



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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State Senate Passes Legislation to Improve New York State's Agriculture Industry

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO June 11, 2015

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The New York State Senate today (6/10/15) passed legislation to help keep the state's agricultural industry booming. Among the seven bills passed, two were given final passage and will be sent to the Governor for consideration. The agricultural industry has a substantial impact on the overall economic health and wellbeing of the state, and the measures passed today will help ensure that this industry will continue to thrive.

Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton), Chair of the Agriculture Committee, said, "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. 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."

Two bills sponsored by Senator Ritchie would help increase the number of new people interested in farming by making it easier to do business in New York.

The Senate gave final passage to legislation [S1824](#) that would provide new and beginning farmers with enhanced access to viable agricultural land. It would also direct the state Commissioner of the Office of General Services to work with the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets to develop an inventory of state-owned real property that may be viable for farming and that could be of interest to farmers. Bill [S1793](#) would establish a beginning farmer revolving loan fund to attract young people to farming and encourage them to consider a career in the agricultural industry. New York State already offers revolving loan programs for many other groups to incentivize residents of the state to take up a certain profession.

Five additional measures to help existing farmers and agricultural businesses further succeed were also acted upon.

The Senate gave final passage to [S3441](#), sponsored by Senator Cathy Young (R-C-I, Olean), to create the Urban and Regional Farmers' Market Facilities Construction Program to help with the planning and development of urban and regional farmers' market facilities. Farmers' markets benefit consumers by allowing them to buy fresh produce and items directly from farmers while also helping to bring people into local businesses within the cities.

Senator Young said, "New York is the 'food state' because we produce so many products ranging from dairy to fruits and vegetables. Consumers are increasingly demanding foods that are fresh, safe, and grown locally. By aiding in the development and construction of urban and regional farmers' markets, our healthy, homegrown agriculture products can be made more readily available for consumers, and our family farms will have new outlets to market their goods."

Bill [S3678A](#) sponsored by Senator Rich Funke (R-C-I, Fairport) would create a Farm Investment Fund to provide grants to farmers for the purposes of updating and improving their farm and farm practices including, but not limited to,

infrastructure, equipment, and marketing of farm products. The Farm Investment Fund would issue grants of up to \$50,000 and the allotment would come from the general fund allocated to the Empire State Development Corporation.

Senator Funke said, “Agriculture remains one of the top industries in Monroe and Ontario counties and there is more demand than ever for fresh, locally-grown products both at home and in restaurants. The Farm Investment Fund would make strategic investments to help more farmers modernize their operations and move their produce from farm to table. Thank you to my Senate colleagues for passing this bill and thanks to our farmers for all they do to feed our economy.”

Bill [S2673](#) sponsored by Senator Ritchie would give the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets the power to establish a Food Safety Compliance Program to assist farmers in complying with changes in federal food safety regulations. The program would provide a variety of technical assistance to farmers including information and education programs, and referrals to help farmers develop or modify farming, food processing, and manufacturing practices in compliance with the current federal law.

Bill [S5199](#) sponsored by Senator Ritchie 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. Three-phase power refers to three wire alternating current (AC) power circuits and upgrading to this type of power, from single or dual power, is extremely expensive. This bill would help farmers with the financial assistance they need to help cover the cost of this necessary upgrade.

Bill [S1835B](#) sponsored by Senator Ritchie would expand a tax exemption for agricultural and horticultural structures and buildings to include commercial equine operations.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly, except [S1824](#) and [S3441](#), which will be sent to the Governor.

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