



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Bill to Reward Dairy Farms for Energy Efficient Improvements Passes Senate

PATTY RITCHIE June 9, 2015

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### Measure Part of Senator's Sprawling "Grown in NY" Plan

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced the Senate has given its stamp of approval to her legislation that would provide grants and low interest loans to dairy farms that make energy efficient improvements.

The measure, Senate bill 2984, is part of Senator Ritchie's "Grown in New York" plan, a multi-part initiative designed to help meet consumers' demands for locally-grown food, support local farmers in their efforts to provide quality, fresh food, and strengthen rural communities.

"Controlling energy costs on the farm is one of the keys to being successful in the agriculture industry, especially for dairy farmers," said Senator Ritchie, who chairs the Senate's Agriculture Committee.

"With ample acreage and a virtually unlimited supply of farm-based fuel sources—from sunlight to biomass to manure—farmers are uniquely positioned to answer America's energy challenge, reduce dependence on foreign sources and contribute to the shift toward cleaner, greener energy supply. This important measure provides an incentive for farmers to become more energy efficient, rewarding them with low-interest loans and grants that will help them to become more financially stable and create jobs."

Under the measure, dairy farmers will be able to apply for grants or loans of up to \$100,000 for cost effective investments that reduce energy use including the installation of solar technology and construction of new digesters. According to the New York State Department of Agriculture, milk is New York's leading agricultural product, with sales accounting for one-half of total agriculture receipts. In 2012, production was 13.2 billion pounds with a preliminary value of \$2.56 billion.

Passage of the legislation builds upon the work Senator Ritchie has done to support agriculture in recent years. Recently, she was successful in advocating for record funding for agriculture programs in the state budget. The final spending plan added more than \$12 million to the Governor's original plan, restored cuts to 33 different programs and included funding for key components of "Grown in New York," which are aimed at strengthening connections between farmers and consumers who are increasingly looking to buy locally grown and produced foods.

The measure was sent to the Assembly, where it was sponsored by Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair William Magee.