



The fourth generation to work their family's farm, the Morgiewicz brothers sell their 40 different types of produce to wholesalers and in 11 farmers' markets throughout the New York metro area.

covers approximately 26,000 acres of Orange County, N.Y., and Sussex County, N.J., and is the remnant of what was once the bottom of an ancient glacial lake. Outside of the Florida Everglades, this is one of the largest concentrations of so-called “muck” soils in the United States.

“Over the course of time—thousands of years—constantly decaying vegetation left these peat-like soils,” says Joe. “In some areas here, the soil is more than 100 feet deep and consists of 100% organic matter.” Compare that to some of this country’s prime crop areas that have soils with just 3% to 5% organic matter.

Despite being so close to New York City, the region’s frequent flooding by the Wallkill River and dark, poorly drained soils deterred the area’s development for anything but farming. Still, it wasn’t until a drainage canal was built in 1835 and an influx of Polish and German farmers familiar with such soils arrived that vegetable production became firmly established.

The Morgiewicz family arrived from Poland in

1895 and worked for other farmers before starting their own operation on 4 to 5 acres in 1905. The region became famous for producing onions, and even the Morgiewicz family grew almost nothing but the aromatic marvels for nearly 30 years—from 1969 to 1997. While they still grow plenty of onions, they began to branch out in 1995, growing radishes and cilantro for wholesale. In 1997, they began growing additional crops for the burgeoning farmers’ market business in the city. They haven’t looked back.

The Morgiewicz brothers run the farm with another eight family members involved either full or part-time. In all, Morgiewicz Produce employs about 40 people. They are adept at spacing out their plantings so there is plenty available at markets in June, as well as in August and September. In fact, they will likely still be picking carrots, beets and even dill well into October.

The nearly year-round process is labor intensive. Some delicate products, such as tomatoes, are only handled when they are picked, are not washed, and then are loaded by hand into crates bound for the various farmers’ markets. Vegetables like radishes might go through a three- or four-step process that involves bunching, washing them in a mechanical washer, then re-packing for market or wholesale.

As farmers, the Morgiewicz brothers have always chuckled about people they refer to as “commuters,”

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The Morgiewicz family’s Massey Ferguson dealer, Sosler’s Farm and Garden Equipment, has been in business for more than 60 years. Learn more about it and see more photos at go.myFarmLife.com/blackdirt.