



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Shaping the Future of Agriculture One Voice at a Time

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE January 5, 2018

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

As we welcome in a new year, 2018 brings a new opportunity for New York State to highlight what makes it so special. Agriculture—our farms, growers, producers and related agribusinesses—leads the way. As New York State's leading industry—and a major driver of the state's economy—this is the time to make sure it remains as such.

Serving as the chair of the New York State Senate Agricultural Committee, I was proud to ensure 2017 marked the third straight year that agriculture received record funding in the state budget—a total of \$51 million. That funding included \$10 million dollars that was going to be cut in the Executive Budget proposal. This funding is now supporting dozens of programs farmers depend on, as well as helping launch new initiatives designed to strengthen the connection between consumers and local foods.

In the 2018 Legislative Session, I plan to continue to tap into the insights and ideas those on the front lines have for helping agriculture grow. This started last month as the Senate Agriculture Committee held a special hearing, which featured testimony from dozens of farmers and leaders across the agriculture industry.

In addition, there is another effort underway to learn more about how we can enhance agriculture both here in New York and across the entire country. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is in the process of collecting data for its 2017 Census of Agriculture, which is completed every five years by millions of farmers across our country who are selected to participate.

I am encouraging every farmer in our region—and across the state—who receives the census to take part. The information you provide will be of great help as we work together to develop farm policy, programs and services and in turn, ensure the future success of agriculture in our country, and here in New York State.

You can find more information on the 2017 Census of Agriculture by visiting <https://www.agcensus.usda.gov>. The deadline to submit information is February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

I cannot stress enough just how important our hardworking farmers, growers and producers are to our everyday lives. If you are a member of the agriculture industry and are selected to take part in the 2017 Census of Agriculture, I encourage you to make your voice heard and

participate.