



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Bill to Connect New Farmers WITH Viable, Surplus State-Owned Land Receives Final Passage

PATTY RITCHIE June 10, 2015

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Measure is One of Five Passed by the Senate Wednesday Aimed at Supporting Agriculture

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced a bill aimed at encouraging more young people to pursue agricultural careers by making it easier for them to access viable, unused state-owned lands has received final passage and will now go to the Governor for his signature.

The measure (S. 1824)—which was prompted by increasing farmland prices that make it difficult for farmers to dig into agricultural careers—is part of the Senate-led “Young Farmers” program, a far-reaching plan that seeks to preserve existing farms today and for the next generation. In addition, several

other measures were passed by the Senate Wednesday, aimed at helping young and beginning farmers jumpstart their agribusinesses.

“Today, the State Senate has once again shown that it is leading the way in making sure that New York’s 36,000 family farms are kept in the family, as well as in our state’s future,” said Senator Ritchie, Chair of the Senate’s Agriculture Committee.

“By providing new farmers—as well as existing farmers—with the tools and incentives they need to be successful, we’re ensuring that farming continues as a tradition that’s not only passed down from generation to generation, but also as a cornerstone of our economy; responsible for boosting our state’s bottom line and creating jobs.”

Under Senate bill 1824, the Commissioners of Agriculture and the Office of General Services will be directed to work together to develop an inventory of surplus state-owned property viable for farming that can be sold or leased for use in agriculture.

In addition to the measure, three other bills sponsored by Senator Ritchie and aimed at protecting the future of family farming also passed the Senate Wednesday and were sent to the Assembly. They include:

- Senate bill 1835, which would help agribusiness owners maintain fiscal stability by making them eligible for tax exemptions essential to their operations;
- Senate bill 1793, which would establish a beginning farmer revolving loan fund program to assist eligible beginning farmers finance land and buy basic farm equipment;
- Senate bill 2673, which would establish a Federal Food Safety Compliance Program in New York State to assist farmers in complying with changes in federal food safety regulations; and
- Senate bill 5199, which would establish a revolving loan program to provide farmers throughout New York State with low interest loans so that they can upgrade their electricity to three phase power, which will help farmers keep electricity costs low and make it easier for them to accommodate heavier machinery.

Legislation passed Wednesday builds upon work Senator Ritchie has done in the past to address the issue of New York’s aging farmer population. Included in her “Young Farmers” initiative, is a student loan forgiveness program for first-time farmers who commit to at least five years building their farm business after college,

and a New Farmers Innovation Fund that's providing grants of up to \$50,000 to help people start or expand their agriculture businesses.

In addition, Young Farmers also includes reforms to the estate tax, which are helping to smooth the transfer of existing farms to future generations, as well as increased state budget funding for school-based agriculture education programs, like the Cornell-run "Future Farmers of America Program."