

# DEC, EPA announce aircraft-based survey

Low-flying plane equipped with latest radiological sensor equipment will collect data to update prior federal survey

Text and Photo Provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation announced the start of an aerial radiological survey of Erie and Niagara counties beginning the week of Oct. 2 and continuing throughout October in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



This new survey will be conducted by single-engine, low-flying plane called the Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT). The plane, based near Dallas, is equipped with a suite of sensors for measuring potential

radiation sources. The various sensors on the plane work together to generate data that will help assess the presence of material at ground level that could contain radiological material. Photographs of property will not be taken during the flyover.

In order to conduct the survey, the plane will traverse a carefully planned linear grid pattern over Erie and Niagara counties at an altitude of approximately 500 feet above ground level for approximately one month, including weekends.

People may notice the low-flying aircraft with U.S. EPA markings (images and information about the ASPECT can be found at: [www.epa.gov/emergency-response/aspect](http://www.epa.gov/emergency-response/aspect)). Flights are dependent on weather conditions.

Western New York was a hub for the manufacturing of atomic weapon components during World War II and other industries using or producing radiologic materials. This aerial survey is being performed out of an abundance of caution to provide the most current and scientific information to complement a similar aerial radiological survey of the region that was previously conducted in 1984 that assessed the extent of potential use and distribution of biproducts and waste material containing radiological material.

This new survey will supplement the prior data and be used by state and federal experts to guide any follow-up on-the-ground surveys and sampling. DEC, the State Department of Health and EPA are coordinating this effort and will continue to keep the community informed as this evaluation progresses.

# NYS: \$700,000 available to support farmers markets

Second round of funding continues to help farmers markets make significant improvements, reaching more consumers and providing a boost to farmers

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball recently announced \$700,000 is available to New York's farmers markets through the second round of the Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant program.

A press release stated, "Grant funding will help farmers' markets across the state make significant improvements by enhancing infrastructure, online sales, and delivery systems."

"Funding for the program was included in the 2024 New York state budget and builds on Gov. Hochul's commitment to ensure a resilient food system in New York state. Awards for round 1 of the program were announced earlier this year."

Ball said, "The Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant program is an important part of New York's ongoing effort to strengthen our food supply chain. By facilitating online sales, delivery capacity, and infrastructure improvements, funding provided through this program will help our farmers and producers reach more consumers and provide an economic boost to our farmers. I thank Gov. Hochul for her continued commitment to our agricultural industry and encourage all eligible entities to apply."

Funding available through the Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant program will be available for projects such as modernizing the delivery of products; repairing, replacing or enhancing market infrastructure; and developing or scaling up marketing and outreach efforts. Projects that help the food system remain resilient, especially when supply chain disruptions occur, will be given priority.

Eligible applicants include registered not-for-profit organizations; local municipalities; business improvement districts; public benefit corporations; and Indian tribal organizations that have experience operating at least one farmers' market. The program will provide \$400,000 for larger markets (40 or more vendors), with awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000, and \$300,000 for smaller markets (less than 40 vendors), with awards ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Entities awarded funding in the previous round of the program are not eligible to apply.

For more information on the Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant program and how to apply, visit [agriculture.ny.gov/rfp-0317-new-york-state-farmers-market-resiliency-grant-program](http://agriculture.ny.gov/rfp-0317-new-york-state-farmers-market-resiliency-grant-program). The deadline for proposals is 3 p.m. Nov. 15. Applications for funding must conform to the format provided in

the Grants Gateway.

Farmers' Market Federation of New York Executive Director Diane Eggert said, "While COVID upended many businesses, farmers markets kept going. The food supply was uninterrupted and managed to keep those connections between producers and consumers open and thriving. But it came at a cost to farmers market organizations as they struggled to accommodate all requirements to keep everyone safe. This grant will help those markets and farmers to move their businesses forward to ensure a continued, thriving marketplace that brings farmers and consumers together so everyone can enjoy the bounty of New York-grown and -produced foods."

A press release noted, "New York state continues to prioritize increasing access to food for all New Yorkers through efforts including the FreshConnect 'Fresh2You' initiative, Nourish New York, and significant investments in the FY 2024 budget that support food supply chain enhancements."

"The New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy convenes to provide expertise on how to address food security, strengthen the food supply chain, and provide New York state residents with greater access to healthy, locally-grown food. The Council on Hunger and Food Policy released a report in early 2022, outlining recommendations for how to improve the resiliency and self-reliance of the food system statewide. The council has additionally established an improving urban and rural consumer access to locally produced healthy foods working group to connect upstate and downstate New York on food procurement and distribution, which released a report in February."

"Farmers markets, farm stands and mobile markets are crucial components to a healthy food system. Today, New York has more than 400 farmers markets, 250 farm stands, and 10 mobile market operators. They provide outlets for agricultural producers to meet the rising consumer demand for a variety of fresh, affordable and convenient products grown directly from the farm. New York state - through the Department of Agriculture and Markets, Department of Health, Office for the Aging, and Office of Temporary Disability Assistance - administers several programs that help low-income families, seniors, and veterans access fresh, healthy food at participating markets."

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