



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

FARMERS' MARKETS HELPING TO GROW NY'S ECONOMY

PATTY RITCHIE June 7, 2011

| COMMITTEE: **AGRICULTURE**

I have to admit, I spend a lot of time driving across Central and Northern New York.

I try to make it a point to spend a day or two in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence County each week to hear what people like you think about what we in the state legislature should be doing to help get New York back on the right track.

One of the best parts of visiting communities across our region is getting a chance to visit the many Farmers' Markets that are becoming such a major part of revitalizing both large and small towns.

Just a decade ago, across New York State, you could only find about 200 Farmers Markets listed by state officials. Today, one guide listed 735, with more being organized as we speak.

As the chair of the New York State Senate's Agriculture Committee, the rapid growth of Farmers' Markets across the Empire State is doing a lot more than just bringing outstanding locally grown produce to more people's tables. It's helping to grow our state's economy, creating new jobs, and helping our state's 35,000 family farms play a greater role in helping to bring about a rebirth in our downtowns .

A hundred years ago, downtowns were the commercial hubs of most communities, bringing shoppers together to buy from locally owned businesses that often sold locally produced products.

In an era of chain ownership, Farmers' Markets are now actually helping to bring shoppers back downtown, providing a new reason for customers to visit. They are helping to grow our downtowns. One study argues that every \$10 spent at a downtown farmers market generates an additional \$17 in spending at nearby shops and eateries. What we're also seeing is that alongside the locally produced food being sold at Farmers' Markets, a lot of them are serving as incubators for new local businesses.

We're seeing local artists, photographers, candy makers, bakers, artisans and crafts people selling their locally produced wares from booths next to these local growers. Some of them start out as part-time ventures. But in some cases, these new local businesses are finding such success that they open permanent shops, adding even more jobs.

Since I assumed the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I have been working to help New York State recognize how important harnessing our family farms are to our efforts to grow our state's economy and help put people back to work. You can help. Buy local. Visit your nearby farm market. Taste the Pride of New York. You'll be glad you did.

To find a farmers' market in your community, just ask a friend or neighbor. Or go online.

In Oswego County, you can find a list in VisitOswegoCounty.com's annual tourist guide (<http://visitoswegocounty.com/more-to-see-do/attractions/animals-agriculture/>).

The Greater Watertown North Country Chamber of Commerce has an events listing, including farmers' markets at its website (http://watertownny.com/events/community_events.php).

And gardenshare.org lists farmers' markets in St. Lawrence County

(<http://www.gardenshare.org/content/farmers-markets>)