



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW INSTITUTE FOR FOOD SAFETY AT CORNELL: GAME CHANGER FOR FINGER LAKES REGION

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO December 18, 2015

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Every day we hear or read about another occurrence of a foodborne illness. From vegetable and peanut butter contaminations, to bacteria outbreaks at national chain restaurants, we are frequently reminded of the increased importance of food safety. Unfortunately, recent food related hepatitis events in the Finger Lakes demonstrate how we locally can be impacted.

In response to this growing need, I am pleased to announce that I have successfully secured \$2 million in state funding to create the Institute for Food Safety at Cornell, which will be located at the New York State Agriculture Experiment Station in Geneva. This important Institute will build on the successful installation of High Pressure Processing equipment at the Station's Food Venture Center, a nationally and internationally renowned facility that will be modernizing to meet the growing demands for excellence and innovation in food safety by food processors.

The new Institute is a food industry and job producing game changer that positions the Finger Lakes region at the forefront of food safety. The long-term vision for the Institute for Food Safety at Cornell is to become the pre-eminent source of scientific research, training and outreach in dairy, produce and food processing safety in the United States and beyond.

The Food and Drug Administration recently put forth new regulations aimed at increased food safety. For the first time, these new federal regulations will require food manufacturers and farmers to implement detailed plans to prevent foodborne illness, making the creation of the Food Safety Institute more important than ever. The Institute will work from farm to table, making sure that New York's job creators can comply with the new federal standards and that, most importantly, our food is safe.

The Finger Lakes region was recently selected as a New York State Regional Council Award winner and will receive \$500 million over five years to be used for economic development projects. The agriculture and food production sector was a cornerstone of the funding application put forth by the Finger Lakes Region Economic Development Council. With our region producing a quarter of New York's agricultural output, and the food industry changing faster than ever, I am very pleased with the direction of the plan.

It is my hope that the Regional Economic Development Council and New York State hold firm to their commitment to the agriculture industry. Much of the plan talks about bringing Wegmans, RIT and others such as the Experiment Station in Geneva, together in important future collaboration. It is imperative the economic developers and educators in Rochester not forget the sometimes taken for granted, excellent work and innovation of one of our region's most important facilities – the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station at Cornell in Geneva.

Every time I visit, and I go there often, I am learning some new and exciting work that is being done for our region and our state's farm and food industries – such as the new Rubyfrost and Snap Dragon apples.

We must work together with all of our local government officials and county economic development leaders to ensure that a genuine plan for food and agriculture innovation in the entire Finger Lakes Region includes the shared vision for the New York State Experiment Station, and the new Institute for Food Safety at Cornell, both located in Geneva. The Institute can become the preeminent source of scientific research, training and outreach in food safety in the United States and beyond.

In order to maximize our taxpayers' resources, job development efforts at the state and regional level must collaborate. With all of the interest in local food and farming, I'm pleased to see a mention of Geneva's Experiment Station in the Council plans. By synergizing and sharing resources between all of the food and farm assets in our region we can see great economic opportunity in the years ahead.

We are fortunate here in the Finger Lakes to be home to one of the world's premier agricultural research centers. These important funding announcements, totaling nearly \$3 million will put the Experiment Station and the entire Finger Lakes region at the forefront of

food safety and innovative technology.

This will benefit consumers locally and nationally, as this region becomes known for excellence in food safety innovation and training. Those community service leaders who take so much time to serve on the Regional Economic Development Council, must insure that agriculture, and the Experiment Station, are fully integrated into this process, our taxpayers' dollars are invested wisely, and that job opportunities will be expanding throughout all areas of the region, including our more rural areas.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read my recent news release regarding this important funding and [CLICK HERE](#) to view the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Corporation's Agriculture and Food Production Plan.