



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Plan To Boost Family Farms

JAMES L. SEWARD March 5, 2015

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE**



ALBANY, 03/04/15 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today joined members of the Senate Republican Conference to unveil their new “Grown in New York” initiative to help meet consumers’ demands for locally-grown food, support local farmers in their efforts to provide quality, fresh food, and strengthen rural communities.

“Agriculture has served as the backbone of New York’s economy for generations,” said Senator Seward. **“By capitalizing on current market trends and a renewed public desire to eat healthy, locally-grown products the senate’s ‘Grown In New York’ initiative will lead to future success for**

our family farms. Anyone who samples a product grown on a New York farm will certainly return for seconds, and this program will enhance that ideal.”

New York is home to 36,000 family farms that contribute to the state’s more than \$5.7 billion agriculture industry. “Grown in New York” expands upon the Senate Republican’s commitment to keeping New York’s farmers and agriculture industry thriving.

“Ag-related businesses are experiencing a real boom in New York, and we need to add state funding and reduce government red tape so our farmers can take full advantage of this positive trend.

While some strides have been made in recent years, just like our farmers, we must keep working,” added Seward.

Over the past four years, the Senate Republican Conference has been a leader in reversing budget cuts and increasing funding for important agriculture and commodity-based research, marketing, and education programs, totaling \$21 million. The Republican Conference also spearheaded the “Young Farmers New York” plan last year to support and encourage a new generation of farmers.

“Farmers deal with countless challenges every day. Anything that can be done to ease their financial burden, increase productivity, enhance farm safety, and assist new farmers has my strong support,” Seward concluded.

The 2015 “Grown in New York” plan includes:

Helping Farmers Expand Their Markets

> \$1.75 million would be allocated to create up to five local transportation cooperatives where farmers can arrange to move their products to New York City and other major populated areas; and

> \$250,000 in New York State Thruway Toll rebate aid would help lower the transportation cost of these goods.

Continuing to Fund Vital Agriculture Research, Marketing and Education Programs

- > The Senate will propose \$10 million in budget funding for agriculture programs; and
- > An additional \$10 million would support the long-overdue upgrades to Cornell's world-leading Geneva Experiment Station, where applied research is solving problems ranging from plant disease to improved agriculture practices, increasing yields and ensuring farm success.

Expanding Young and New Farmer Initiatives

- > \$1 million would be allocated to the Beginning Farmer Innovation grants, and the arbitrary acreage cap that was previously required by this program would also be removed;
- > To meet growing interest, there would be a \$1 million increase to the Young Farmer Student Loan Forgiveness Program. This program would also be expanded to include agriculture educators as well as farm operators;
- > \$700,000 would be given to support school-based agriculture education, including Future Farmers of America and BOCES-based agricultural science education;
- > \$300,000 in matching grant funding for farmers would provide on-the-job training to aspiring farmers through the Cornell Cooperating Farm Apprenticeship;
- > \$1 million would aid in the creation of a Farm Bank, which would link new farmers with public and private land owners to create better opportunities for new farmers; and
- > A \$1 million revolving loan fund would be created to assist eligible beginning farmers finance land and buy basic farm equipment.

Creating a Grown in New York Brand

> \$1 million in funding would create a Grown in New York marketing brand to help consumers identify NY-grown and farm-made products that contain at least 75 percent local ingredients.

Reaching Consumers of All Ages

> \$1.8 million would expand the USDA's Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to reach more senior consumers across the state.

Getting Produce from The Farm and Into Schools

> While the Executive Budget proposal only includes a \$250,000 appropriation, the Senate's proposal includes a \$2.5 million financial incentive to encourage schools to choose locally produced, healthy food choices.

Expanding Cornell's Harvest NY Program

> \$1 million of funding would aid the statewide expansion of Cornell University's successful Harvest NY program. It provides hands-on and commodities-based expertise to assist family farmers, with an emphasis on identifying new export opportunities and growing New York's meat industry.

Focusing on Clean Energy

> \$5 million in New York State Energy Research and Development Authority grants would direct additional clean energy resources to farm-based projects, including the installation of solar technology and construction of new digesters.

FarmNet Farm Business Transition Program

> \$200,000 in funding would create a new Farm Business Transition Program, operated through Cornell's FarmNet, to assist the smooth transfer of up to 75 farm businesses each year to new ownership.

Cornell NYOneStop Program

> \$450,000 would create the first comprehensive program to help farmers navigate regulations and find information about programs and services that can grow their businesses.

The "Grown in New York" initiative will be included in the senate's one house budget resolution. The full report is attached.