



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Planting Seeds to Grow Our Agriculture Industry

PATTY RITCHIE February 2, 2015

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

From the food we eat to the beverages we drink, agriculture is at the root of it all. And, as recent numbers have shown, the industry is poised for even greater growth in 2015. According to the USDA, New York State set a sales record in 2013, with cash receipts from livestock, crops and other products totaling nearly \$5.7 billion—that's up from \$5.5 billion the year prior.

Contributing to this growth are a number of new advancements made in 2014. These steps forward are outlined in the New York State Senate Agriculture Committee's Annual Report, which is available now on my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov), or by calling (315) 782-3418. As Chair of Senate Agriculture Committee, it's a top priority for me to support our hardworking farmers and encourage growth of the industry. Here are just a few of our major accomplishments highlighted in our Annual Report:

***“Young Farmers NY”***: Through this plan, more young people are being encouraged to pursue careers in agriculture through incentives such as grants for the lease or purchase of farm equipment, forgiveness awards to students who commit to farming careers after graduation, reforms to the Estate Tax to help assist in the transition of family farms as well as increased funding for in-school, agriculture leadership programs such as Future Farmers of America;

***A Budget Boost***: Along with Young Farmers NY, in 2014 a State Budget was passed that reaffirmed New York's commitment to agriculture by including new funding for key farming programs as well as critical marketing, education and research initiatives;

***Encouraging Eating Local***: In 2014, we were also successful in getting legislation to increase the amount of locally grown and produced foods purchased by state agencies signed into law; and

***Fighting Back Against Deadly Diseases:*** Last year we launched new efforts to protect people and animals from deadly diseases like EEE, Lyme, West Nile and rabies through \$100,000 in funding for preventative programs as well as the creation of the “21st Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination and Reduction,” a group comprised of experts in diseases, infection and public health tasked with pushing for the development of effective vaccines against diseases.

These accomplishments have set the stage for continued success in the agriculture industry in 2015. As Senate Agriculture Chair, I’ve led the fight to secure \$21 million in new funding over the past four years. This year, my colleagues and I will be working just as diligently to secure record funding for key farming programs as well as to spearhead critical marketing, education and research initiatives.

Whether they are sowing crops in the fields or balancing their budgets behind a desk, farmers work hard to support our state’s largest industry. In past years, we have made great strides in supporting the work they do. As 2015 continues, I’m looking forward to continuing to help the agriculture industry grow.