



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

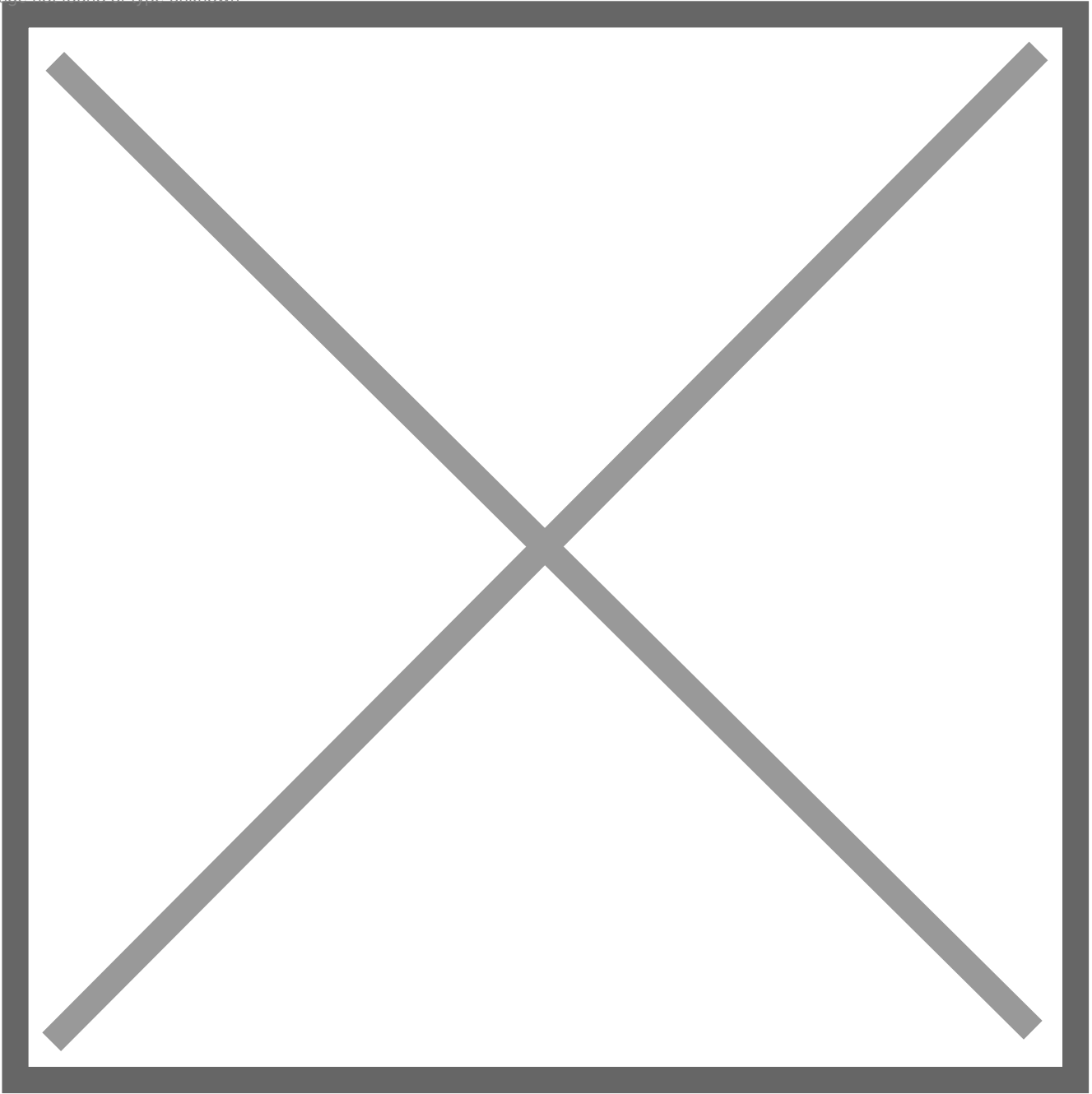
Patty Ritchie

## State Budget Includes Record Funding for Agriculture

PATTY RITCHIE March 30, 2015

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**Restores Spending Cuts and New Funding to Help Boost Products “Grown in NY”**

Senator Patty Ritchie announced that the new State Budget will include record funding for agriculture programs designed to connect consumers with locally produced farm products, increase farmers’ yields, boost rural economies and strengthen the future of family farms.

The final budget adds more than \$12 million to the Governor’s original plan unveiled in January, restores budget cuts to 33 different programs, and includes funding for key components of Senator Ritchie’s

“Grown in New York” plan to strengthen connections between farmers and consumers increasingly looking to buy locally produced foods.

“With more than 100,000 people working on 36,000 family farms, agriculture is our most important industry, and supporting farmers means a stronger economy for rural communities all across Upstate New York,” said Senator Ritchie, chair of the Senate’s Agriculture Committee.

“Once again, the Senate has led the way in making agriculture a budget priority for the state, restoring cuts and investing in the success of family farmers, and building a stronger rural future.”

In addition to restoring budget cuts for programs designed to aid in research, marketing and agriculture education, the new budget adds funding for six new programs, including components of the “Grown in New York” plan. Also included is \$650,000 more to expand the state’s “Young Farmers” program, first created by the Senate last year to encourage the next generation of new farmers.

## **MARKETING**

Programs to help farmers market products ranging from dairy to apple, and maple syrup to award-winning New York-produced wines, among others, will benefit from new and restored budget funding. In addition, the budget creates new programs first outlined in Senator Ritchie’s “Grown in New York” plan to connect consumers with locally produced products, like developing a series of new farm-to-market hubs to help farmers in regions like the North Country more easily move their products to markets in New York City and other urban centers across the state (\$1.064 million), new programs to bring more locally produced fruits and vegetables to schools (\$250,000) and low-income seniors (\$2.3 million), and expansion of the successful “Harvest NY” program to the region (\$600,000).

## **RESEARCH**

The final Budget restores funding cuts to key research programs that are already producing results in the form of increased yields and profits for farmers, helping to reduce pesticide use, and find ways to combat diseases that can decimate crops and livestock. The restored funding includes two programs especially important to North Country and Central NY farmers—the farmer-led Farm Viability Institute (\$2.12 million) and Northern New York Agriculture Development Program (\$600,000). Both programs are involved in key research that especially benefits dairy farmers and others in this region.

## **EDUCATION**

The final Budget continues and expands programs tied to the Senate-initiated “Young Farmers” plan to encourage the next generation of future farmers, including FFA, the Future Farmers of America program

that has recently expanded to include new schools across the state, and support for ag educators and programs to introduce students to the farming life in local school districts.

### **YOUNG FARMERS**

The Senate's "Young Farmers" program is expanded with increased funding for college loan forgiveness and \$1 million to fund grants (up to \$50,000 each), and a new business planning program, administered through Cornell's FarmNet program, to help beginning farmers get on their feet and ensure success.

A full list of programs funded under the State Budget Agriculture plan can be found by **CLICKING HERE**.