



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Recaps Efforts To Support Farmers In Newly Released Report

JOHN FRIOT January 19, 2017



Record funding for agriculture, new programs to encourage young people to pursue careers in farming and efforts to help make succeeding easier for hardworking farmers are just a few of the highlights included in the 2016 Annual Report of the Senate Agriculture Committee, released today by the committee's chair, State Senator Patty Ritchie.

"Each and every day, farmers in every corner of the Empire State are working to grow crops, raise livestock and plant the seeds of continued success for New York's leading industry,"

said Senator Ritchie, who just was renamed chair of the Committee earlier this month.

“As they continue this important work, it’s the Senate Agriculture Committee’s job to support them and look for ways that help create new opportunities for growth. From securing record funding to creating new programs that safeguard the future of farming, in 2016 we made great strides toward strengthening agriculture and I’m looking forward to the Committee building on these efforts in the coming months.”

As the newly released report notes, in 2016, more than \$12 million in proposed budget cuts were restored by the State Senate for a wide range of farm programs. And, since 2011, more than \$55 million has been restored or added to the budget for farm programs, as compared to the amounts included in the Executive Budget proposals.

Other highlights of the report include the following:

- Funding for a new “Vets to Farms’ program that connects veterans to opportunities providing them with training and experience in operating a farm;
- Funding for a third round of “Beginning Farmer” grants providing financial help to farmers who have been in business for less than 10 years and who are looking to purchase land, buildings or supplies;
- Support for creating a “North Country Agricultural Studies Academy” in St. Lawrence County. This facility, which is expected to be a model for similar programs across the state, provides high school seniors with hands-on experience in agribusiness careers;
- Record funding for FFA programs that provide students with opportunities to learn about agriculture and develop leadership skills;
- Record funding to prevent the spread of diseases such as wildlife rabies and eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE); and

- Renewed funding for student loan forgiveness for beginning farmers.

Also in 2016, Agriculture Committee meetings provided opportunities for members to learn more issues important to the industry through interaction with a wide range of special guests and experts, including FFA students, Cornell University leaders and staff, American Farmland Trust, NY FarmNet and others.

A full copy of the report can be viewed by clicking the PDF link on the top of the page.