



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

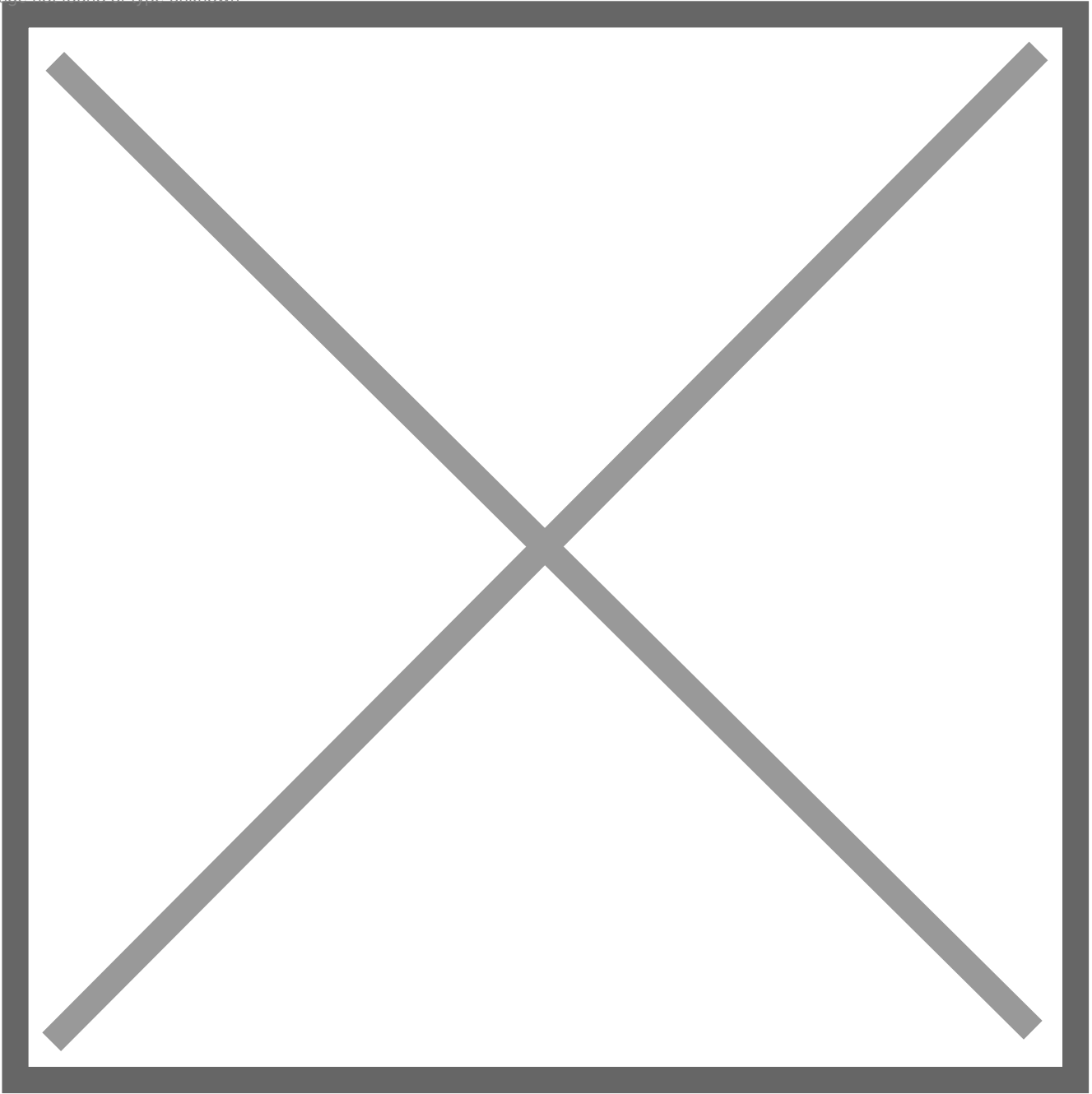
Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Brings Together Farmers, Agriculture Experts to Discuss Establishment of “Food Hubs”

PATTY RITCHIE September 9, 2015

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In an effort to expand markets for farmers and connect consumers with more fresh, locally grown foods, State Senator Patty Ritchie brought together local agriculture professionals Wednesday in Watertown to discuss the establishment of a “food hub” in Upstate New York.

“As we all know, one of the greatest challenges facing our state’s hardworking farmers and agribusiness owners is finding metro markets in which to sell their products,” said Senate Agriculture Committee Chair State Senator Patty Ritchie.

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“In recent years, more and more people have realized the importance—and advantages—of eating local. A food hub will capitalize on the “eat local” movement by allowing farmers to bring their goods to one central location, where they then can be transported to major cities throughout our state and ultimately, end up on the dinner tables of people in metro areas who are looking to eat nutritious, locally grown foods.”

At Wednesday’s meeting, Senator Ritchie and other agriculture leaders, including members of the Senator’s Agriculture Advisory Council, discussed how to best utilize funds included in the new state budget to establish food hubs, which will give farmers and agribusiness owners an opportunity to bring products to a central location where they can then be transported to major cities throughout our state, including New York City.

“The establishment of a food hub represents a tremendous opportunity for our region’s farmers and agribusiness owners,” said Kevin Jordan, Executive Director Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County.

“This meeting was the first step to getting a food hub off the ground and I’m looking forward to continuing to work together on a plan that not only connects consumers with the foods we’re growing here in Upstate New York, but also helps to boost the bottom lines of farmers across our region.”

“Creating more ways for Upstate farmers to reach into metro markets will help more farms thrive. Connecting our homegrown produce with consumers Downstate who demand homegrown produce is a critical link to more sustainable agriculture. It will also create more jobs in the agriculture industry,” said Assemblyman Will Barclay, who was in attendance for the discussion.

“The North Country Food Hub has the potential to transform agriculture across our region. I’m very pleased with the progress we’re making on this vital project,” said Assemblyman Blankenbush, whose district includes portions on Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Lewis counties.

Wednesday's meeting builds on Senator Ritchie's efforts to support our state's farmers as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. This year, she lead the way to help provide record state funding to strengthen and preserve family farming and secured over \$1 million to assist in the establishment of a Food Hub in Northern New York, and across the state. In addition, Senator Ritchie also worked this year to expand her "Young Farmer" program, which was created in 2014 to address the challenge of replacing aging and retiring farmers, as well as to introduce the "Grown in New York" initiative, which aims to strengthen farmers' bottom lines by connecting local farms and consumers.

(Attn. photo editors: Senator Ritchie was joined by Assemblyman Will Barclay, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County Executive Director Kevin Jordan and over 25 agriculture professionals from Central and Northern New York.)