Governor Cuomo announced the Southern Tier Ag Industry Enhancement Program (STAIEP) on January 19, 2016.

The program allocated $25 million to 11 Southern Tier Counties including Broome, Chemung, Tioga and Tompkins that our team serves. The intent of the support directly targeted to ag producers was to increase agricultural production on farms and improve profitability, as well as support farmers in better managing and enhancing environmental resources. Farmers could receive up to $100,000 at a 75% cost share to help with construction, renovation, irrigation, drainage, environmental enhancements, fencing, trellis systems and greenhouses. The project was to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets in coordination with the County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Applicants had to meet a set of 5 criteria to be eligible to apply. Applications had to include 4 elements: 1) Projects must be critical to increasing production, enhancing profitability and or increasing environmental compatibility of the farm operation; 2) Projects must implement a farm business or environmental plan or components of a plan; 3) The applicable section(s) of the farm business or environmental plan should be prepared by a third party and submitted with the application for funding; and 4) The project must be located on land owned and operated by an Eligible Farm Operation. Projects located on rented land are not eligible.

Marrying DAP to STAIEP

This program was a once in a lifetime opportunity for farmers in these counties. The farms that had been through the Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP*) program had a leg up. Participating DAP farms had already thought through their long term goals and had an up-to-date business plan in hand that would meet criteria required by STAIEP. Others who were new DAP applicants could apply for a mini-project and receive up to $1000 to have a consultant prepare farm financial records and benchmark farm financial status. This report would also meet the requirement of farm financials prepared by an independent third party.

Team members worked with dairies that had their DAP developed business plan and encouraged those that didn’t to use DAP to pay for the professionals to prepare the required financial overview. In August the farms selected for funding from the first round were announced. All of the farms that had completed the DAP business plan received awards. Other farmers taking advantage of DAP have also applied for the 2nd round of funding.