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Goshen dairy farm embraces solar energy

Grants, loan help support projects



Alan Glustoff, owner of 5 Spoke Creamery, stands in front of solar panels on his Goshen farm on Monday. Thanks to grants and a loan, the farm will be able to be more energy efficient and save costs. ELAINE A. RUXTON/TIMES HERALD-RECORD

By James Walsh
Times Herald-Record

Posted Apr. 13, 2015 at 6:26 PM

GOSHEN – Nearly 200 blue solar panels were at work Monday, soaking up sunshine so 5 Spoke Creamery can spend less on power and more on growing the business.

After more overcast gray days than anyone can count, farmer Alan Glustoff hosted about 50 people – local and state officials, business leaders and neighbors – to a celebration of the solar power delivered to the 75-acre dairy farm via grants and a low-interest loan.

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"It's a major boost to the farm," Glustoff said as some guests took photos of calves while others sampled the creamery's cheeses, and breads from Janet's Quality Baked Goods in Florida, N.Y.

Reduced operating expenses, he said, opens the possibility of building more aging rooms that could double the output from this year's anticipated 30,000 pounds of artisan cheeses.

His was the first project of Energize NY, the state Energy Improvement Corp.'s new finance program supporting conservation and renewable energy projects for commercial enterprises.

The solar installation by Novel Approaches of Middletown was financed with grants of about \$39,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and \$50,000 from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

Glustoff also received a low interest 6-year loan of \$71,000 that will be paid with his property taxes. The loans are available for up to 20-year terms.

Orange County is the first in the state to team up with Energize NY, which aims to boost economic activity while reducing fossil fuel consumption.

"Every county, every city across the state is eligible to join at no cost," said Mark Thielking, executive director of the Energy Improvement Corp. "We have about 60 projects in our pipeline... Twenty percent of them are in Orange County."

He said 15 of the upcoming projects are solar installations, and 45 are energy-efficiency upgrades.

"The important thing is that the power generated exceeds the cost of the financing each and every year," said Robert Fischman, director of commercial programs for Energize NY. The assistance is available to nonprofits as well.

Orange County Executive Steve Neuhaus credited his planning department for connecting the county with the state program. He said lowering energy costs is necessary to help the region's agriculture thrive.

And Neuhaus, a beekeeper in his spare time, provided a jar of Neuhaus Honey for the cheese table.

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