

# NYS Council on Food Policy Fall Meeting

Tuesday, October 12, at Cornell University Moakley House, Ithaca

Guest speakers were (*See: CALS presentations\_10.20.09*):

**Margaret Smith, Assistant Director of the Cornell Agriculture Experiment Station** provided a presentation on the mission of the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) which includes: advancing a productive and sustainable agriculture; promoting a wise stewardship of the environment; supporting a safe, secure food supply; and fostering economic vitality. A report on opportunities and challenges for New York State due to global climate change was also presented.

**Tom Overton, Associate Professor of Animal Science, Cornell University** explained that the dairy industry in New York produced \$2.3 billion in farm gate revenue in 2008, yet the industry faces many challenges. With strong support from CALs and programs such as Pro-Dairy, Dr. Overton described the many resources available to the dairy industry to advance their production, crop, environmental, and business management skills.

**Anu Rangarajan, Director of Cornell's Small Farms Program, Department of Horticulture** discussed the many programs administered through the Small Farms Program. The mission of the Program is to foster the sustainability of diverse, thriving small farms that contribute to food security, healthy rural communities, and the environment. The vital contribution that Cornell Cooperative Extension educators make in our communities, and the Cornell organic agriculture efforts, including research and extension projects, were also discussed.

**Olga Padilla-Zakour, Director of Food Venture Center** provided an overview of the mission of the Center and examples of how the direct technical support, the education and outreach, and the research and food safety trainings provided have assisted hundreds of entrepreneurs, farmers and food companies develop commercial food products.

**Susan Henry, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Cornell University** spoke of the critical relationship and commitment to New York State agriculture that CALs shares with the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, and now with the New York State Council on Food Policy.

A brief question and answer period was held during which guest speakers responded to inquires from the audience.

During the NYS CFP Roundtable, Council members individually shared their successes, collaborations, concerns, and new proposals for food policy in New York State. The majority of which is outlined in Section V of the annual report to the Governor. (Go to: Report to Governor - 2009 - "Account of Progress Made in Achieving Goals").

A public comment period followed during which stakeholders presented recommendations for the NYS CFP consideration (*See: Public Comments\_10.20.09*).

A site visit to Fessenden Dairy in King Ferry preceded the meeting during which:

**Tim and Ronda Fessenden**, operators of this sixth-generation family dairy farm described the current financial struggle they are going through to keep the business running with record low dairy prices. The Fessendens are dedicated to keeping the number of cows in balance with the land. They milk 700 cows three times a day, and produce about 5,000 gallons of milk daily. On 1,200 acres of carefully designed contours, terraces and strips they raise corn silage and alfalfa feed.

The Fessendens have also taken innovative steps to diversify their business while preserving and enriching the soil for future generations. They have implemented an award-winning waste management system that recycles animal manure solids into heat-treated bedding for cows, or is turned into certified organic compost; and have engineered a system to manage the liquid nutrients and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 31 times!