



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senate Passes Bill to Bring Farmers Markets Featuring New York Produce to Urban Areas

MALCOLM A. SMITH April 19, 2009

(Albany, NY) The New York State Senate today unanimously passed legislation (S1676) that will create a program to provide for the planning and development of regional and urban farmers market facilities that will give consumers access to fresh, locally grown New York produce and other goods. This initiative will aid farmers and rural producers by opening up new agriculture markets, while also providing healthier goods at lower costs to communities, particularly urban areas across the state.

"One of our goals as a state must be to put quality New York produce from our farms on the plates of New York consumers," said sponsor, Senator Darrel J. Aubertine (D-Cape Vincent), a retired dairy farmer who continues to raise livestock and grow crops on his farm in Northern New York. "This legislation is an important step toward achieving that. By giving consumers the opportunity to buy the highest quality and freshest products from New York farmers, we are giving our farmers new opportunities to sell their products, bringing healthy foods to underserved communities, and helping our environment by encouraging people to buy local."

In conjunction with Senator Aubertine's leadership as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, the Senate Majority has

made a commitment to initiatives such as this one, as a way to mutually benefit both urban and rural residents in "One New York." The legislation passed by the Senate creates a revolving loan system to aid in the successful adoption of farmers markets. It also allocates for planning grants and will support construction costs for the farmers' market facilities.

By creating new, accessible and larger markets for small businesses, the bill will also cut down on pollution and shipping costs associated with transportation of produce from outside the state, and provide healthy, fresh food to New Yorkers.

"Buying locally builds relationships, economic and otherwise. This program is ideal because it benefits New Yorkers from every region of the state, while providing a terrific economic development model to keep investments local," said Senator Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan), who before being elected to the Senate was the Associate Director of the Community Food Resource Center where she became a nationally recognized leader in hunger and poverty issues. "This is literally a win for everyone involved—the farmers, producers, and consumers all benefit from healthy, fresh, easily transportable goods that remain in-state and help our own markets grow."

The economic, social and health benefits of a local food system are well-documented. As industrial food transfer systems grow, a single head of lettuce can be cut, shipped, transferred, sold, and consumed all by different parties. This results in a more costly, less fresh product that may have been shipped thousands of miles before making it to the dinner table.