



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ag Leaders Offer Ideas to Help Farming Grow

PATTY RITCHIE October 18, 2011

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE**

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**

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Western New York agriculture industry leaders, including dairy farmers and grape growers, brought their ideas for strengthening New York agriculture to the Senate Agriculture Committee on Tuesday. Speaking at an Agricultural Business Forum sponsored in Geneseo by Agriculture Committee Chair Patty Ritchie and Committee Member Sen. Patrick Gallivan, farm owners and representatives of agricultural groups said Albany needs to cut regulations that adds to the cost of operations and reduces profit margins. "When the Legislature goes into session in January, the Agriculture Committee will be ready to hit the ground running with a plan that provides concrete assistance to help kick start our agribusiness sector," Senator Ritchie said. "By bringing together some of Western New York's top agricultural leaders, this forum will help us develop a realistic agenda that can help achieve concrete results for the Empire State's family farms."

“What we grow on our farms provides the critical materials for many of our upstate manufacturing companies that provide high paying jobs for our citizens,” Senator Ritchie said. “Growing agriculture and supporting New York farmers means a stronger economy and better jobs both on the farm and in our communities.”

Under Senator Ritchie's leadership over the past year, the Senate Agriculture Committee helped restore critical agricultural marketing and research programs and passed a number of bills and new laws that cut red tape on farmers and small businesses to help them grow and create new jobs.

The statewide series of agriculture forums is aimed at building on this past year's success by listening to farmers and agricultural business leaders offer ideas on opportunities and hurdles impeding the success of farm families.

Speakers at Tuesday's forum urged the Senate to consider:

- Eliminating New York State's duplicative requirements of registering pesticides when the U.S. EPA already evaluates the same data for its regulatory program. The state's extra set of regulations creates a one to three year delay for New York farmers in their access to cutting edge pesticide technology;
- Giving agriculture a major seat at the table on the newly established regional economic development councils and in regional economic development plans;
- Incentivizing food processing companies to help recruit them to come to New York State to take advantage of New York's proximity to major markets and its existing agricultural resources;
- Supporting programs aimed at workforce development for dairy farmers to help them hire more local workers, rather than having to recruit from outside the U.S.;
- Recognizing farming for its overall contribution to the state's economy instead of being targeted each year with massive spending cuts to critical research, marketing and educational funds. Funding for agriculture related issues represents less than one percent of the total state budget, but the state's small investment creates a large return for state residents in terms of jobs and economic value;
- Continued support for programs like Pro Dairy, the Farm Viability Institute, Grape and Wine Growers Foundation, and other agencies, that help New York's farmers compete.

Participants in the forum included:

Scott Page – Genesee County Farm Bureau, President, LeRoy, (dairy and hay)

Hon. A. Douglas Berwanger – Chairman, Wyoming County Board of Supervisors/ Chair of the New York State Association of Counties Blue Ribbon Task Force on Agriculture (dairy farmer)

John A. Noble - Linwood Management Group, President (dairy farmer)

Robert Noble – Noblehurst Dairy Farms (Livingston County)

Joan Sinclair Petzen – Director of the Wyoming County Dairy Institute

Paul Bencal – Ransomville (Niagara County grape grower)

Carol Doolittle – Frontenac Point Vineyard, Trumansburg (Seneca County) /New York State Wine Association

Ted Marks – Atwater Estates Vineyard, Watkins Glen (Schuyler County)

Dr. Thomas J. Burr – Director of the Geneva Experiment Station

Holly Harwood – 4-H Program Director, Wyoming County Cooperative Extension

Dr. Ynte H. Schukken, DVM – Director of Quality Milk Production Services, Cornell Veterinary College

Hon. Sam Casella – Supervisor, Town of Canandaigua (Ontario County)/ Member of the New York State Association of Counties Blue Ribbon Task Force on Agriculture (sheep farmer)

Senator Ritchie has scheduled the final of her series of forums for Thursday at 1 p.m., on Long Island, at the Riverhead Town Hall.

Those interested in attending, submitting testimony or getting more information, can contact the Senate Agriculture Committee at (518) 455-3438.

Senator Ritchie has also created a [special webform on her website](#) for farmers and those interested in agriculture issues to share their ideas for boosting farming and helping to create jobs.