



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young, Colleagues Offer Support For New York's Family Farms

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Initiatives strengthen connections between local farmers and consumers

ALBANY – Providing the tools and incentives needed for success, the State Senate this week continued their ongoing effort to ensure that New York's vibrant agriculture sector remains a cornerstone of the state's economy.

As part of the Senate's efforts to ensure the heritage of family farming continues from generation to generation, legislation sponsored by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) was approved to help plan and develop new avenues for farmers to market their goods.

"This legislation directly helps the economy in the Southern Tier and Livingston County. With consumers increasingly demanding food that is fresh, safe and grown locally, enhancing our agriculture industry boosts the state's bottom line and creates new jobs," said Senator Young.

Statewide, about 23 percent of land, or 7 million acres, is used to produce the state's diverse array of food products that helps make New York the nation's third leading producer of milk, second leading producer of apples, the third leading producer of wine and juice grapes, and the second leading producer of maple syrup.

Under Senate bill 3441, authored by Senator Young, an Urban and Regional Farmers' Market Facilities Construction Program will be established to help with the planning and development of urban and regional farmers' market facilities. These new facilities will allow consumers to purchase fresh produce and items directly from farmers who may otherwise lack access to a particular market within a city.

“By aiding in the development and construction of urban and regional farmers’ markets, our healthy, New York State homegrown agriculture products can be made more readily available for consumers, and our family farms will have new outlets to sell their goods. Often urban centers lack readily available fresh, locally grown resources, and our farmers want to be able to distribute their goods to new communities. This bill is really a win-win,” Senator Young said.

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, the average age of a New York farmer is 57 years old. To address the rising age of those in the farm industry, the Senate also passed legislation that would encourage the growth of the next generation of New York farmers.

Senate bill 1824 will provide new and beginning farmers with enhanced access to agricultural land and creates an inventory of state-owned property that may be viable for farming. Another bill, Senate bill 1793, co-sponsored by Senator Young, establishes a beginning farmer revolving loan fund to attract young people to farming and encourage them to consider a career in the agricultural industry.

As part of this year’s state budget, Senator Young personally shepherded through a key technical amendment to the Real Property Manufacturer’s Tax Credit, which will now allow for farms that lease their property from a related family member to continue to qualify for the tax benefit. This is particularly important for farms that have generational transfer plans in place, where a younger generation farmer leases land from an older family member.

“Many of New York’s farmers are growing older and a new generation of farmers is slowly developing. By encouraging generational transfer plans, and providing the necessary tax benefits to new farmers, young people can continue to carry on their proud family farming tradition. By providing this simple technical change, we can help launch the careers of many young farmers who would otherwise be unable to begin their own operations,” said Senator Young.

Earlier this year, Senator Young and her colleagues also passed legislation that will connect farmers to Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs), giving them additional resources to promote economic growth and increase job creation. Under current law, IDAs can issue loans and provide technical support to manufacturers, processors, and warehouseers of agricultural products, but not to those businesses that directly grow, harvest, or collect agricultural products. Legislation passed by the Senate will encourage farmers and other agribusinesses to expand and upgrade their operations by allowing existing IDAs to help promote job growth in industries such as fruit cultivation, livestock production, and additional agricultural pursuits.

During the budget process, the Senate Republican Conference introduced their “Grown in New York” agenda, which guided much of the state’s funding for agriculture this year. Among the key programs receiving funding was NY FarmNet, which received \$1.1 million to continue their efforts to help family farms by providing free consultation services on an array of issues. These include financial guidance, generational transfer, and other family

issues. The budget also included \$300,000 specifically directed to address mental health issues experienced by farmers. Also added to the final budget was more than \$12 million in support for agriculture that was not included in the Executive Budget proposal.

Among the programs for which the Senate Republican Conference restored funding were:

- Farm Viability Institute - \$1.9 million;
- Wine and Grape Foundation - \$1.1 million;
- Beginning Farmers Grant Program - \$1 million;
- Apple Growers Association - \$750,000;
- Harvest NY - \$600,000
- Future Farmers of America - \$392,000;
- Tractor Rollover Prevention Program - \$250,000;
- Dairy Profit Teams at Farm Viability - \$220,000;
- Maple Producers Association - \$213,000; and
- Precision Agriculture Studies - \$110,000.