



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Video of O'Mara's recent 'Drought Forum' for regional farmers available online ~ Forum brought together State Ag Commissioner Richard Ball and top state and local officials to provide information, answer questions, tour farms ~ Read and watch more

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 25, 2016

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE ECONOMY**



I deeply appreciated the local, federal and state participation we received at our Drought Forum. We had a comprehensive and very frank discussion of what's facing Southern Tier and Finger Lakes farmers and farm communities, short and long term, as a result of this year's drought. This informational forum provided an opportunity to hear directly from many farmers together with representatives of the farm agencies who can offer ongoing assistance.

**Elmira, N.Y., September 20**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today posted a video replay (see link below) of a public forum he sponsored in Prattsburgh on September 13th, **“Agriculture Roundtable: The Impact of the 2016 Drought on Southern Tier and Finger Lakes Farmers.”**

The September 13th forum was held at the Prattsburgh Central School Main Building on 2 Naples Hill Road in Prattsburgh.

Senator O'Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "I deeply appreciated the local, federal and state participation we received at our Drought Forum. We had a comprehensive and very frank discussion of what's facing Southern Tier and Finger Lakes farmers and farm communities, short and long term, as a result of this year's drought. This informational forum provided an opportunity to hear directly from many farmers together with representatives of the farm agencies who can offer ongoing assistance. I also appreciated Commissioner Ball and Senator Ritchie for joining us to personally tour several farms in Steuben and Yates counties to see and hear firsthand what farmers are facing. We all need to stay focused on what's facing our farmers and farm communities, and we will."

O'Mara was joined at the forum by New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball and State Senator Patty Ritchie (R,C,IP-Watertown), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. State Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) and Alison M. Hunt, District Director for Rep. Tom Reed (R-Corning), were also in attendance. They were joined by a panel of federal, state and local farm agencies and representatives.

The forum's other panelists were: Jamie Earl, Executive Director of the Steuben County Farm Service Agency; Ashur Terwilliger, President of the Chemung County Farm Bureau and District 4 State Director of the New York Farm Bureau; Tom Eskilden, District Technician, Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District; James C. Johnson, Executive Director of

the Steuben County Industrial Development Agency; David Van Lieshout, Manager, Farm Credit East; Stephanie Mehlenbacher, Horticulture Home Ground & Gardens Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Steuben County; Jeffrey Parker, District Manager, Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District; Larkin Podsiedlik, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension of

Steuben County; and Christopher C. Wager, Farm Loan Manager, Steuben County Farm Service Agency.

Following the forum, O'Mara, Ball, Ritchie, Palmesano and other officials personally toured three area farms to see and hear firsthand from local farmers on the drought's impact.

On August 31, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the federal government's 24-county drought disaster declaration, which has since been revised to 26 counties. Counties included in the designation include all of the counties O'Mara represents: Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins and Yates. As a result of the designations, farmers in these areas could be eligible for assistance, including emergency loans, from the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. Additionally, Ball has been joining state lawmakers and other farm leaders to conduct on-site assessments throughout the state and is working with Cornell University experts to study the outlook for recovery.

O'Mara said that anyone who was unable to attend the informational event in Prattsburgh can now view the video of the September 13th discussion and should not hesitate to contact his offices for assistance and information.

The following farm tours took place following the September 13th round table:

1.) John R. Wallace Farms, a Steuben County potato farm located at 61279 Route 415 in Avoca. This stop is scheduled to take place from 1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.;

2.) From 2:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m., officials will visit Damin Farms, LLC, a large family dairy and corn farm in Steuben County located at 10926 Fairgrounds Road in Prattsburgh; and

3.) From 3:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., officials will visit Clearview Farms, one of the largest vineyards in the Finger Lakes region, located at 4019 Stever Hill Road in Branchport (Yates County).

**[WATCH SENATOR O'MARA'S SEPTEMBER 13TH "AGRICULTURE ROUNDTABLE: THE IMPACT OF THE 2016 DROUGHT ON SOUTHERN TIER AND FINGER LAKES FARMERS"]**