



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Farmers Cheer Return of N.y. Milk to State Lunch Rooms

PATTY RITCHIE February 15, 2012

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‘Local Food’ Rally Erupts as Senator Ritchie Delivers the News

A gathering of farmers from across New York State cheered when they heard that state officials are pushing to include more locally produced food in cafeterias that serve tens of thousands of state workers and visitors, a move that was prompted by a simple request from State Senator Patty Ritchie to return New York milk to the menus.

Senator Ritchie delivered the news to more than 100 farmers and supporters at the “No Farms, No Food” rally at the capital, an annual event that calls attention to challenges facing New York farmers.

“Eating 'local' matters. Last year, I was surprised to find that the dining rooms here in the Empire State Plaza and the state office complex, which serve 40,000 workers and visitors every day, were serving milk from Texas,” Senator Ritchie said.

“Working with Governor Cuomo’s Commissioner of General Services, RoAnn Destito, we changed that—and OGS is now looking for additional ways to bring NY-produced food products into this market,” she said, as the farmers broke into cheers and applause.

Last summer, Senator Ritchie asked Commissioner Destito to review state food service contracts to increase the use of New York food products. Senator Ritchie represents one of the largest dairy-producing regions in the state.

Commissioner Destito immediately agreed to broaden contract language used by state agencies to encourage the purchase of locally grown products.

“Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Destito have made it a priority to use the state’s purchasing power to expand and grow New York’s agricultural industry,” Senator Ritchie said. “That’s good news for consumers who can enjoy the quality products that New York has to offer, and good news for New York farmers, who can grow their businesses.”

Senator Ritchie, who chairs the Senate’s Agriculture Committee, is also the cosponsor of the “Buy From The Backyard Act” which passed the Senate unanimously last year. The measure requires the Office of General Services (OGS) and other State agencies to buy 20% of all their food products from producers and processors in New York State.

Senator Ritchie is also the sponsor of the “Let NY Farm Act,” a top priority of the New York Farm Bureau, which seeks to reduce taxes, fees and regulatory burdens that put family farms at a disadvantage in the global marketplace.

The “No Food, No Farm Rally” was sponsored by the American Farmland Trust.