***NEWS RELEASE***

CONTACT:
Larry Van De Valk
607-255-7907
ljv4@cornell.edu

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**Dairylea Legacy Endowment Fund Benefits LEAD New York**

Cooperative Designates Leadership Program as a Beneficiary

The Dairylea Legacy Endowment Fund, established in 2014 at the successful completion of the merger of Dairylea and Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), will provide support on a perpetual basis to the greater Northeast agriculture community by fostering a better understanding of the importance of dairy farming & production agriculture through support for agricultural leadership development programs, education and wellbeing within the dairy industry, youth and student studies in the agriculture sector and other programs that highlight the importance of research and awareness of dairy and agriculture.

In establishing the fund, Dairylea board members designated the Empire State Food and Agricultural Leadership Institute, or LEAD New York, to be the perpetual recipient of a portion of the fund’s annual earnings. The remaining earnings will be distributed annually to a variety of other programs. “Dairylea, Dairy Marketing Services, DairyOne, DFA, and individual employees at these organizations have always been generous annual supporters of our program. This gift solidifies that support for the long term, a gesture for which we are both honored and grateful” said Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director of the program.

LEAD New York is a leadership development program for adult professionals in the food, agriculture and natural resource industries. It consists of seminars, workshops, and field travel experiences both in and out of New York State, including an international study trip. The program focuses on leadership skill development, enhanced self-awareness, civic engagement, a greater understanding of issues facing our food system and rural communities, and cultivating leadership networks.

Currently, there are over 400 LEAD New York alumni. These individuals serve in leadership positions in private business, local, state and federal government positions, not-for-profit organizations, and educational institutions. Over a dozen LEAD New York alumni have served Dairylea and its affiliated organizations in management roles, and countless others are members of the cooperative.

For more information, contact Larry Van De Valk, Executive Director of LEAD New York at 607-255-7907 or at ljv4@cornell.edu. Additional information is also available on the LEAD New York website at www.leadny.org.

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