Seward Focuses on Agriculture

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ALBANY, 03/19/12 – The New York State Senate today passed the "Buy From the Backyard Act" to promote the purchase of locally grown or produced food.

Senator Seward co-sponsored the bill (S.2468) which requires state agencies with food contracts to buy at least 20 percent of their food from New York sources.

"Agriculture is New York's number one industry," said Senator Seward. **"In recent years, agribusinesses have taken on all shapes and sizes – large dairy farms, small alpaca ranches, roadside**

vegetable stands - encouraging the use of their products will help our upstate economy grow."

The bill expands upon existing law, which creates a program that encourages the purchase of local food products by state agencies. Under the new legislation, at least 20 percent of the food purchased by mental health facilities, prisons, universities and other state institutions that have food contracts with the state, would be required to be grown, produced, harvested or processed in New York State.

"Farmers markets are extremely popular throughout my district. It's an opportunity for consumers to buy a quality product from their neighbors, knowing that their purchase will help build the local economy. The "Buy From the Backyard Act" extends that concept to New York State and will help cultivate our many agribusinesses," Seward added.

The bill was sent to the assembly.

Senator Seward also helped celebrate Agriculture Literacy Week with students at Coxsackie Elementary School.

Senator Seward read to Mrs. Patterson's second grade class from the book Seed Soil Sun by Cris Peterson. Representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Greene County and the Greene County Farm Bureau joined Senator Seward for the event.

Now in its 7th year, Agricultural Literacy Week has helped to bring agriculturally themed books and resources into thousands of classrooms and libraries throughout New York State.

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