



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Federal Farm Bill Will Provide Greater Stability for New York Farmers

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January 31, 2014

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Senator Young strongly supports passage of Farm Bill

ALBANY— With farms serving as the foundation of our nation's food supply, it is encouraging to see progress being made toward the passage of a long awaited federal Farm Bill.

“Agriculture has always been key to the success of our state,” said Senator Catharine Young (R, I, C—Olean), chair of the New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. “As a state legislator, I am pleased to see our representatives at the federal level working to pass legislation that will improve the stability of our food system, mitigate risks for farmers, encourage economic development in rural areas, and benefit the health and safety of consumers.”

A new Farm Bill was recently moved out of conference committee, designed to replace the previous version that had expired. The bill was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives this week, and Congressman Tom Reed deserves a great deal of credit for his unwavering efforts to pass the bill. Additionally, Senator Chuck Schumer has been a strong advocate in the effort to pass a Farm Bill that will benefit farmers throughout New York State. A vote is expected in the U.S. Senate next week.

Among its many provisions, the Farm Bill will benefit dairy producers, expand upon crop insurance options, and invest in rural economic development.

In recent years, New York State has seen significant increases in milk production, especially as a result of the surge in popularity of yogurt. Recently, the state reestablished itself as the third largest milk producer in the United States. In light of these facts, it is more important than ever to provide a stable solution to ensure that dairy farmers are able to avoid the financial crises they have faced in years past.

Historically, there have been times when the price of milk, as compared to the cost of producing milk – including energy costs, taxes and other operational costs – has made dairy farming unsustainable for many farmers. To address this issue, the Farm Bill includes a dairy margin insurance program that is designed to provide a safety net for dairy farms. It will be especially helpful to farmers with less than 200 cows, providing them with more affordable premiums.

Farmers producing other crops will benefit from other provisions in the Farm Bill. A number of crop insurance options are included to provide improved protection for farmers growing crops like fruits and vegetables.

The need for crop insurance protection can be demonstrated with the example of the devastating damage caused to fruit crops throughout New York State in 2012. An unanticipated thaw in March and April of 2012 was followed by extended periods of frost and freezing. These weather conditions severely diminished fruit crops including apples, grapes, cherries, and other fruits. The Farm Bill also will provide retroactive support to fruit growers affected by the loss of their crops in 2012 due to these conditions.

The Farm Bill also promotes rural economic development. Many rural areas in New York State have struggled through difficult economic times in recent years. Programs encouraging the growth of business and assisting entrepreneurs in rural areas are a part of the bill. It will also create programs to invest in important infrastructure improvements such as desperately-needed broadband expansion.

“The improved safety net for our dairy farmers as well as many of our fruit and vegetable growers who have had little recourse following a natural disaster is a worthy investment into our food system. The sensible approach not only saves taxpayers billions of dollars, but also reassures farmers and consumers alike that our food system is protected during times of need. The Farm Bill also provides for rural economic development initiatives that will help get healthy food from the farm to the dinner table,” said Dean Norton, President of New York Farm Bureau.

“New York’s farmers constantly face the uncertainty of many factors including difficult weather conditions, fluctuating prices, and economic pressures. This bill will go a long way toward decreasing uncertainty and improving opportunities for farmers and rural areas in New York State,” said Senator Young. “I certainly hope that the U.S. Senate will pass this bill next week and that it will promptly be signed into law.”

