

AGRICULTURAL COMPOST MARKETING PROJECT



While some livestock farms may have excess nutrients from manure, there is a need for those nutrients on other types of farms, and for industrial and home horticulture and landscaping. Today, few users are aware that high-quality compost sources may be nearby on New York farms.

In one New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) project, a survey determined the extent and type of composting practices and assessed the quality of composts on 30 farms. Initial sampling showed that, following sampling instructions provided by the Cornell Waste Management Institute (CWMI), farmers could take and prepare good samples. About five samples from each farm were analyzed by Woods End Research Lab. Statistical analyses and interpretation of the data are underway.

To better understand existing and proposed labeling standards among specific compost user groups, each group's testing and approval process was studied. Properties important for specific end uses, such as in potting mixes, are different than for erosion control. The 30-farm, Cornell sampling results are being compared with these different end uses.

The project is now developing a proposed voluntary compost testing and information program to producers. This will provide compost quality information to help users see which New York producers can match their needs.

Work continues to expand markets for farm composts. In a project partially funded by NYSERDA, CWMI will be working with faculty, staff and industry representatives of the turf and vineyard sectors to develop compost use guidelines, conduct field research demonstrations and provide education on compost use. Several agencies are interested in pursuing the potential for aggregation or joint composting and/or marketing of compost.

