



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

State Legislature OKs key plank of 'Grown in New York' plan pushed by O'Mara, Senate colleagues: property tax relief

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 20, 2013

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Albany, N.Y., June 20—The Legislature has unanimously approved legislation co-sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) to place a two-percent cap on annual agricultural land assessment increases and deliver long-awaited and badly needed property tax relief to state farmers.

The legislation (S.1952/A.165) was a cornerstone of “[Grown in New York](#),” a comprehensive economic development strategy for New York State agriculture unveiled by O'Mara and his Senate Republican colleagues earlier this year. Property tax relief and other key provisions of “Grown in New York” have been high priorities for the state's farmers this year.

“For too long, property tax increases have been crushing our family farms and driving too many of them out of business. New York farmers have long labored under the second highest property tax burden in America and it’s been an unfair competitive disadvantage,” said O’Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. “It’s about time we took this action and we’re hopeful that it will make a difference for our next generation of family farmers to help them grow, prosper and stay competitive.”

Dean Norton, President of the [New York Farm Bureau](#), said, “The passage of the 2% cap on agricultural assessments is welcome news on farms all across New York. Not one has been immune to the skyrocketing property taxes that make it more difficult to provide local food and products to their communities. (This legislation) will go a long way to keep New York families on their farms.”

O’Mara said that farmers have seen rising land values drive up property taxes on farmland over the past several years, essentially doubling since 2006. The two-percent cap on ag assessment increases -- which has been a top priority for the New York Farm Bureau -- was prompted by an alarming increase in farmers’ property taxes statewide. Currently, New York farmers pay \$38.41 per acre in property taxes, according to Farm Credit East -- the second-highest rate in the country that, on average, accounts for 15% of a farm’s net income and puts state farmers at a clear competitive disadvantage.

O’Mara stressed that he and his colleagues will keep pushing other provisions of their “Grown in New York” plan, which they first introduced in March, that focuses on tax cuts, regulatory reform, market expansion and a series of other economic growth initiatives.

“We need to keep taking actions that keep our farmers competitive for the long haul. We can’t risk New York State’s farmers being taxed, regulated and priced out of business. The ‘Grown in New York’ plan is a bold, common sense blueprint to keep New York a proud and strong agricultural state,” said O’Mara, who also serves as one of 10 members on the Legislature’s joint, bipartisan Commission on Rural Resources. “Farming has been a mainstay of upstate New York’s culture and economy for centuries, and it remains the backbone of many of our communities. But the challenges and the competition are tougher than ever.”

The legislation now goes to Governor Andrew Cuomo to be signed into law.