

## Wayne County Apple Grower Adding Peaches

Williamson, NY, 04/01/03 - Recent weather and financial climates challenging New York State apple growers has one Wayne County apple grower preparing land to plant peaches this spring.

"The margins for apples have been shrinking down to nothing," says Dennis Van Strien, who has some 200 acres of orchards in Williamson. "We began researching for another crop to plant and found a buyer who wanted to contract for quite a few acres of peaches with a guarantee for tonnage produced. The peaches will ripen sooner than the apples which is also a plus."

After deciding to add peaches to his operation, Van Strien's next question was "how do we expand the farm and invest in a new crop when money is already tight?". That's where the Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program came in. The program, funded by a New York State Governor's Office for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant, is making business planning workshops, one-on-one business planning assistance via NY FarmNet and Farm Credit of Western New York, and a \$500,000 revolving loan fund available to qualified farm and agribusiness owners.

"Working through the Program's business planning process and with a Farm Credit advisor helped opened my eyes to extensive information that you may not think about unless you're putting it on paper. Seeing the numbers for break even and profit points helped me create a timeline, a budget and the decision to go ahead," says Van Strien, a first generation farmer who purchased his first land in 1985.

Van Strien's business plan shows he will harvest his first peach crop in 2005, will harvest 180-190 tons at peak production, and will turn a profit in 2007. He is currently readying about 24 acres of newly purchased land to plant peaches. He has begun installing drainage tile, clearing hedgerows, and soil sampling to adjust pH levels for the new crop.

His nursery stock, purchased with the advice of the Canadian processor who will buy his peaches, will be purchased from a nursery west of Rochester, New York. The processor has already promised to help with shipping regulations to assure speedy delivery of the peaches across the U.S.-Canada border.

Van Strien's son Kurt, at 21 the youngest of three sons, is taking an interest in the farm and may eventually become a partner. The Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program has helped the father and son explore the types of partnerships that might work best. They have also looked at how direct retailing might fit into their future business plans. They currently supply about ten percent of their apple crop to Victor Farm Market for fresh sales. Ninety percent of their apples are shipped for processing.

The Van Striens are also considering applying for an Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program loan to cover the costs of establishing the orchard, e.g. tile, nursery stock, and labor. For more information on Van Strien's Farm, contact Dennis Van Strien at 315-

589-8451, [appledutch1@aol.com](mailto:appledutch1@aol.com)

For more information on the Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program, its business planning assistance and loans, contact Ora Rothfuss, Wayne County Agriculture Development Specialist, Wayne County Planning, 315-946-5919, or the Wayne County Industrial Development Agency, 315-946-5917.

**Note: This release is part two of a four-part series** on new or expanding farm enterprises supported by the Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program. If you have not seen part one: Wayne County Agribusiness Micro-Enterprise Program Seeds New Farm Market released March 18, 2003, please contact Kara Lynn Dunn at 315-465-7578 or [karalynn@gisco.net](mailto:karalynn@gisco.net) to request a copy.

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