for Economic Development.’”

During those workshops, it was reported that some officials were already working on ideas that might help, “and they have formed a task force called the Otsego County Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship, or ‘CADE,’ said Kevin Hodne, an Otsego County Representative from the city of Oneonta.” Hodne was with Gary Turits at these workshops.

“‘We want to preserve agricultural land in Otsego County,’ said Hodne. ‘It’s important to find ways to diversify agriculture.’”
CADE soon became more than a task force and didn’t limit their outlook to only Otsego County.

Hodne said recently that Turits, who had a background in education and farming, said this area had declined in agriculture and revitalization was greatly needed. Hodne knew Turits when both worked at the Otsego Northern Catskills Board of Cooperative Educational Services (ONC-BOCES) campus in Milford. Turits also had his own farm, and was already marketing and selling some of his own products, mostly beef, chicken and turkey, at higher prices directly to a cooperative with other farmers.

Turits convinced Hodne that “this could be done” with other farmers across the region. The two knew that most farmers didn’t know how to market or sell their products, and thought that a go-between agency could enable farmers to take on these kinds of skills. The opportunities were there for farmers to try new or existing products and get better prices.

“I joined in enthusiastically,” Hodne said, “to share in his (Turits’) vision, and helped make a big pitch for that.” Hodne said he got to know Turits better in these workshops. One thing led to another.

Hodne said a group formed including Barry Warren, Phil Metzger, Charlie Kremer, Bill Gengenbach and Cliff Brunner, to put together a strategic plan and write a grant.

Daily Star readers learned on Jan. 15, 1991, “The Nourse Foundation has awarded $60,000 to...CADE,” and Hodne said the money would go toward hiring a director, office expenses and other costs. The Nourse Foundation was affiliated at that time with the Cooperstown-based Clark Foundation.

The work had just begun.
Annie Farrell became the first executive director of CADE in April 1991 and remained for several years. She explained to the UpRiver/DownRiver magazine in 1991 that her goal was to “rejuvenate farming in the Catskills by encouraging farmers to develop their own niche; to make agriculture sustainable and responsive to the needs of the marketplace.”

Annie continued, “We are the breadbasket of the metropolitan area, and yet we’re losing our farms. The devastating loss of these family farms cannot be measured. Local, sustainable agriculture is not just a cute or chic concept, but it is the future of food production.”

Farrell grew up in the Bronx and developed an early and abiding love for growing flowers and growing vegetables on her many trips to the Botanical Gardens with her aunt. She taught herself how to garden in what she called a hit-or-miss method.

When 24, she moved to Bovina and settled on 22-acres. At that time there were about 38 farms (1973) near the hamlet, and by the early 1990s the numbers had dropped to six.

The new CADE director had her work cut out for her, an overwhelming problem that wasn’t about to go away, but needed to be turned around. New approaches were necessary.

The State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Delhi was one of the first to take a new approach. Having educated generations of dairy farmers, new programs were introduced as an alternative to a regional industry in decline. A $77,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1992 gave the college and other regional organizations ways to teach farmers how to produce and market specialty greens and herbs.
As The Daily Star reported in August 1992, “Gardens will be planted at the college’s farm to discover which crops are feasible for the region. Which types of vegetables are grown will be based on market demand, said Annie Farrell, director of the Center for Agriculture Development and Entrepreneurship.

“Farrell experimented with alternative agriculture by creating her own business in 1986. Before she sold the four-greenhouse operation in 1991, she successfully produced specialty greens year-round without chemicals, she said.

“Urban areas, primarily New York City, provide a market with a huge demand for items such as Napa, or Korean cabbage and other ‘ethnic’ vegetables, said Dominic Morales, project director.

“The demonstration project would not only teach farmers how to grow the produce but also how to market it in those areas. Representatives from the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development are coordinating marketing strategies, he said.”

In one of CADE’s first newsletters, it recapped the first year’s activities, which included conducting a survey of farmers to determine their interest in trying new products, identifying markets, organizing education forums and establishing a “revolving loan fund” to assist farmers who want to try a new product.

During the early 1990s, local farmers’ markets were new and gaining in popularity, using one of the best marketing link-ups possible: locally grown, bought and consumed products. CADE established management of the Oneonta’s Farmers’ Market, and moved the market from sites like the Market Street parking garage and behind Clinton Plaza, to a much more visible Main Street location. Some of those locally grown products were also making their way to bigger markets, as well. New in 1993 was the Bronx Sunday Market, in the Joyce Kilmer Park on the Grand Concourse near 162nd Street.
One of the early education forums offered by CADE was about CSA’s; Community Supported Agriculture.

As The Daily Star reported on June 8, 1993, “If you want to avoid supermarket produce and help out a local farmer, there’s a new way to do both at once. Sign up with a CSA.” It was an idea that was gaining popularity across the country, and took root here. A farmer contracted with a group of subscribers to provide a regular supply of fresh produce. Subscribers or members provided the farmer with a guaranteed market.

Not only were there new efforts to grow local produce underway, the same was true with livestock for meats.

“The most exciting possibility for expanding livestock production in Otsego County is in the area of meat goat production,” The Daily Star reported in January 1992, “and a large group of interested prospective producers from Otsego is planning on a trip to Kingston to learn more about the enterprise.”

That fact-finding trip soon showed its benefits. It was reported in The Press & Sun-Bulletin on May 24 that a follow-up meeting at the Otsego County Cooperative Extension in Cooperstown drew 22 farmers who owned or are considering goats to diversify their farms.

“We are close to the biggest market for goat meat — New York,” said Annie Farrell. Many ethnic groups, including Muslims, Jamaicans, Africans, Italians and Greeks, enjoy goat meat, she said.”

Marty Broccoli, a marketing specialist with CADE added, “There is a larger and larger ethnic population in New York, especially New York City. There is an enormous rate of immigrants at the rate of 10,000 to 12,000 a week. They like to continue eating goat meat. We have a very low supply.” At least at that time there was.

“Not much other than Cornell Cooperative Extension was around to help farmers,” Broccoli said recently. “They stayed pretty much with projects on the commodities level, and not many looking at the new wave of agriculture and farm production, or getting creative on how we looked at farming. We were in a position to take advantage of the new trends that were coming in the late 1980s and early ‘90s.” Broccoli worked in the area of specialized meat production, especially in the meat goat industry.
That grant, enabling Broccoli to join CADE, also allowed the agency to introduce meat goats with Boer genetics, a goat that came out of South Africa. “Now nearly everybody has it in their meat goat herds,” Broccoli said. “CADE did some great things for the meat goat industry in New York.”

“There are a lot of abandoned farms and buildings in our area that are perfect for goats,’ said Phillip D. Metzger, project coordinator for South Central New York Resource Conservation & Development.” Metzger also served on the board of CADE from the mid-1990s through about 2008. In a New York Times article from June 15, 1996, it was reported that 30,000 goats were trucked into the state each month, primarily from Texas, Tennessee, Missouri and Oklahoma.

“We can grow the product right here,” Metzger said in the article, adding that upstate New York could compete with these states.

That same year, Wilber Allen, a Mount Vision dairy farmer, in addition to milking 100 cows, began raising goats to be sold for meat in New York City.

“I’m excited about it,” he told The Daily Star. “I think there’s going to be quite a few people getting into it.” Allen was able to secure a $2,500 loan from CADE to get started. So were other farmers across the region.

In addition to goat meat, raising calves for veal was starting to find a niche locally in the late 1990s.

Farmers were getting next to nothing for male calves, so a project was started to encourage raising the animals naturally in meadows, and develop markets for the veal.

In The Daily Star’s Farm Yearbook of 1998, two farmers were featured. Kyle Smith of Masonville and Jean Barrows of McDonough, were raising calves in a new program started in 1997 by the New York Pastured Veal Producers Association. The project was also sponsored by CADE, the South Central New York Resource Conservation Development Project, the Appalachian Regional Commission and Federal and State Marketing Improvement Program.
While new ventures had begun earlier in the decade for growing and marketing local produce had taken shape, an effort at growing medicinal herbs and plants began.

Kevin Hodne was now the board chairman for CADE, and told The Daily Star on Nov. 8, 1998 that a new health care trend in the nation could be a great new local opportunity.

“This is a rapidly growing industry. We see a lot of opportunity in medicinal herbs, and we want to develop that opportunity for local farmers.”

Medicinal herbs were being used to treat everything from cold symptoms to depression. Only a few years earlier, herbs such as Echinacea and St. John’s Wort could only be found at health food stores. By 1998 these and many other herbs were getting into drug stores and supermarkets.

By 1999, a $20,000 grant from CADE and the Otsego County Industrial Development Agency had been awarded for the cultivation of ten types of herbs on 15 trial plots throughout the county. For a short time, a company called Graham Development in Oneonta produced a line of medicinal herbs called Scientific Herbals. Many of those herbs were locally grown, according to an article in The Cooperstown Crier in November 2000.

Inside the greenhouse at the ONC-BOCES campus, medicinal herbs were being grown in a hydroponic garden.

The first decade was a busy one, and following the departure of Annie Farrell, CADE was capably led by Betsy Hale, Marty Broccoli and Keith Bott. During these years, there were many opportunities given to farmers, longtime and new, for workshops and seminars to work on these new agricultural opportunities.

As The Star editorialized in June 2000, “Today’s farmers are finding new ways to improve their operations, taking creative approaches to everything from pest management to keeping cows comfortable. And like entrepreneurs in so many other sectors, they’re changing the way they do business to make use of development in technology.”

As the first decade was passing, Marty Broccoli recently reminisced that CADE wouldn’t have been here without Gary Turits and Kevin Hodne. Other board members referred to Turits as the visionary, and Hodne the worker.
“Area agencies such as the Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship deserve credit for educating farmers about new techniques and philosophies. And, of course, many farmers are learning about innovations on their own, thanks in part to the Internet’s amazing resources and reinvigorated professional associations.”

- The Star, June 2000 editorial
T H E  2 0 0 0 ' S

There certainly wasn’t a slowdown for CADE as the new millennium arrived, and with it came a new full-time director in June 2001, Kevin Hodne. CADE had moved its headquarters from SUNY Oneonta to 25 Elm Street by this time. Later the center was located at 250 Main St.

Many times, success grows out of a failure. Early in his directorship, Hodne was approached by the owners of the Cooperstown Cheese Company (a start-up dairy processing business owned by two dairy farmers), for CADE assistance. The building was half way to completion and needed additional capital for the completion of the plant. CADE hired Wayne Mellor as a business consultant to review their business plan, conduct market research and apply for loans. While the enterprise eventually failed due to problems between the business partners, this experience was the impetus for a new approach in the work and philosophy of CADE.

At that time, CADE management felt that if Mellor and other professional consultants had worked with the Cooperstown Cheese Company partners at the planning stage, they would have based their decisions on market research and a professional business plan, and thus would have had greater likelihood of success. In addition, they would have had better prospects in acquiring capital through grants and loans.

This experience combined with bringing Mellor on board to help with business planning, and later hiring Steven Holzbauer as distribution consultant, led to CADE’s grant application to the Kellogg Foundation for a new program called Agriventure.

“We hadn’t changed our philosophy of helping farmers,” Mellor said recently. “We just changed our tactics from idea support to business support. Agricultural people had good ideas for things they wanted to do, but didn’t have the business tools to get from point A to point B.” Kellogg had a program called Food and Society, and Agriventure was an offshoot of that.
With this new talent, CADE shifted from providing general services to farmers and potential farmers to a new model. Now farm venture owners received intensive, professional-level consultant services in the areas of business planning, product development, market research, marketing, promotion, sales, business systems such as bookkeeping, and distribution. CADE’s emphasis became one to assist farms that produce “value-added” products such as dairy (cheese, yogurt, bottled milk, butter, ice cream), produce (organic and/or “local”), and meats and eggs (primarily using “grass-based” production methods). The demand for these products was growing at a rapid rate by the middle of the first decade of the 21st century.

Kellogg liked what they saw in CADE’s plan and provided a three-year grant to fund the program. It was the first major grant obtained at the time. Other grants had been smaller and fairly local, but Hodne said this was the first national organization to support CADE.

“Kellogg funded 50 organizations across the U.S., and we were the smallest,” Hodne said. “We sold them on this business model which featured a triple bottom line. There has to be three benefits to help the farmer and society. These are economic, to make money; social; and environmental.”

Also during this time, CADE was able to get a grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to study the feasibility of building on-farm meat-processing facilities.

Hodne said they came up with a plan to help with some processing plants locally. At that time NYSERDA didn’t fund any agricultural programs, but that changed after CADE connected with the Authority, convincing them that agriculture is a major part of the energy sector.

“We helped them establish a program for agriculture and got their first grant. We were pioneers,” he added.

Marty Broccoli recently added that part of the NYSERDA grant also helped strengthen the meadow-raised veal project begun in the late 1990s.

Frequently, CADE offered workshops for farmers and farm entrepreneurs as part of the Agriventure program. Kevin Hodne told The Daily Star on Dec. 22, 2003, that, “those farmers have spent years perfecting their skills as food processors. To be a successful entrepreneur, they will also need to become adept at customer service, promoting their business and selling their products. We believe this will help.”
Hodne also worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension, as an instructor of workshops to enable farmers to write grant proposals for their own new ventures.

The diversity in products grown or raised in the region had been continuing to grow, as The Star reported in its June 22, 2001 edition.

“Vincent Hickling of Edmeston started in the dairy business in 1959, but now he runs a fish hatchery on his land. And Wayne Snyder, a former dairy farmer in Delhi, has diversified his crops so that the farm is busy nearly all year long, and he no longer works with Holsteins. He now raises gourmet produce, strawberries and other cash crops on his farm.

“Both men are examples of a continuing trend in the dairy industry of farmers who once spent their time milking cows but are now raising such things as fingerling potatoes — or bass.”

CADE also worked to bring more attention to local farming to people of all ages.

Star readers in the fall of 2003 found out, “‘Farm Life: A Coloring Book of Fun Places to Visit,’ introduces children and their families to farms and farm-related destinations in the Cooperstown and Oneonta area.

“Kathleen Frascatore, communications consultant to CADE and a manager of the Oneonta Farmers’ Market, thought up the book as a way to market the area’s farming attractions to visitors.

“‘There’s something so heartening to me when I see a big red barn and a rolling green hill,’ Frascatore said. “And I know that’s why people come to the area.’

“But the book is also intended to teach readers about farming and its history, she said.
Another venture Hodne was proud to have worked with was something called the Upstate-Downstate Project. It was the development of a project with New York City Schools.

“We were the producers and they were the marketers,” Hodne said. “One school had their own supermarket. Another put a food basket together to sell as fundraisers for their school.”

This area’s students, from ONC-BOCES, also went to New York City. That began after the Clark Foundation gave a grant for an agriculture program at the Milford campus. “We had a greenhouse, we raised fish and also grew organic potatoes,” Hodne said, “and our students went the Union Square Farmers’ Market, and together with the New York City students we became vendors” of these local products.

“And then the New York City students came up here,” Hodne continued, “and visited our farms. Most had never seen a farm before.” One of the outcomes from the exchange was a cookbook called “From The Farm.” It was produced by the ONC-BOCES Visual Arts Media Technology program. In addition to recipes, the book featured stories about agricultural businesses such as the Fly Creek Cider Mill, Evan Farmhouse Creamery, Bear Pond Winery, Hickling’s Fish Farm, Wildflower Gourmet Potato Farm, Sunny Slope dairy farm, and Massoud’s Tree Farm.

During the tenure of Kevin Hodne, the positive momentum of CADE’s mission continued. Large grants had been successfully written and obtained from the Winrock Foundation, in addition to the Kellogg grant.

Of his team he worked with, Hodne said recently, “I think we made a good contribution to getting more farmers involved, more customers, more people buying local — part of this trend toward local sourced food. Farmers’ markets were blossoming and restaurants were putting on their menus what they were buying locally.”

Chris Harmon was selected as the new executive director in October 2007. The transition was smooth, as in the CADE Annual Report for 2007-2008 it stated, “He has worked diligently to continue the work begun by the founders and previous director, Kevin Hodne. Accomplishments under Harmon’s leadership include capacity building through increased staffing, organizational efficiencies, increased focus on fund development, and bringing additional enterprises on board as CADE clients, while continuing to provide intensive consulting services to existing clients.”
CADE continued to build capacity of established food hubs, which are a locus for connecting many farm and local food ventures for multiple benefits to farms. Examples of local hubs included Evans Farmhouse Creamery, near Norwich, which worked with over 30 small family-owned farms in the region to give access to processing, storage, distribution and transportation — services they would not otherwise have.

Wayne Mellor recalled that Evans Creamery had been a first successful venture he’d worked with as a result of the Kellogg grant to start the Agriventure program. Evans later grew to become Sunrise Family Farms, makers of the Five Acres Farm label of quality dairy products such as yogurt, Kefir and buttermilk. Dave Evans started out with a small creamery in his backyard in Norwich in 1999. Another well-known brand that came from this operation was milk products sold to the popular Siggi’s Icelandic Yogurt.

Another example was Flying Pigs Farm in Washington County, a hub serving farms by purchasing rare breed piglets and pigs from farmers. Flying Pigs’ Farm to Chef operation benefitted 10 other producers with their expertise in marketing and distributing products to customers downstate.

Goat meat was still a strong venture, but another enterprise of interest during this time was the Painted Goat Farm in Garrattsville, a farmstead which began making goat cheese. CADE provided them with general business assistance including business planning, goat selling, marketing and distribution.

Year after year of annual reports showed CADE was successfully working to raise the profile of the organization in the community, the organizational capacity, diversify funding, continue successful grant writing and grant administration, increase the profitability and sustainability of CADE’s Agriventure clients, and improve the Oneonta Farmers’ Market.
Success stories continued to mount for CADE as it entered its third full decade of service to the region. There was another change of address during this period, as CADE relocated to 189 Main St.

To add to the aforementioned CSAs formed during the 1990s, Sustainable Otsego started a food initiative in the region.

“‘People want to eat better and help local farmers,’ group co-founder Adrian Kuzminski said,” as Daily Star readers of Jan. 28, 2010 learned.

“Although Sustainable Otsego is known for its opposition to natural gas drilling, that’s not its only mission, Kuzminski said.

“‘The whole idea is to encourage a more sustainable, healthy lifestyle for individuals and the area,’ he said. ‘And buying local food is at the heart of that.’”

The idea was adapted from a 2007 project in Chenango County, when the county’s Agricultural Development Council set up Chenango Bounty, a program to deliver food from farmers to other residents once a week. In 2008 Madison County joined in. It soon became Central New York Bounty.

“‘We’re averaging about 100 orders a week now,’ CNY Bounty project coordinator Steven Holzbauer said.”

Not surprisingly, CADE had fingerprints on the project, as, “Holzbauer also works for (CADE).”

Another noteworthy “hub” to serve local farmers was the opening of Larry’s Custom Meats in Hartwick, a certified USDA slaughterhouse.

As reported on May 14, 2011, this new venture was made possible by Otsego County’s Industrial Development Agency, the County Economic Development Office — and CADE. Owner Larry Althiser had six employees and planned to add more as demand allowed, because area farmers had pledged to use Larry’s Custom Meats.
“With a USDA stamp on their products, farmers will be able to sell their beef, pork, lamb and other meat products directly to customers including food stores and restaurants.

“Farmer Cliff Brunner of Hartwick said that connecting farmers to consumers can only be a good thing. ‘I think this is a very good news for farmers in our region.’”

The business was successful, bought out by another company in the years ahead.

Chris Harmon left CADE in December 2011 to pursue other interests. Soon after, Rebecca Morgan took on the new executive director role in 2012.

While diversifying agricultural products had been the mission of CADE, the dairy farmers were never left alone in their production of milk.

“In a recent survey by CADE, 96 percent of local farmers were unhappy with the price they received per hundredweight of milk,”

The Daily Star reported on Dec. 10, 2013.

“Lauren Melodia is founder of Milk Not Jails, a non-profit organization that seeks to connect upstate dairy farmers looking to sell their milk for higher prices with restaurants, cafes or institutions like school in New York City. In short, she said, dairy farmers have a commodity that they need a higher price for, and New Yorkers have a demand for milk.

“Melodia and Morgan said Milk Not Jails and CADE want to be a support system for the farmers, helping promote and directly connect them with interested buyers.”

One of the problems faced with getting the milk to New York was transportation and delivery of the products. Lucky Dog Food Hub in Hamden did that on a limited basis, and the need for improvement was realized in 2015.
As The Star reported on June 1, “Lucky Dog Food Hub...was recently granted a combined total of $40,000 from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation and the Delaware County Economic Development Office to expand connections between local farmers and downstate customers.”

Richard and Holly Giles started Lucky Dog in 2013, when CADE brought local farmers together to coordinate their efforts to reach downstate markets.

Back in 2012, Morgan had attended a conference in Colorado where a new breed of investors were looking for places to invest money that aligned with their personal beliefs. “Morgan immediately thought of the Lucky Dog Food Hub.” CADE had again assisted in connecting the two.

“The hub is feeding into this enormous food revolution that’s taking place right now in places like Brooklyn, where there is seemingly a farm-to-table restaurant on every block because people are starting to connect the dots that local agriculture is sustainable, that it does promote economic growth and that we have to build developing food systems in the face of the changing climate,’ Morgan said.” At that time, California was experiencing drought, and later came the massive forest fires.

“With that in mind, Morgan pitched Lucky Dog Food Hub as an example of where this group of impact investors could reflect their desire to support small farms and sustainable agriculture. Last year, the (Steiner) foundation gave CADE a check for $20,000 with the proviso that it be held for Lucky Dog Food Hub to leverage an additional matching grant.”

There were still a lot of vacant farms across the region from the years when dairy farms had closed. Sustainable farming continued to advance across the region, but CADE looked to attempt to fill some of those farms — with new occupants. In 2013, CADE developed the New Farmer Development Program, and started with 25 graduate immigrant farmers looking to start their own farms in Otsego, Delaware, Schoharie, Broome and Sullivan counties. These participants graduated with production, business, marketing and distribution plans.
In 2014 CADE secured funding and developed business and marketing plans for eight hops producers in Schoharie, Otsego and Delaware counties. Additionally, CADE secured funding to purchase a shared hops harvester and get three area 20-C kitchens licensed and equipped for hops production.

The hops industry had been making a comeback with craft beer at the time. One local hops farmer is Christina Hunt-Wood. Christina is a co-owner with her husband of Muddy River Farm Brewery, a farm in the town of Sidney since 2011. She wasn’t only a client of CADE, but a board member as well for a short time.

Hunt-Wood found support from CADE in getting the hops to market, sharing mobile harvesting equipment through networking with other farmers in making the business successful.

Growing hops in the modern era, where hops had once been the premiere agricultural crop of the 19th and early 20th century locally, was all new again.

“There were all these new rules and regulations,” Hunt-Wood said, “of needing the 20-C kitchen to dry and harvest the hops. None of us had the equipment to do it. CADE was there to help us and other farmers so we could sell our hops to the brewers.” Now, farms like Hunt-Wood’s and others can take their hops to Oneonta, to Northern Eagle Beverages to have them processed for selling.

Christina is also one of a few women in the agribusiness locally, but is pleased to see that more are entering the field, and how CADE is encouraging women and minorities to become part of the growth of the sustainable food supply system.

“The face of farming is changing, not only in what is being produced, but who is producing it,” she added, pointing to the success of Cowbella, an over 200-year-old farm in Jefferson, owned by Shannon and Dan Finn. They’ve added on to milk with value-added products like cheese and yogurt.

Another major development in local agriculture got underway in July 2016. It was reported that CADE and SUNY Cobleskill were seeking participants for the Farm & Food Business Incubator, “which provides business training and value-added product development facilities for new and expanding farm and food entrepreneurs.”
“Whether looking to establish or expand,” The Star reported, "The incubator provides participants with access to services and resources through educational programming with local and national experts; access to customized support and mentoring; and for value-added producers, the ability to process without on-farm infrastructure.”
Working with CADE board members Sonia Janiszewski and Carolyn Lewis, the incubator came to full strength a few years later.

Lewis served on the CADE board of directors from 2011 until May 2021. When she began with CADE, she worked in Otsego County’s Economic Development office, and had established a good working relationship going back into the years of leadership of Chris Harmon and Kevin Hodne.

“The partnership with SUNY Cobleskill and the incubator was a game changer,” Lewis said. “We were able to partner with Cobleskill to leverage a significant amount of dollars to put toward technical assistance, of helping farm entrepreneurs in putting business plans together. It gave us something very tangible, very real and valuable to the food system.”

While not directly involved with another project, CADE had great interest in the development of a highly-significant venture — The Hartwick College Food & Beverage Innovation Center. It began operation in January 2016, and was ready to open a new center in downtown Oneonta in 2022.

In a letter to the editor in The Daily Star of March 28, 2017, CADE Executive Director Rebecca Morgan wrote, “(CADE) enthusiastically supports initiatives that stimulate agricultural economic development such as the F&BIC promises to do. CADE carries out farm educational programming, farm and food business incubator services, and value-chain facilitation with the goal of increasing farm numbers, viability and diversity in the Catskill and Mohawk Valley regions. The best way to support our farmers and protect our farmland is to generate agricultural vitality, as the F&BIC will surely do.”

Elsewhere in the region, The Star reported on Jan. 11, 2017, “The Delaware County Department of Economic Development has been approved for a $200,000 grant from the state’s Community Renewal Funding Program.

“The grant will enable the continuation of the county’s Agricultural Microenterprise Program for a third year. Although the ag-micro program will continue to seek to aid in the expansion of existing small agricultural businesses, it will also aim to help in the growth of agricultural based tourism businesses within the county.” As expected, CADE was involved in helping to carry out the work of the program, through educational resources, business planning and the development of sales and marketing strategies.
Just in 2017 alone, CADE made opportunities available for those wishing to get into farming, or to expand their agribusiness, through agricultural seminars.

According to The Star of Sept. 29, “This year’s round of workshops through (CADE) will begin...with ‘So You Want to Farm,’ an introductory primer to meat farms that takes place at the Stone and Thistle Farm in East Meredith and Slope Farms in Meridale.” Both farms had gotten their operations started in years past through CADE’s help. “The farms will give tours of their pastures, process and facilities to the participants.

"Upstate New York is experiencing an upswing in agricultural demand. Many factors contribute to this, including increased awareness in highly populated areas like New York City about food systems that benefit local producers.

“We’re seeing more than just specialty markets. There’s also mass-market demand and we’re working on building capacity as a region to better serve the market."

- Rebecca Morgan as quoted in The Daily Star, September 2017
It had been a job-well-done by Morgan, with an announcement made in The Daily Star of March 6, 2018, that a new executive director had been hired at CADE, in Phoebe Schreiner.

“Morgan conducted fundraising and programmatic work that led to increased farm production capacity and significantly enhanced farmers’ market access and product distribution to high-profit downstate markets,” the article added.

Schreiner came to CADE with a background much different than her predecessors, in that she had worked with the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Open Society Foundation.

Schreiner is the eighth generation on her family’s farm in Gilboa. Although it went out of operation during the 1950s, she came home in recent years to rekindle a family farming tradition. She had been in Afghanistan, working with the government and stakeholders to transition from poppy production for opium use, for other agricultural development, shifting farms to other foods related to entrepreneurs and give them skills to produce high yield and higher income food products, from fruit trees to nuts and the herb, saffron.

Thus, the skills set matched perfectly into what CADE had been doing. When Phoebe returned to the United States, another nearby farm friend told her about the directorship opening at CADE.

The board of directors felt Schreiner was in a position to bring CADE into growth and some new “next steps” following previous leadership.

Schreiner entered with a Strategic Plan for 2018-2022. It included a “Theory of Change: Building a Stable Food Supply Chain,” which created conditions of optimized production, enhancing infrastructure and supporting industries, and expanding markets and sales.
There were no gaps in accomplishments in the transition of directors. For example, as reported on Sept. 11, 2018, “(CADE) received $99,990 in federal funds to develop and market value-added dairy products in coordination with regional dairy farmers and the State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill.

“The money received through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development agency, will be used to support the testing, producing, branding and marketing phases, CADE Executive Director Phoebe Schreiner said.

“SUNY Cobleskill is opening a dairy processing plant on its campus as an educational facility. The plant manager, Michelle Sumers, will be helping dairy farmers to develop a regional product line. CADE conducted a market research study with 10 dairy farms in the region and discovered that there would be a competitive market for cream cheese or string cheese.”

In early 2019, CADE offered farms help on tax exemptions.

As told in The Star of Jan. 15, 2019, “Fiscal sponsorship, long a tool of nonprofits to support projects or groups without tax-exempt status in applying for grants and receiving donations, is being implemented as a strategy to infuse capital into farm and food businesses in the region.

“The Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship launched its fiscal sponsorship program in fall 2018 with the intent to create another possible funding stream for agricultural businesses. ‘Capital is a big issue with farmers,’ Tianna Kennedy, a CADE board member and owner of Star Route Farm, said.
“From the donor side, Kennedy explained, there are foundations and trusts that are unable to support businesses, even if it would fit within the scope of the organization’s mission.

“Foundations cannot give to for-profit businesses, but with CADE — a nonprofit — as a middle entity, funds can be re-allocated based on projects.”

In March 2019, Congressman Antonio Delgado, recently having been appointed to the House Agriculture Committee, worked to develop an agricultural advisory committee for New York’s 19th Congressional District. It was comprised of 40 farmers and agriculture leaders from every county in the district.

Some of those leaders included members of CADE, including Schreiner and board members Tianna Kennedy, the owner of her Charlottesville farm and Mark Davies, then an education professor at Hartwick College, and now at SUNY Oneonta.

“‘Agriculture is at the center of the upstate economy,’ Schreiner told The Star. ‘It’s important that our elected officials, regardless of party, pay close attention to realities on the ground and what’s at stake for farmers in the district. We hope that regular dialogue with the Committee will better equip him to address needs.”

Since Schreiner’s start as executive director, the organization has more than tripled in size as far as annual budgets, from $250,000 to $300,000, to over $1 million, the growth going to more entrepreneurial efforts across the region.

While much was getting accomplished in the late teens, the world went into a near shut-down mode with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the early months of 2020.
While the effects of COVID-19 was a massive blow to the world economy, food production was still a necessity, and even though CADE was forced to work remotely with agribusinesses, work was slowed, but never ceased.

“But what emerged,” Schreiner said, “because of so many supply chain issues nationally, such as big plants being shut down due to infections, it showed how fragile our food system is. We weren’t ready, and this was a valuable lesson for policy makers and others that we need to start planning ahead. As far as consumer response to the crisis, we actually saw among our clients a massive uptick in the number of consumers who wanted to avoid infection, lines and supermarkets, and they began rushing to their local farm stands and farmers’ markets, in finding other ways to get food.”

Food banks were also affected by COVID, and Schreiner said many area farms sold food to state and federal food programs, which were brought to these food banks. The Otsego Community Foundation supported CADE’s efforts to buy food from Otsego producers to get it into the county’s food pantries.

“I think this was a first time in which there was a real connecting of the dots of how local producers supported their local communities, and the local food movement, which was always small and marginal, and was brought to the forefront, and why it is so important we support our local farmers,” Schreiner added. “It will keep us safe, it will keep us healthy, and keep it local, as opposed to food that comes from some faraway place.”

CADE is currently working on something called Vision 2050. This effort is to accelerate sustainable agricultural economic development, increase food security, mitigate climate change and create green jobs throughout the farm and food sector. Not just locally, but across New York state.

Carlena Ficano has served two separate times with CADE on its board of directors, from the late 1990s to 2005, and more recently from 2015 to present. She has been working closely on Vision 2050, and calls it a bit of a departure from what CADE normally does, from giving grass-roots support.
“CADE has stepped into the role as a convener and network builder to bring together voices from across the food supply chain to create a shared vision of what a healthy, equitable, sustainable food system would look like. To articulate that vision, we’ll get some thoughts on how we might get there, collaboratively — and not meant to be a strategic plan, but a visioning document to move us to the next step as a state. Hopefully from this, we’ll get some state-level coordination.”

-Carlena Ficano, CADE Board of Directors
Ficano said there are a lot of interested voices being heard, in regards to a food system across the state. While there may not be a CADE in different sections of the state, other small organizations and agencies, including Cornell Cooperative Extension’s network, are working together to get a system in place for New York state.

Vision 2050 has been holding roundtables, taking surveys and holding meetings with diverse stakeholders to create this vision and complete a report with priorities, targets and recommendations for how to reach the vision. It will be completed by spring 2022.

“Phoebe’s vision ahead is spectacular,” Carolyn Lewis said. “The overarching theme that New York state could be the country’s next food hub is exciting. The relationships she has built and funding she has sourced to move this forward is working, and hopefully more people will buy into and invest in this food infrastructure.”

“We’ll use this as an advocacy tool for political leaders to see what people in the food system want to see for our future,” Schreiner said. “New York state does not have an agricultural development plan, and if we could say as a result of this Vision 2050 initiative, we could be successful in advocating the government to think holistically on the recommendations. It will create a much stronger food system and can bring out what a lot of people are calling for, from being healthier and profitable.”

Former board member Mark Davies agrees.

“We have several problems confronting us as a nation and here in the northeast. Climate change is beginning to negatively impact farming and food, and we have food insecurity among people. On top of that we have a food system that is very distant from the consumer, with a lot of our food coming out of California’s Central Valley. Our area has taken a huge hit in food production over the last few decades. Now we’re looking at our area becoming a major food source again for the northeast. We need this vision to restore our state to a foodscape.”
Erin Summerlee is the current CADE board chair. She has been with CADE since 2015. She is employed with the Rural Health Network of South Central New York, based in Binghamton. She directs the agency’s Food Health Network, which collaborates with partner organizations — such as CADE — on developing community-based food systems centered around enhancing the economy, environment, health and social fabric of a particular place.

“There’s a natural connection with my work and that of CADE,” Summerlee said of her involvement over the past several years. Regarding the Vision 2050, Summerlee said other states have visions of statewide food systems with action plans, while New York has never had one.

“It’s exciting that CADE is spearheading this effort with other organizations across the state to bring about a plan.”

Another area Schreiner and the board and staff are working on is regarding antibiotics, as they are becoming less effective in animals and livestock, because they are being overused. Studies in the U.S. and Europe have highlighted this fact, and CADE is working on a new curriculum to support dairy farmers in their reduction of antibiotic use.

With climate change being in the forefront of contemporary news, CADE will continue to work with stakeholders and other organizations to meet “green” targets set by the state and federal government. This will mean changing from bad farming practices into good ones, which are more healthy and eco-friendly to our planet.

As we approach the post-COVID era, Schreiner is calling this a critical time for the future of the food system in New York state. Longtime farmers are getting older and will soon retire. The need for more new farmers is essential to fill in those leaving the business. Young farmers and people of diverse cultures are finding their way into new ventures, but there is still a lot of vacated farmland that cannot be lost to development, such as people from metropolitan areas wanting to move out and relocate in rural areas. Efforts to keep those lands in food production are important to our future.
Thirty years of successful ventures later, to borrow some baseball analogies, CADE hasn’t been hitting a home run every time at bat.

While there have been the successes outlined in this publication, there were some “errors.” But consider how most Baseball Hall of Fame sluggers finished careers with lifetime batting averages at the .300+ level.

Kevin Hodne, reflecting on his years as director, said not everything was successful. “But you learn and you grow and do things better.”

What CADE has accomplished follows the motto of Baseball Hall of Famer Willie Keeler; “Keep Your Eye on the Ball, and Hit ‘Em Where They Ain’t.” CADE has been getting the hits in ways never thought of locally in agriculture before 1991, attempting to establish new ventures never tried before. It doesn’t stop now.

Through the first three decades, CADE has capably continued its mission through increased funding from a variety of sources, from private foundations, state and federal funding. Many organizations have made sustainable agriculture stronger through individual efforts and partnerships.

The same rings true of what Annie Farrell said in 1991 of CADE,

“Local, sustainable agriculture is not just a cute or chic concept, but it is the future of food production.”

Likewise, in the present. Phoebe Schreiner says of funding for continuing CADE’s mission, today is a call to action for funding opportunities.

In the public world of funding, by taxpayers, Schreiner says there’s every reason in the world for us to think “fresh and out of the box” how our dollars should support a healthy food system, from healthy farm practices to healthy products grown locally.
For private philanthropy, this is a time for people and organizations to help support CADE’s efforts by providing seed funds to do innovative thinking around new models for food systems. It can be for experimental projects, from fewer antibiotics to new items for the food system.

Schreiner would like to see more funds going into the hands of farmers and food entrepreneurs themselves to be able to transition out of the commodity market, such as corn and soybeans, and into value-added production or buying more land so animals can be pastured and get them out of pens.

Bottom line: Entrepreneurs need more accessible, flexible funding sources tailored to them. New York’s farm and related food businesses matter — producing food as a “public good,” driving the rural economy, acting as custodians of our land and water systems. Increasingly, farms are also New York’s most promising resource for sequestering carbon to help solve one of the world’s most urgent challenges — the climate crisis — and are enhancing our capacities to meet the state’s (and America’s) most ambitious “green” targets.

CADE would highly recommend potential funders to review the publication, “A Guide for Funders,” in print or on CADE’s website, cadefarms.org. For those who have supported us in the past, you have our most sincere thanks. We welcome newcomers to be inspired by these three decades of work in continuing our mission.
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