



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senator Young Joins Senate Colleagues in Unveiling Plan to Support Young Farmers

CATHARINE YOUNG March 7, 2014

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TAXES, JOB TRAINING OR TRADES**



**For Release:** Immediate, March 7, 2014

*“Young Farmers NY” Will Support the Next Generation of Family Farmers*

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ALBANY - Senator Young and her Senate colleagues unveiled the new “Young Farmers NY” program this week, which will help support and encourage the next generation of farmers.

“Agriculture is the backbone of our state’s economy, contributing more than \$5.4 billion every year, and few work harder or face greater challenges than our dedicated farmers. We owe it to them and to the next generation of aspiring farmers and agricultural leaders to enact the Young Farmers NY program and support them in their enthusiastic desire to help strengthen the farms that power our state’s economy,” said Senator Young.

Today, the average New York farmer is 57 years old, and for every farmer under the age of 35 there are two aged 65 or older. The Young Farmers NY program is aimed at attracting more young people to farming and supporting family farming for generations to come.

“The increasing age of New York’s farmers presents a major threat to the future vitality of agriculture in our state, which continues to be our most important economic driver. With the importance of farming to our state’s future and this aging of our farming population, it is crucial that we support our young farmers,” said Senator Young.

Senator Young joined Senator Patty Ritchie, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and other members of the Senate Republican Conference in presenting a series of proposals designed to preserve existing farmland, make it easier for farmers to transfer land to the next generation, and help young farmers overcome challenging obstacles and have an opportunity to succeed.

Also present for the unveiling were farmers from Farm Bureau chapters in Senator Young’s district and from across the state who made the trip to Albany to advocate on behalf of New York’s farmers. Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, and Livingston County farmers were all represented.

Among the obstacles faced by today’s farmers are the high costs of land, equipment, taxes, and utilities. Recognizing these challenges, which make it especially difficult for young farmers trying to break into the business, provisions of the Young Farmers NY program, which will be included in the State Senate’s 2014-15 budget resolution, focus on obstacles to farm ownership and the improvement of opportunities for agricultural education. The plan includes:

- **Young Farmer Farm Preservation Tax Credit:** Provides eligible farmers with up to 10 percent of the sale or rental price for the sale or lease of land or equipment to a new farmer. This preserves farmland, allows retiring farmers a more equitable return on their lifelong investment, and lowers the cost of farmland for beginning farmers. (\$5 million)
- **Young Farmer Revolving Loan Fund:** Provides \$5 million for start-up loans for land and equipment purchases by new farmers. (\$5 million)
- **Young Farmer Innovation Grants:** Allocates up to \$50,000 for new farmers through a competitive grant program that seeks to encourage new technology or production innovation. (\$1 million)
- **Farm Savings Accounts:** Establishes tax-free savings accounts similar to college or retirement accounts for the purchase of farmland or equipment. (\$5 million)
- **Estate Tax Reform:** Increase in the estate tax exemption to allow for the preservation of family farms passed from generation to generation. (\$14 million)
- **Young Farmer Apprenticeship Program:** Provides funding to BOCES programs to establish partnerships with working farmers to help young people gain hands-on experience they can bring to their own successful farm operation. (\$500,000)
- **Young Farmer Student Loan Forgiveness Program:** Directs the Board of Regents to establish a student loan forgiveness program for up to 10 agriculture degree graduates annually who agree to work full-time in agriculture for a minimum of five years. (\$100,000)
- **Funding for Agriculture Education:** Increases funding for the in-school FFA program, which encourages careers in agriculture. There are 77 FFA chapters in New York State. (\$158,000)

For more information on the Young Farmers NY plan, [click here](#).

“The farmers from my district who made the trip to Albany today to represent Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, and Livingston County know what it takes to be successful in New York State and how important it is that we empower the next generation to carry on the vital work of farming in our state. I commend them for their hard work and dedication to providing our state with the safe, affordable, and nutritious food supply we depend on, and look forward to passing a successful state budget that continues to respond to the challenges they face,” said Senator Young.

Following the unveiling of the Young Farmers NY plan, the Cattaraugus County Farm Bureau was also given the special honor of a proclamation celebrating their 100th anniversary, which was presented by Senator Young.

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