



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

# Grants For Young Farmers Now Available

James L. Seward

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**ONEONTA, 10/16/14** -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today announced grant applications are now available for two new programs to assist our next generation of farmers. The programs are part of the “Young Farmers NY” initiative, a comprehensive plan, introduced by Seward and his senate colleagues earlier this year and enacted as part of the 2014-15 state budget.

**“New high tech industries emerge every day, but agriculture persists as New York’s economic, social, and environmental binding force,”** said Senator Seward. **“Helping our next generation of farmers contend with industry-specific hurdles - education, property taxes, and equipment costs - will boost our state’s economy and sow the seeds for future growth of our number one industry.”**

“Young Farmers NY” addresses issues related to the advancing age of New York farmers and helps smooth the transfer of farmland to the next generation; preserves existing farmland, and helps young farmers overcome obstacles to give them greater opportunities for successful careers in agriculture.

Applications are now being accepted for two of the enacted programs that will help young farmers with the financial roadblocks associated with farming.

- *The New York State New Farmers Grant Fund* – which offers grants of up to \$50,000 for eligible beginning farmers participating in the production of an

agricultural product at commercial farm operations statewide. Eligible project costs include leasing or purchasing farm machinery and equipment; constructing or expanding farm buildings or systems; and purchasing supplies such as root stock, seed or fertilizer. More information and the application (deadline to apply is January 28, 2015) is available on the New York Empire State Development (ESD) website at <http://esd.ny.gov/BusinessPrograms/NewFarmersGrantFund.html>.

- *The Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program* – which provides loan forgiveness awards for students who earn an agricultural degree from a State University of New York (SUNY) college or university, including the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, and work in New York State agriculture for at least five years after graduation. More information and the application (deadline to apply is December 15, 2014) is available on the state Higher Education Service Corporation (HESC) website at <http://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/nys-grants-scholarships-awards/new-york-state-young-farmers-loan-forgiveness-incentive-program.html>.

**“These programs will assist our next generation of farmers as they embark on careers here at home. Successful grant recipients will be able to avoid some of the financial pitfalls that overwhelm many young farmers, and I encourage anyone eligible to apply,”** Seward added.

“Young Farmers NY” was developed in response to research that shows the average age of New York farmers is increasing, as fewer young people pursue farming careers. According to new data from the USDA Census of Agriculture, the average age of New York farmers is now 57.1 years. There are two farmers aged 65 and older for each one under age 35. This and other factors lead to farmland being lost forever to development. About 50,000 acres of farmland were lost in New York in each of the last five years, the federal agency reported.

Along with the new grant programs, Senator Seward also helped direct new tax relief to farmers as part of the 2014-15 state budget through an increase in the estate tax threshold from \$1 million to \$5.25 million over a period of three years. This reform of the estate tax, a long-standing priority of the New York Farm Bureau and other farming advocates, will encourage farm preservation from generation to generation and will impact approximately 2,800 family farms throughout the state.

**“Farms are very often a family business. We want to make sure that fathers, mothers, and grandparents are able to pass that business down to the next generation. To do that, we need to address the high costs associated with the profession and help ready our young farmers so they can succeed in an evolving economy. These new grant programs, along with other elements of ‘Young Farmers NY’ will help strengthen our state’s leading industry and encourage more young people to pursue careers in agriculture,”** Senator Seward.