



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

Senate Agriculture Chair Visits Farms in Western New York, Stresses Importance of Agriculture

DARREL J. AUBERTINE September 23, 2009

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Photo: Sen. Aubertine at the John Knight Dairy Farm, discussing the impact of current low milk prices on this family farm.

JAMESTOWN (September 24, 2009)—State Senate Agriculture Chair Darrel J. Aubertine today visited several farms in Western New York to hear from farmers and stress the importance of agriculture in our state. The meetings are part of a statewide agriculture tour

in anticipation of a set of public roundtables with farmers and in conjunction with Senate Energy Committee hearings and roundtables.

“The dairy industry is suffering due to imports, hauling costs and milk prices that do not come close to covering a farmer’s cost of production. While other sectors of agriculture are doing well, they too have concerns, whether it’s phytophthora blight, colony collapse for bee keepers, the marketing of maple products, or any number of issues,” Sen. Aubertine said.

“Farms are businesses and must be a priority when discussing economic development in Upstate and rural New York. These businesses are economic engines that support jobs on and off our farms, serving as the backbone of our economy throughout our state’s rural communities.”

In the morning, Sen. Aubertine visited Eden Valley Growers, Inc., established in 1956, a cooperative of eight farmers just south of Buffalo. The farmers ship vegetables throughout the state and to New Jersey, Massachusetts, Texas, Michigan, Louisiana and Florida. Here the Senator was shown the effects of phytophthora, a devastating disease that can wipeout crops of peppers, tomatoes, squash, melon, gourds and more. The Senator worked to restore funding in this year’s budget to Cornell University, which is conducting research to identify and develop management strategies for the blight.

The Senator later visited Double A Willow farms in Fredonia, which SUNY Environmental Sciences and Forestry chose five years ago to grow and distribute high yielding, fast growing varieties of shrub willow for use in bio-fuel projects, before heading over to the John Knight Dairy Farm, a family farm in Jamestown with more than 100 head of cattle. He has several more meetings scheduled in Jamestown on Friday.

Earlier in the week, Sen. Aubertine, who also chairs the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee, was in Western New York for a roundtable discussion in

Buffalo with business leaders and a public hearing in Niagara Falls to discuss the role of low cost power and the New York Power Authority in economic development programs. After the hearing he and other lawmakers toured the New York Power Authority's Niagara Power Project.

The Senator today also thanked Sen. Cathy Young, the Agriculture Committee's ranking minority member, for taking the time to visit the North Harbor Dairy just outside of Sackets Harbor. Though unable to be with Sen. Young in the North Country, his office did offer its assistance if needed for the visiting Senator.

"I'm pleased Sen. Young has taken the time to meet with farmers in Northern New York because it's important to recognize we are on the same side—the side of our farmers. In our roles representing farmers as members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, it's important we hear from farmers not only in our own districts, but all across the state," Sen. Aubertine said. "These informal stops and public meetings give farmers a seat at the table in determining our legislative agenda and policies moving forward. We need to bring their message not only to state government, but deliver it to our federal representatives as well to bring about real change for all farmers."

The only active farmer serving in the New York State Legislature, Sen. Aubertine recently announced that he will be conducting a series of roundtables with farmers and the New York Farm Bureau to discuss the issues that face farmers and ways the state can help, as well as talk about the proposed Farm Worker Fair Labor Practices Act, which Sen. Aubertine adamantly opposes.

Sen. Aubertine has been a leader on agriculture issues throughout his tenure in state government and has sponsored bills intended to increase demand for raw milk and cut costs for farmers, lobbied federal lawmakers to take action on milk prices, promoted agriculture as

a means to meeting our energy needs in the future, and worked to both pass legislation and also lift regulations so more local farm products are on kitchen and school cafeteria tables across New York.