



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Women Sowing The Seeds Of Agriculture

PATTY RITCHIE April 28, 2017



As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I was successful in securing \$51 million in overall funding in our newly adopted state budget for New York agriculture. This record investment will support dozens of programs focused on marketing, education and research for agriculture, which will help bolster the more than 35,500 farms in our state, which generate \$5.4 billion for the state's economy.

In addition, the spending plan helps encourage more young people to pursue farming careers and makes possible new initiatives that will better connect consumers with local foods and

boost the bottom lines of our hardworking farmers, including many women farmers.

According to the USDA, there are 18,750 women farmers in New York State, including 6,459 principal operators, which means they run their entire farm business. Some women are partners and managers who work with others to operate their farms. The average age is 53 and almost 1,000 of them have been farmers for two years or less.

These women farmers raise families while they work very long hours on their farms, which grow food and raise animals to feed our state's people. It is a hard life, but it has many rewards.

Throughout our region, women farmers mentor each other through various programs and look for new ways to grow their businesses. One popular way is through agritourism, which incorporates operations or activities that bring people to visit farms like hayrides, pumpkin patches, and corn mazes, especially related to the fall and winter holidays.

Farmers—and increasingly women farmers—are part of our state's tradition of a strong agriculture industry. As the 2017 Legislative Session continues, I am looking forward to continuing to support them, and working toward investments and changes that support them, and the important work they do.