



New York agriculture is growing, reaching new heights in sales and innovation, adding billions of dollars to our state’s economy, and supporting a workforce that’s 100,000 strong.

The Senate Republican Majority is proud to stand with New York’s family farmers in support of this vital and vibrant industry. Since 2011, the Senate has worked to restore state budget cuts and invest in new programs and initiatives—like the Senate’s Young Farmers and Grown in New York programs—that are helping to strengthen New York’s leading industry today and for the future.

We’re **Planting Seeds** but it’s the hard work and support of farmers and agriculture professionals who help ensure that New York’s leading industry continues to grow.

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Planting Seeds to Grow New York Agriculture

The Senate's Republican Majority is committed to supporting family farmers and helping agriculture grow, but we understand that the success of family farming relies on the hard work of 35,000 family farmers and their employees. By continuing to provide tools, like research, education and marketing assistance, tax and regulatory relief, and advancing initiatives to expand markets, promote quality and food safety, and connect New York farmers with hungry consumers across the state and region, the Senate is helping to ensure farm success and strengthen farmers' bottom lines.

Restore Funding Cuts

Investing in New York's leading industry has been a priority for the Senate's Republican Majority. Since 2011, budget restorations and funding for new programs has totaled more than **\$32 million**. The new Executive Budget reduces funding for 42 different programs in the largest single year reduction in agriculture funding in five years. Senate Republicans will prioritize full restoration of these cuts, and work to achieve record levels of budget funding to support family farmers.

Strengthening Farmers' Bottom Lines

Senate Republicans believe reducing the cost of doing business will help New York's economy grow, and when it comes to easing the burden on family farmers, we've delivered. In addition to reductions in broad based tax rates, and a statewide property tax that's reining in school and municipal taxes, a Senate Republican initiative to limit increases in agricultural land assessments has already saved farmers more than \$11 million in its very first year. Senate Republicans will continue to prioritize tax and regulatory relief for family farmers, including:

Estate Tax Reform – Lowering New York's estate tax was a key part of the Senate's 2014 Young Farmers initiative. That plan helps preserve the tradition of family farming by making it easier to transfer farm businesses to the next generation. This year, Senate Republicans propose to speed up the full phase-in of the estate tax reform, to allow farmers to claim the federal exclusion amount.

Farmer PIT Exemption – Senate Republicans also will work to reduce taxes on family farmers by raising the Personal Income Tax exemption for small and mid-sized family farms from the current 5 percent to 20 percent, and making even more farmers eligible for the exemption.

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Supporting NY's Premier Ag University



Founded by former State Senator Ezra Cornell, New York's statutory "Land Grant" college is the nation's premier center for agricultural learning and research. Throughout its nearly 150 years, Cornell University has helped train generations of farmers and agriculture professionals and is at the cutting edge of research and applied science to increase productivity, prevent the spread of animal and plant diseases and enhance food safety. While demand and interests in its programs and services have increased, state support for the school has not kept pace.

In addition to restorations and increased funding for Cornell's important ag-related research and study programs, the Senate will seek to increase support for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to meet growing demand from students for agriculture and veterinary instruction and programs. Increasing support for Cornell's education programs will help hold the line on rising college costs and student debt.

Protecting Food and Human Health

Farmers and consumers face unprecedented challenges to food safety from the arrival of new and invasive diseases that not only threaten plant and animal health, but human life as well. "Planting Seeds" would continue and restore funding for a number of programs that aim to detect and prevent the spread of diseases in plants and animals. Senate Republicans will seek to increase funding for cutting edge research into the prevention and spread of avian disease ("bird flu"), and recently arrived threats to food safety, like *Salmonella Dublin*, a virus that affects dairy cows and has sickened humans who drink raw milk. Additional funding would expand Cornell's research into the recent die-off of honeybees, critical to crop pollination, and programs that encourage farmers to reduce pesticide use.

"Planting Seeds" also seeks funding to replace aging and outdated lab facilities, helping to leverage additional USDA support for a new lab to continue Cornell's cutting-edge food safety and research programs.

To protect human health, we will seek to increase funding to continue efforts to stop the spread of wildlife rabies from Canada and across New York State, and to provide reimbursement to local public health services for costly human post-exposure rabies preventive treatments.

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Encouraging Innovation

Nearly two dozen farms from across the state are benefitting from the first round of “Beginning Farmer” grants, created as part of the Senate’s 2014 Young Farmers initiative to encourage interest in agriculture and help protect the future of family farming. The grants, of between \$15,000 and \$50,000 each, are helping young farmers purchase seed, equipment and supplies to help their new businesses grow. A second round of grants will be announced in the near future.



“Planting Seeds” will seek to restore budget funding for a third round of Beginning Farmer grants, and provides new funding for established farmers to help them install innovative new technology to make their farms more efficient and profitable.

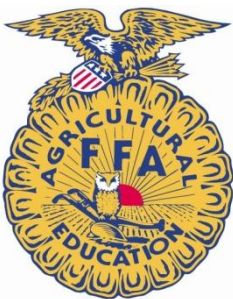
The Senate also supports increased funding for local cooperative extensions which are often the first point of contact for experienced and beginning farmers in finding solutions to problems and challenges on the farm.

Additionally, the Senate will seek to increase investment in FarmNet, which provides services and assistance to farmers, including business and farm transition planning.

The Senate will also seek to increase funding for programs to help dairy farmers who are dealing with price volatility find ways to improve profits.

Support for Agriculture Education

The Senate’s Young Farmers program provides a loan forgiveness program for beginning farmers to encourage more young people to consider careers in agriculture. “Planting Seeds” take that initiative even further, by investing in ag educators, and pre-college school-to-farm programs.



Among the initiatives are an extension of the Beginning Farmer Student Loan Forgiveness Program to include students who are pursuing degrees in ag education, continued support for high school FFA (formerly known as “Future Farmers of America”) programs, and creation of a new North Country Ag Academy. Modeled on a similar program in Western New York, the Ag Academy would provide hands-on learning experiences for aspiring young farmers to learn and practice the agricultural arts, and prepare them for future careers.

“Planting Seeds” also supports funding to establish an agriculture management program at SUNY’s Canton College, which can serve as a lower-cost alternative to four-year agriculture degree programs. Originally founded as the School of Agriculture at St. Lawrence, the college

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eliminated most agriculture-related degrees in the 1990s. The Senate would support the provision of staff to provide courses and real work experience allowing students to study marketing, technology, and other practical skills necessary to survive and thrive in the farming industry.

Assisting Our Veterans

Returning veterans and those seeking a career change could be encouraged to try agriculture, utilizing benefits they've earned under the GI Bill to gain training and expertise to begin their own successful small business. **"Planting Seeds"** seeks funding to support an innovative proposal by Cornell's Small Farms Program to help establish up to five veteran-owned small farms through a first-in-the-nation pilot program. In turn, these sites would be available to train additional veteran-farmers in future years.