



Agriculture in Long Island

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Report 10-2013

October 2012

Highlights

- Agricultural production in Long Island reached \$258.7 million in 2007, according to the most recent census by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (Suffolk County accounted for 94 percent of total sales.)
- Long Island is the top region in New York State for the sale of nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod products. (Suffolk County accounted for half of all statewide sales of these products.)
- While Long Island accounted for only 6 percent of statewide agricultural sales, Suffolk County had the highest sales of all counties in the State, with \$242.9 million.
- Suffolk County is the State's largest pumpkin producer. Although sales dipped last year as wet weather hurt the crop, this year's pumpkin crop is expected to rebound.
- Suffolk County is also the State's largest producer of tomatoes and cauliflower, and the third-largest producer of grapes, peaches and strawberries.
- Suffolk County was the first county in the nation to establish a farmland protection program that was based on purchasing development rights.
- Long Island has about one-fifth (57) of New York State's 316 wineries, helping the State become the nation's second-largest wine producer and third-largest grape producer.
- Long Island's vineyards cover more than 3,000 acres, produce 1.2 million gallons of wine and attract 1.3 million visitors yearly.
- Long Island had 38 farmers' markets in 2012, along with many farm stands. Direct sales to consumers totaled \$9 million in 2007, nearly double the amount in 2002.

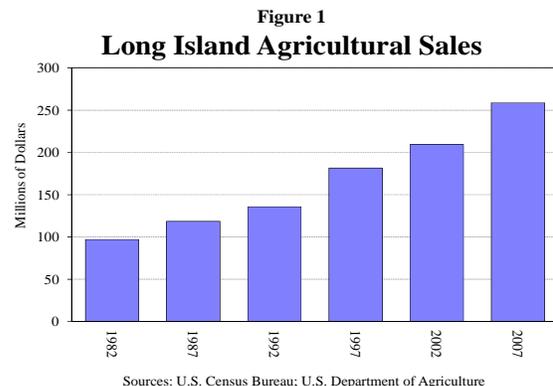
The Long Island region, which encompasses Nassau and Suffolk counties, has undergone extensive suburban development over the past 60 years. Nonetheless, agriculture remains an important sector, and provides many benefits to the regional economy and local residents. In fact, Suffolk County has the highest agricultural sales of any county in New York State, and is home to about one-fifth of the State's wineries.

Along with generating income and jobs in farming and related industries, Long Island's farms and wineries attract tourists. Visitors come for fruit and pumpkin picking, fall festivals, and wine tasting. Although Long Island is home to the nation's first suburb, it has retained its agricultural identity.

Agricultural Overview

The amount of land devoted to agriculture in Long Island declined from 150,680 acres in 1950 to 37,243 acres in 1992, but has held fairly steady since then. According to the most recent census by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Long Island had 35,690 acres of farmland and 644 farms in 2007.¹

As shown in Figure 1, total agricultural sales (excluding wine) in Long Island reached \$258.7 million in 2007, an increase of 23.5 percent in five years (4.5 percent after adjusting for inflation). Long Island's farms are efficient and produce a mix of high-value crops, as the average sales per acre was \$7,249 in 2007, which was more than ten times the statewide average (\$616).



¹ The agricultural census is conducted every five years.

Long Island is the top region in New York State and Suffolk County is the top county in the State for the sale of nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod products. Long Island's sales totaled \$194.3 million (see Figure 2), which accounted for three-fourths of Long Island's total agricultural sales and half of the statewide sales of these products. The sale of these products supports the landscaping industry throughout the downstate region as well as in other states.

**Figure 2
Agricultural Production by Commodity Group
in Long Island (2007)**

	Sales (millions)	Share of Total
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod	\$194.3	75.1%
Vegetables, melons and potatoes	\$26.8	10.3%
Fruits, tree nuts and berries	\$13.8	5.3%
Poultry and eggs	\$9.9	3.8%
Aquaculture	\$7.6	2.9%
Other	\$6.4	2.5%
Total	\$258.7	100.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Long Island's other top commodity groups are vegetables, melons and potatoes (which includes pumpkins); fruits, tree nuts and berries; and poultry and eggs. Long Island is also the State's largest producer of aquaculture (i.e., the farming of aquatic organisms such as fish, clams, shrimp, lobsters and aquatic plants).

Agritourism

Many farms on Long Island attract visitors. In addition to the draw of buying fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables and nursery products, farms offer an array of recreational activities. Visitors may come to pick their own fresh produce (such as vegetables, peaches, pumpkins and apples) throughout the growing season from late spring through Thanksgiving, and then come to cut their own Christmas trees in December.

Many farms feature hay rides, corn mazes, and other attractions. Some accommodate school groups and private bus tours to pick fruit, visit the attractions, enjoy the natural beauty of the farms, or observe old-fashioned cider-making. Many farms and nurseries, as well as towns and villages, hold fall festivals that feature local farm and floricultural products, along with arts and crafts and other entertainment. The Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau currently lists more than 60 such events.

Long Island's Wine Industry

Long Island's soil and long growing season make it a premier region for growing wine grapes to make wines in various classic European styles. With about one-fifth of the State's wineries, the region's wine and grape production has helped the State become the nation's second-largest wine producer and third-largest grape producer. Starting with one vineyard in 1973, the Long Island wine region has expanded to include 57 licensed wine producers today, according to the Long Island Wine Council. The wine region is concentrated in eastern Suffolk County (an area known as the East End), with most wineries on the North Fork. Long Island's vineyards cover more than 3,000 acres, and its wineries produce about 1.2 million gallons of wine per year.

In addition to wine tastings, Long Island's award-winning wineries host many events throughout the year, including vineyard and wine-making tours, live music events, festivals and wine classes. According to the Long Island Wine Council, 1.3 million visitors visit the East End wineries each year. The benefits of this tourism extend to hotels, restaurants and shops in surrounding towns and villages.

Farmland and Environmental Protection

In 2004, Suffolk County created and authorized funds for the Agricultural Stewardship Program to reduce the leaching of agricultural fertilizers and pesticides into groundwater, the Long Island Sound and other bodies of water. The voluntary program, which is a collaborative effort with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, universities, and County, State and federal offices, promotes environmentally safe crop production through education, research and demonstration projects.

Many farm owners also have embraced the Suffolk County Farmland Program, which has preserved more than 10,000 acres of farmland through the purchase of development rights since it began in 1974. Under the program (the first of its kind in the nation), Suffolk County acquires the land's nonagricultural development rights, and the land remains privately owned farmland. The value of the rights is the difference between the land's value at its potential "highest and best use" versus its value as farmland.

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