Agriculture Chair Tours Long Island Farms

DARREL J. AUBERTINE   September 30, 2009

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Aubertine meets with farmers to hear concerns and highlight importance of agriculture

NORTH FORK (September 30, 2009)—State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine, chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, today toured several farms and agricultural facilities on Long Island as part of his ongoing outreach to farmers across the state. Coordinated with the New York Farm Bureau, Sen. Aubertine and a representative from the Long Island Farm Bureau met with farmers to discuss their operations, their concerns, and the importance of agriculture in our economy.

The tour, like a similar one last week in Western New York, is in anticipation of a set of public roundtables with farmers and in conjunction with a Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee roundtable on Tuesday.

"Agriculture in New York State is a cornerstone of our economy that creates jobs and generates wealth for our communities," Sen. Aubertine said. "We have tremendous diversity in the agricultural industry that must be maintained and we will continue to work toward policies that promote the use of local agriculture so that the wealth we generate here stays in New York to continue supporting jobs across the state from Central and Northern New York to Long Island. When we talk economic development, agriculture must be a top priority."

"Long Island's farmlands continue to make immense contributions to New York State's economy," said Sen. Brian X. Foley of Blue Point, who preserved a record acreage of land during his tenure as the Town of Brookhaven Supervisor. "I am pleased to work with Sen. Aubertine to boost the farming industry. Together, we will sustain farmlands on Long Island to the North Country and throughout New York State and allow the next generation of New Yorkers to benefit from this economic and cultural staple of our great state."

Senator Aubertine visited the Delea Sod Farm, a family run operation started in 1928 which grows bluegrass blends, mixtures, tall fescues, bent grass and wildflower sod and caters to residential customers, as well as golf courses and sports venues. The tour also brought the lawmaker to Ellana's Gypsy Vanner Farm in Jamesport, where owners David, Ellen and Lena McLarin raise gypsy vanner horses, a small draft

horse brought in from England, which the owners said is the first new breed in the past 100 years.

Senator Aubertine went to Riverhead to visit the Philip A. Schmitt & Son Farm, Inc., at 135-acre family run farm with 25 varieties of crops, including spinach, lettuce, cabbage, beets, arugula, basil, parsley, sorrel, horseradish, corn and flowers of which 95 percent is sold fresh at market. The next stop was MKZ Farms, a field crop farm that grows shrubberies and flowers, including the California privet, Arborvitae Emerald Green Smaragd, Arborvitae nigra, and forsythia.

In the afternoon, the Senator visited the North Fork Potato at the Martin Sidor Farms in Mattituck, a potato farm started in 1910 which now produces an award winning hearty potato chip kettle cooked in sunflower oil that they sell by the case in several varieties. Next the tour stopped at the Aeros Cultured Oyster Co. in Southold, N.Y., an aquaculture farming operation in the bay.

The Senator Aubertine also visited Paumanok Vineyards, a vineyard started in 1983 that plants grapevines on 1,100 acres to produce a variety of wines, including Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, in limited batches of fewer than 9,000 bottles each distributed to select restaurants and retail stores. The tour concluded at the Crescent Duck Farm, an integrated duckling facility started in 1908 and located in Aquebogue on a more than 350 year old family farm. The farm breeds, hatches, grows and processes approximately 1,000,000 ducklings per year primarily for foodservice distributors nationwide.

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