



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Senate Majority Passes Legislation To Promote New York's Agricultural Industry

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority today advanced legislation to promote better agricultural development and the accessibility of local goods for New York. The package would enable schools to source local goods better and aim for 15% of all food products purchased by state agencies to be New York based; expand the New York loan forgiveness program for young farmers; establish the office of urban agriculture; increase the number of farmers markets; develop educational materials for farmers on the use of agrivoltaics and promote co-locating solar power on active farmland; create a farming hotline with the Cornell cooperative extension as well as a New York State council on food policy, and increase the farm workforce retention credit. The proposed bills acknowledge the crucial role that local farms play in New York's sustainability and its future growth potential.

"New York is home to over 30,000 farms, with 98% of them being family-owned. Not only is the agricultural industry our main source of sustenance, it's also a foundational piece of New York's economy," **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. "Many farms have faced too many lean years and were unable to absorb recent economic downturns. A pervasive disconnect between producers and consumers has left many New Yorkers stranded in food deserts. This package will go a long way in decreasing that discrepancy while boosting farm growth. With a homegrown food supply as large as ours, every New Yorker should have access to quality local food. I thank our Agriculture Chair, Senator Hinchey, and the bill sponsors for advancing this crucial legislation and look forward to continuing to support New York farmers."

Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and bill sponsor, Senator Michelle Hinchey said, "Protecting our agricultural economy, and the farmers and farm businesses that support it, is a priority in the New York State Senate. This robust legislative package that we've passed today is a testament to the far-reaching work of the Senate Agriculture Committee and showcases our commitment to the industry by bolstering access to fresh, healthy food for all New Yorkers, providing assistance to new and seasoned farmers alike, and strengthening agriculture's impact in the fight against the climate crisis. I'm proud of this slate of bills that will bring meaningful and direct support to our small and mid-size farmers across the state and thank my colleagues for their partnership in passing these bills today."

The legislation passed by the Senate Majority, includes:

- **Farm Workforce Retention Credit Increase:** This bill, [S.3502A](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, increases the amount of the farm workforce retention credit from \$600 to \$1,200 per farm employee for tax years 2021 through 2025.
- **New York State Food Products:** This bill, [S.6808A](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, aims to increase the market for New York's agricultural industry's products by setting goals for procurement of local foods by state agencies and facilities.
- **The Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Act:** This bill, [S.4082](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, expands eligibility for the New York State Young Farmer Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program. This bill removes the requirement that the eligible person graduated college in the last two years and expands eligibility to farmers who have produced agricultural products for less than ten years.
- **The One-Stop Farming Hotline:** This bill, [S.4072](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, establishes a farming hotline, with assistance from the Cornell Cooperative Extension. The hotline provides information on all aspects of farming including tax credit programs, beginning farmer loans, and sustainable practices.
- **The Office of Urban Agriculture:** This bill, [S.8059A](#), sponsored by Senator Jamaal Bailey, establishes the office of Urban Agriculture to assist and promote different forms of urban farming across the state. The bill also requires the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets to convene an urban agriculture task force to develop ways to encourage and expand urban agriculture to bridge the gap between urban agricultural businesses and urban food insecurity.
- **Locally Sourced Goods For Schools:** This bill, [S.3974](#), sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, makes it easier for schools to procure a variety of local agricultural products into their food services.
- **Produce Produced In State:** This bill, [S.2199](#), sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, directs the Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop and facilitate regional farmers markets to promote the direct marketing of farm products to large volume purchasers.
- **Agrivoltaics In Farming Education:** This bill, [S.7861](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, directs the Department of Agriculture and Markets to provide guidance and educational materials on the benefits of co-locating solar power systems on active farmland for crop production. This bill also requires the Department to provide a booth at the state fair which will help educate the public on agrivoltaics in farming.
- **The Local Food, Fams, and Jobs Act:** This bill, [S.549B](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr., creates the New York State Council on Food Policy to develop state food policies with the goal of ensuring that all New Yorkers are able to eat a healthy diet and avoid food insecurity while consuming New York grown foods as much as possible.
- **Farmers Markets in State Parks:** This bill, [S.5006](#), sponsored by Senator Jose Serrano, permits farmers markets in state and local parks. This bill will increase access to locally grown food products.

Bill Sponsor, Senator Jamaal Bailey, said, “Urban agriculture is the future of the fight against food insecurity. From the Bronx to Mount Vernon, this crucial legislation will help advance sustainability and resiliency, promote job creation, and improve access to low-cost, locally sourced food across the state. All New Yorkers should be able to easily access affordable fresh food, regardless of where they live. This bill will create the Office of Urban Agriculture to promote urban farming and serve our communities with a myriad of health, educational, environmental, economic, and social benefits for years to come. I want to thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins and my colleagues in the State Senate for their commitment to a healthier and more sustainable New York.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Tim Kennedy, said, “By advancing this package of bills, New York is doubling down on its commitment to support locally sourced products, and creating new opportunities to make healthy, nutritious food more accessible to communities statewide. I'm grateful to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing our agriculture industry, and for integrating these reforms into a broader vision for success as we work to build back New York.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Rachel May, said, “I am proud to join my colleagues in supporting New York’s agriculture. These bills help to forge better connections between our farms and local consumers, boost the farm workforce, advance urban agriculture, and support farmers in many other ways. My bill, S.7861, addresses the concerns that solar farms are displacing food farms, by promoting ways to combine green energy production and food production while protecting our priceless soils and the rich agricultural history of this state. By helping farmers meet their on-site electricity demands, the use of agrivoltaics also offsets the ever-rising costs of production and labor on farms.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator James Sanders Jr., said, “New York State has a diverse agricultural market and residents should be taking advantage of the wonderful food that is grown right here at home. They would be eating fresh produce as part of a healthy diet while at the same time helping local farmers to thrive.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Jose Serrano, said, “The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted stark health disparities and led to a steep rise in food insecurity for people across our state. Promoting farmers markets in state and local parks will not only benefit agriculture in New York, but will also increase access to fresh, healthy, locally sourced food.”

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