



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie ‘Young Farmers’ Plan Included in Final State Budget

PATTY RITCHIE March 30, 2014

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Budget Also Reaffirms NY’s Commitment to Agriculture with Record New Funding for Farm Programs

State Senator Patty Ritchie announced that key elements of her “Young Farmers NY” plan to support and encourage careers in agriculture will be included in the final state budget, which also adds record levels of new funding for priority agriculture programs that can help farmers succeed.

The \$1 million Young Farmers NY initiative includes Sen. Ritchie’s proposal for new farmer innovation grants—now called the “NY Beginning Farmer Fund”—of up to \$50,000 each to help start or expand an agriculture business. In addition, the budget will include \$100,000 for student loan forgiveness for agriculture college graduates who commit to farming careers, increased funding for the in-school, agriculture leadership–focused FFA (formerly known as “Future Farmers of America”) program, and reforms the Estate Tax, to make it easier for families to pass on their farm business to the next generation.

“The lifeblood of agriculture in New York is the family farm,” said Senator Ritchie, who is chair of the Senate’s Agriculture Committee. “And the funding and incentives included in the new budget will help encourage young farmers to continue that tradition and strengthen family farming.”

Studies have shown that the average age of farmers is slowing creeping up—it is now 57—and that retiring farmers are not being replaced by a new generation, raising questions about the future of this critical industry.

In addition to the Young Farmers NY plan, the budget reaffirms New York’s commitment to agriculture by including record funding—the highest in at least six years—for critical agriculture marketing, education and research programs. For the past four years since joining the Senate, Senator Ritchie has made a priority of restoring cuts to agriculture funding, and securing new funds to help key segments of the \$5 billion agriculture sector grow.

The record \$8.5 million in increased agriculture support includes:

Apple Growers Association \$544,000

Dairy Profit Teams at Farm Viability Institute \$220,000

Farm Viability Institute \$1.1 million

Genesee Agriculture Academy \$100,000

Island Harvest \$20,000

Turfgrass Association \$150,000

NY Wine and Grape Foundation \$287,000

Life-saving Tractor Rollover Prevention program \$150,000

Wildlife rabies prevention (Cornell) \$460,000

Cornell Animal Health Diagnostic Center \$1 million

NY Berry Growers Association \$320,000

Corn and Soybean Growers Association \$75,000

Honeybee research at Cornell \$50,000

Hops and Barley Research (Cornell) \$160,000

EEE prevention program \$175,000

FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America) ag education \$158,000

NYS Horticulture Society \$500,000

Assistance to County Fairs \$160,000

St. Lawrence and Jefferson County low-cost rabies vaccine program \$25,000

NY Maple Producers Association \$150,000

Cornell Maple Research \$105,000

Northern NY Agriculture Development \$600,000

Onion Growers Association \$50,000

Vegetable Growers Association \$100,000

Farm Net assistance for farmers \$516,000

Wood Products Council \$100,000

Christmas Tree Growers \$120,000

Harvest NY \$300,000

Agribusiness child development \$1 million