

## NYS CAFO Changes

It was announced at the Governor's August Yogurt Summit that the state would increase the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) limit from 199 cows to 299 cows, bringing it up to the federal level. This will allow for increased milk production across the state and help dairy farmers earn and produce more without being subjected to onerous regulations. There are currently about 872 farms across the state with between 100 and 199 cows. Those farms that fall under the category of CAFO must be inspected by Ag&Mkts and Soil and Water under the Clean Water Act to prevent runoff from contaminating water sources.



## College Grads Choose Farming

For decades, the number of farmers has been shrinking as a share of the population, and agriculture has often been seen as a backbreaking profession with little prestige. But the last Agricultural Census in 2007 showed a 4 percent increase in the number of farms, the first increase since 1920, and some college graduates are joining in the return to the land. Hearty Roots, about 100 miles north of New York City, spans 70 acres with a clear view of the Catskill Mountains to the west. At the height of the harvest this year, the farm produced 8,000 pounds of vegetables a week — including peppers, beets and kale — and employed 10 workers. None of them came from farming backgrounds and most had heard about the job through word of mouth. The federal Agriculture Department said it did not have statistics on the number of college graduates who have become farmers in recent years, but Kathleen A. Merrigan, the deputy agriculture secretary, said in a recent interview that she believes the profession is becoming more attractive.

## Drought Hits Shippers on Great Lakes

According to a report by the Associated Press, the Midwest drought is lowering water levels in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron to near-record lows, putting pressure on the shipping industry and turning some beaches into long mud flats. It is also intensifying a debate over a decades-old dredging project near Detroit that permanently reduced the lakes' levels by nearly two feet. The two lakes, which meet at the Straits of Mackinac, were down nearly a foot in August from a year earlier and nearly two feet below the average for the past century. The levels could break a record low set in 1964 in the next few months, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projections. The drought has lowered water levels in lakes and rivers throughout the Midwest, including the Mississippi, which has experienced periodic closures to barge traffic. Even the Great Lakes, which represent one-fifth of the earth's surface fresh water and are hundreds of feet deep, are being hit by the lack of rain. Great Lakes water levels are especially important to the shipping industry, which moves some 200 million tons of cargo each year; since the depth of water near ports and shipping channels dictates how much coal, iron, grain or other cargo can be loaded on ships. The low water also highlights the need for more maintenance dredging of many ports around the lakes. Dredging is necessary to keep shipping channels open as the movement of water carries sediments that can clog channels and block off harbors. The Corps of Engineers has identified at least \$200 million in dredging needs to restore Great Lakes channels and harbors to their intended depths. All the Great Lakes fluctuate seasonally as well as year to year and decade to decade because of weather and long-term climate changes.

## First-Time GLOS St. Lawrence River Forecasting Technology Will Help Boaters Plan Travel

In July, the New York Sea Grant announced its public upload of the new real-time Great Lakes Observing System - St. Lawrence River Boaters Forecasting tool for recreational boaters. The new tool extends Great Lakes global observing technology to the St. Lawrence River with some data specific to the river system. Boaters and marina operators can access the site by computer and smartphone. Users can request email and text alerts that are sent when their personal pre-set datapoint (for example, a specific water depth or speed) is reached. The new tool integrates data from various sources, including Environment Canada. The easy-to-use, web-based application at [www.glos.us](http://www.glos.us) provides current-time and 12-hour-forecasted water current and depth data for points all along the St. Lawrence River.

