



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Move Over Maple: Ritchie Bill to Help Farmers Add Walnut, Birch Syrups to NY Breakfast Tables Gets Final Passage

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Potential Seen for Expansion Into New Products

State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced final passage of legislation aimed tapping into the potential of the state's many walnut and birch trees, which are seen by researchers as a way for producers of maple syrup to expand their markets.

According to researchers, there are 22 types of trees that can be tapped for syrup, with the most common in New York State being black walnut and birch. In recent years, Cornell University has been working to help maple producers explore the use of these trees to expand and add value to their businesses, and extend the season for "sugar makers," as birch and walnut saps typically run after maple stops flowing.

"We've seen the popularity of maple products explode in recent years and while there's still room for the industry to grow, there's also untapped resources contained in the millions of other trees throughout our state, namely birch and walnut trees," said Senator Ritchie.

"This legislation will help us to build upon the success of New York's maple industry, expand markets for syrup producers and help to ensure that those who purchase birch and walnut syrups are buying the best product possible."

Under Senate bill 3669, purity and quality requirements would be established for birch and walnut syrups and sugars, similar to those that currently exist for maple. This legislation would help grow the walnut and birch syrup industries by safeguarding consumers from inferior products and by helping to protect producers from unfair competition, posed by those making imitation syrups. The bill has been approved by the Assembly and now goes to the Governor for his signature.

In recent years, New York State's maple industry has grown from 1.3 million taps in 2007, to more than 2 million today. While the state is second only to Vermont in maple syrup production, millions of trees across the state remain untapped. Senator Ritchie's legislation seeks to add birch and walnut trees to the ranks of those used by sugarhouses for syrup production. Similar to maple, walnut syrup is described as being sweeter, with a hit of nuttiness. Alternatively, birch syrup has more of a fruity, tangy flavor.

As chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Ritchie has been working to support and expand markets for farmers and agribusiness owners across New York State. This year, she successfully pushed for record support for agriculture initiatives in the State Budget, which represented an addition of \$12 million to the Governor's budget proposal, as well as the restoration of budget cuts to 33 different programs.

The new spending plan also contains funding specifically aimed at expanding New York's growing maple industry, including \$125,000 for maple research at Cornell University and more than \$200,000 in funding for the Maple Producers Association.