



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## SENATE SEEKS RECORD FUNDING FOR AGRICULTURE

PATTY RITCHIE March 15, 2016

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State Senator Patty Ritchie announced that the Senate is once again seeking record budget funding to support New York's family farms, including plans to restore budget cuts by the Governor and Assembly and tax cuts that target relief to small- to mid-sized farms.

The Senate budget approved Monday restores cuts to dozens of agriculture programs that provide farmers with cutting-edge research to prevent plant and animal disease, improve productivity and boost farmers' bottom lines.

In addition, the Senate plan invests in ag education, supporting both students and their teachers, and includes funds to help create a new North Country Ag Academy to help inspire careers in farming, as well as tax cuts first outlined in the Senate's "Planting Seeds" 2016 farm initiative to help keep farms in the family, and more money in the pockets of hard-working farmers.

"Right now, New York's farmers are planning for the upcoming season and in government, we have to be looking ahead too for ways to strengthen our family farms and New York agriculture for the future," said Senator Ritchie, who chairs the Senate's Agriculture Committee.

"Our Senate budget once again makes clear our commitment to support family farmers and the vital role they play in creating jobs and strengthening rural economies all across New York State."

Highlights of the Senate budget plan include:

Restoring \$12 million in cuts that were included in the Governor's agriculture budget. The Senate restorations total \$9 million more than the Assembly's budget plan;

Increased funding for cutting-edge ag research into diseases, invasive pests and opportunities for farmers to expand into new crops and products to build their business, including funds for organizations with deep ties to Northern New York ag communities;

An income tax cut for small- to mid-sized family farms and agriculture businesses, and a reduction in the punitive Estate Tax to help keep farms in the family;

\$1 million for a third round of Beginning Farmer grants to help build start-up ag businesses and encourage careers in agriculture;

Increased investment in ag education, including record funding for school-based FFA, expanding a student loan forgiveness program for beginning farmers to also include ag educators, and \$200,000 to help launch a new BOCES-based North Country Ag Academy;

Restored funding for marketing programs for New York products, ranging from apples and berries to maple syrup and Christmas trees, and funding for buildings and improvements at county fairs across the state, and

Funding for a new “vets-to-Farms” program, being organized by Cornell University’s Small Farms Program, to connect veterans with farming and career opportunities.

“New York’s family farms are the backbone of our economy, and I am proud to stand up to support hard working family farmers and encouraging the growth of our state’s most important industry,” Senator Ritchie said.