



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

SENATE AG COMMITTEE DISCUSSES KEEPING FARMS 'IN THE FAMILY,' GROWING NEXT GENERATION OF AGRIBUSINESS OWNERS

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Smoothing the transition of family farms from one generation to the next and encouraging more people to enter into farming careers were the topics of discussion at Tuesday's Senate Agriculture Committee Meeting, which featured a presentation by the Executive Director of NY FarmNet.

Established 30 years ago, NY FarmNet provides farm families with a number of free services that help them to grow their businesses, including vital information about transitioning farms from one generation to the next. According to NY FarmNet, in the next decade, 60 percent of farms will transfer ownership to the next generation, making their services extremely important to the future of our state's agriculture industry.

"When I talk to farm families, one of the things that always comes up is succession planning, and the complications that often times occur when a parent is looking to retire and pass the operation on to the younger generation," said Senator Ritchie, who serves as Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

"Time and time again, farm families have pointed to the services provided by NY FarmNet as being critically important to smoothing that transition and making passing the business down to the next generation much easier. I'd like to thank NY FarmNet's Executive Director Ed Staehr for sharing information at today's meeting

that demonstrates just how important it is to keep supporting key programs—like FarmNet—that contribute to the success of our farm families and our state’s agriculture industry as a whole.”

During his presentation, Staehr spoke about how the organization’s mission has changed during its more than three decades, modifying its services to meet changes and growth in the industry.

“The majority of our calls were from a lot of farms that were selling out, and we were helping a lot of families get out of farming,” said Staehr, as he spoke about the early days of NY FarmNet.

“That has changed dramatically over time, because now, over 90 percent of the farm families we work with stay in business—and expand the businesses.”

In addition, Staehr also spoke about a recent study conducted by NY FarmNet that pointed to an increase in the number of women managing farming operations. A full video of Staehr’s presentation is available on Senator Ritchie’s website, www.ritchie.nysenate.gov.

In recent years, Senator Ritchie has made it a priority to advocate for funding for NY FarmNet, as well as other programs that help to support New York’s farm families. While funding for NY FarmNet was reduced in the Executive’s recent state budget proposal, Senator Ritchie successfully advocated for restoring and adding funding for a total of \$1.2 million in the final spending plan. This support was just part of record funding allocated in the new state budget to strengthen New York’s leading industry.