



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

## Promoting agricultural education through new technologies

GEORGE D. MAZIARZ January 21, 2011

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Paul Bencal, a grape farmer from Niagara County and Chair of the New York Farm Bureau Foundation for Agricultural Education, today thanked the Verizon Wireless Foundation for a recent grant to help the Foundation teach elementary school students about technology in agriculture.

Calling the grant a wonderful extension of an earlier partnership with the Verizon Wireless Foundation, Mr. Bencal said, “The commitment by the Verizon Wireless Foundation to help our not-for-profit agricultural education Foundation is truly outstanding.

“With this grant, our Foundation will be able to help elementary school students gain a better understanding of the many technologies employed by today’s agriculture, from robotic milking machines to GPS technology embedded in today’s tractors to ensure adequate deployment of nutrients to soils and crops.”

Sandra Prokop, Director of the NYFB Foundation for Agricultural Education, said, “The tools we will be able to develop as a result of this grant are appealing to students, and, in fact, all ages of the public as the usage of technology is interesting to a broad audience.

“The creativity showed by our farm family members in their usage of technology helps not only to keep our farms sustainable and efficient producers of food, but also encourages students from a non-farm background to be engaged and interested in agriculture.”

Senator George Maziarz, Chairman of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee, said, “Teaching children about agriculture, our state’s biggest industry, is paramount today. The technology is always changing, and it’s very important for young people to know where the food they eat comes from and how it is produced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I salute the Verizon Wireless Foundation for their commitment to helping the New York Farm Bureau educate the next generation.”

“The Foundation’s efforts are critical to ensuring the successful recruitment of the next generation of family farmers and employees,” continued Bencal. “I am very pleased by the Verizon Wireless Foundation’s recognition of the important role technology plays in agriculture and we hope to utilize these funds to really capture the imagination of students and open their eyes to the expanding and ever-changing careers that exist in the agricultural and food sector.”

Bencal also thanked State Senator Maziarz who, in his role as Chairman of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee, has helped support measures to help farmers utilize technology on their farms, particularly with the relatively recent adoption of net metering for on-farm power generation.