



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

Grant Program Helps Protect Farmland Across New York

JIM RANNEY January 22, 2018

| ISSUE: **FARMLAND PROTECTION**



Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma) is supporting a program to provide \$5.5 million to enhance farmland protection efforts throughout New York. Two new grant opportunities will help preserve viable farmland in agricultural production, protecting it from development and conversion to non-farm uses. The funding will also help farmers identify available land and expedite the process of permanently protecting agricultural properties through perpetual conservation easements.

"New York's number one industry is agriculture and we need to do all we can to protect and preserve valuable land for the next generation of farmers," Gallivan said. "These programs help ensure that our farmers have the land they need to produce the fresh food we all depend on and help sustain our agricultural economy by encouraging growth and job creation."

Under the state's farmland protection program, eligible applicants are encouraged to implement an *Option to Purchase a Perpetual Conservation Easement*, also called an Option Agreement Project. This Option Agreement Project will lay the groundwork for landowners interested in permanently protecting their farms by pre-determining the value of development rights.

This new initiative provides a total of \$5 million to eligible applicants, including municipalities, counties, soil and water conservation districts and land trusts. Grants of up to \$500,000 will be awarded to cover costs associated with obtaining and administering an Option Agreement Project.

This new funding opportunity builds on the State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program, which helps cover the costs of buying a perpetual conservation easement, ensuring that valuable farmland remains in agricultural production forever.

Since 2011, the State has invested more than \$62 million in 82 conservation projects statewide. The 2017-18 State Budget includes another \$20 million for the program, which will become available later this year.

Meanwhile, the new \$500,000 Land Trust Grants program was created to advance farmland protection strategies identified by counties and municipalities throughout the state. The program provides competitive grants of up to \$50,000 to land trusts. The funding will help

develop local inventories of viable farmland and inform landowners of programs and opportunities to protect their properties from conversion to non-farm uses. It will also help expand outreach efforts to better connect willing landowners with farmers interested in leasing or buying their properties for agricultural production.

More information about the application process is available on the Department of Agriculture and Markets website (www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html).