

NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Preserve, Promote, Grow: IDC Unveils Package To Strengthen NY Farms

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Agriculture

The Independent Democratic Conference today unveiled a legislative package designed to preserve, promote and grow farming in New York State.

Agriculture is one of New York's largest industries, producing \$4.7 billion in 2009 and employing tens of thousands of workers. Additionally, New York generates roughly \$4 billion a year in wine making and wine tourism and has become the third largest producer of wine in the country.

However, most farms, which are small, family run businesses, are feeling the squeeze from rising costs, increasingly tight profit margins, lack of access to credit and markets, as well competition from other states and other countries. These factors have led to the loss of 666,000 acres of farm land and the closure of 1,200 farms during the last decade.

The IDC has introduced "Preserve, Produce & Grow" a package of legislation that will help farms across this state face these challenges head-on, strengthen the industry, and improve New York's economy.

"Agriculture is a cornerstone of the New York State economy," Senator David J. Valesky, (D-Oneida), said. "For the industry to grow and thrive, it is important to support our farmers and producers, and the IDC has a strong legislative

agenda to do so."

Preserve

To stem the loss of farmland and the closure of family farms in New York, the IDC proposes:

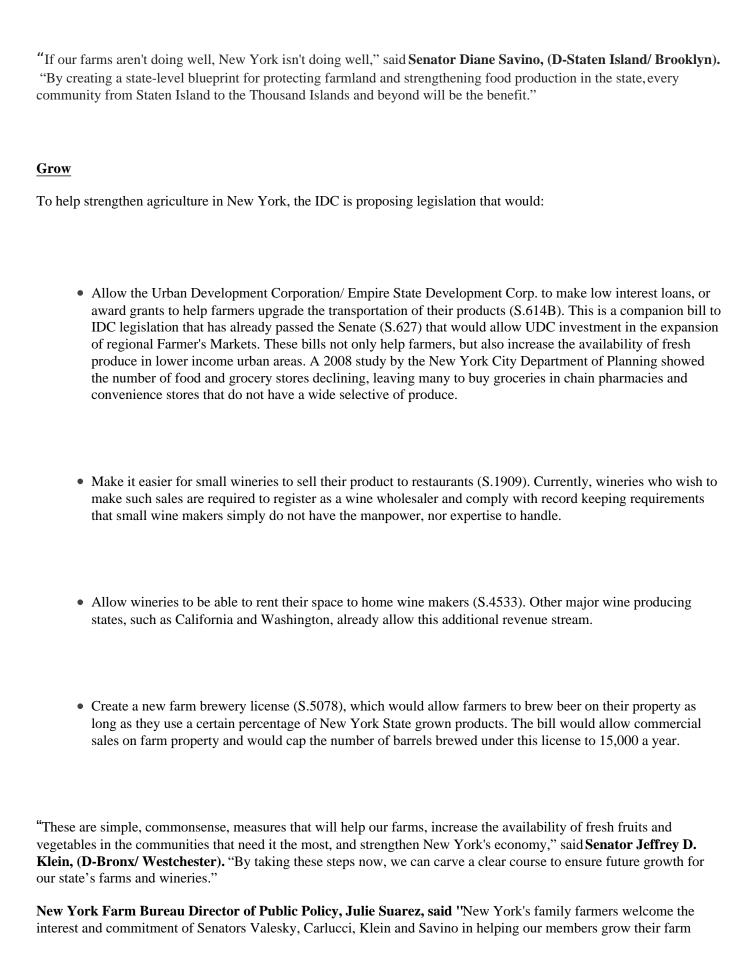
- Preventing utility companies from charging fees and penalties to farmers who install small-scale, on-site power generators on their property (S.652). Currently, farmers who seek to install devices on their land, such as small wind turbines, or bio gas generators, that would offset rising energy costs are often subjected to penalties or extra charges from their existing energy provider.
- Opening up new financing options for farmers, by creating a tax incentive to entice domestic life insurance companies to invest in agriculture (S.4296). These companies, which invest life insurance premiums as part of their business model, would help fill the void of commercial banks that by and large have stopped lending to continue farm operations. In exchange for the incentive, a conservation easement will be placed on the land that ensures its continued use for agriculture.
- Directing the Department of Agriculture and Markets to create an overall blueprint for sustaining agriculture in New York (S.5377).

"It is not only essential that we work to actively promote our family farms, but that we also seek ways to make sure they continue to grow and prosper," said Senator David Carlucci, (D-Rockland/ Orange), said. "This package of legislation will provide the tools needed to support our farmers, promote locally grown agricultural products amd preserve our valuable farm land."

Promote

Increasing awareness of New York products would help open up new markets across the state and compete with out-of-state produce. The IDC proposes:

• Creating a tax incentive for restaurants who purchase produce from a farm participating in the Pride of New York program (S.4889). The credit would be for \$100 for every \$1,000 of produce purchased. This measure would not only result in more New York State produce being sold, but will also further promote the Pride in New York program.



businesses. Many of these bills provide new opportunities for the state's family farms, either through making the production of on-farm renewable energy more affordable, or providing new added value opportunities for agricultural crops, such as the farm brewery license. Encouraging growth in agriculture just makes sense for everyone who farms, lives, or eats in the state of New York".