



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

## Senate Republicans Fight to Protect Agriculture Programs

DEAN G. SKELOS March 31, 2009

Senate Republicans today fought to restore \$30 million in state funds for the Dairy Assistance Program, as well as restore \$10 million for other agriculture programs that are vitally important to the state's largest industry. The Dairy Assistance Program provided \$30 million in direct support payments to the state's dairy producers to help prevent family farms from going out of business.

"The agriculture industry is critically important, not just Upstate, but in the Hudson Valley and on Long Island because it provides jobs and supports local businesses and the economy," Senate Republican Leader Dean Skelos said. "The programs being cut provide much-needed support and assistance to help the agriculture industry thrive."

Senator Cathy Young (R-C-I, Olean) proposed an amendment to the 2009-10 state budget to reverse cuts that could be disastrous to programs that serve every sector of agriculture. Senate Democrats, including current Senator Agriculture Committee Chairman Darrel Aubertine, voted against the agriculture program restorations.

"The costs of operating a dairy farm keep going up, while the price farmers receive for their milk keeps dropping," Senator Young said. "New York State has lost hundreds of farms in recent years and that is a tremendous blow to the economies of rural communities. The reauthorization of the Dairy Assistance Program is critically important to help prevent the

loss of more dairy farms. In this economy we cannot afford to have more family farms and the businesses that depend on them, go under.”

The economic impact of New York’s dairy industry is more than \$10 billion. Dairy is the largest sector of the agriculture industry, with about 6,200 dairy producers. However, milk prices have dropped 40 percent from last year, causing a severe crisis for dairy farms and forcing many out of business.

“The federal stimulus plan did nothing for the dairy industry in New York, but we did receive \$1 billion in unrestricted funds from the stimulus which could and should be used to help our dairy farms, as well as restore funds for other programs that impact the economic growth and research that benefits apple, grape and vegetable growers, beef and cattle farms and other sectors of agriculture.”