



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Fights to Protect Agriculture Programs

CATHARINE YOUNG March 30, 2009

Senate Young (R-C-I, Olean) 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 Senator proposed an amendment to the 2009-10 state budget to reverse cuts that could be disastrous to programs that serve every sector of agriculture. Democrats, including current Senate 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.

Milk prices are continuing on a historic slide at a time when energy, feed and fertilizer costs are through the roof, forcing many farmers throughout the state to need assistance. In January, the average price farmers received for milk was \$13.39 per hundredweight, or \$1.15 per gallon, far below the average break-even cost of \$17.50 per hundredweight, or \$1.50 per gallon.

“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.”