



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR  
Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Highlights Efforts to Support Agriculture in Newly Released Report

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| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE**

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**



The 2017 Annual Report of the Senate Agriculture Committee, released by the committee's chair State Senator Patty Ritchie, highlights record funding for agriculture, new programs to secure the future of family farming and new funding to promote New York's booming, farm-based craft beverage industry.

"Agriculture remains a leading contributor to the state's economy with one-quarter of the state covered by farms," said Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Ritchie. "Local, hardworking farmers need our support as they work tirelessly to grow the food, and raise the livestock we need to feed the Empire State."

A major highlight of the report is that in 2017, for the third straight year, the Agriculture Committee helped to secure record State Budget funding, with a total of \$51 million. That included more than \$10 million in proposed budget cuts in the Executive Budget were restored by the State Senate for a wide range of farm programs. Since 2011, more than \$60 million in proposed Executive Budget cuts has been restored, or added to the budget, for agriculture-based programs. In all, more than 40 bills related to agriculture were introduced by Agriculture Committee members in 2017.

“The Senate Agriculture Committee is long recognized as a leader in supporting New York farmers. For the third year, this included record funding for farmers and programs they depend on. In the new year, I’m looking forward to the Committee promoting agricultural success and strengthen connections between farmers and consumers,” Senator Ritchie Added.

In addition, as we look towards 2018 and beyond, the committee hosted a special hearing in Albany to solicit ideas from nearly 20 farmers and industry representatives on finding new ways to help grow New York Agriculture further. Information gathered from the hearing will be used to shape future actions and create legislation to strengthen the agriculture industry.

**Other highlights of the report include the following:**

- A new law backed by the Committee authorizes the creation of a New York State Young Farmers Advisory Board to secure the future of family farming;
- The introduction of “F.A.R.M.” camp, Cornell-sponsored, regional training camps to provide assistance to new and existing farmers, with a special emphasis on veterans;
- Funding for a fourth round of “New Farmer Grant Fund” 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;
- New funding to help promote New York’s growing, farm-based craft beverage industry, including brewers, distillers and cideries;
- Record funding for FFA programs that provide students with opportunities to learn about agriculture and develop leadership skills;

- New funding to establish a “Farm-to-Table Trail,” which will help consumers more easily locate local food and drink and help boost the bottom line of farmers;
- 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 2017, 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 copy of the full report can be viewed by clicking on the PDF link above the photo.