



NEWS FROM NEW YORK FARM BUREAU

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NEW YORK FARM BUREAU MEMBERS HOST POPULAR ALBANY RECEPTION AND LOBBY DAY TO ADVOCATE FOR STATE PRIORITIES

Albany – Farmers from across the state spent two days in Albany this week visiting with lawmakers on March 6-7 to highlight New York Farm Bureau’s public policy priorities for the year. They kicked things off with the popular Taste of New York Reception at the Empire State Plaza for state lawmakers, commissioners and staff. Nearly 90 county Farm Bureaus and agricultural organizations hosted tables featuring local farm products for people to sample. New York Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli and Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan were among the many dignitaries who attended the event.

Following the evening reception, more than 250 members participated in the annual lobby day on March 7 where they met with both their local Senators and Assembly members. The county Farm Bureaus also visited with their “adopted” lawmakers who represent the New York City area. In addition, NYFB’s executive committee met personally with legislative leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Flanagan and the Chairs of the Agriculture Committees, Senator Patty Ritchie and Assemblyman Bill Magee.

“We had record participation for our Taste of New York reception and Lobby Day this year. The high turnout is a testament to our organization’s strong grassroots support, and it demonstrates the value our members place in meeting to face-to-face with their elected officials,” said David Fisher, New York Farm Bureau President.

The state priorities for the organization include securing a refundable investment tax credit for farmers. With 2015 farm income down nearly 20 % to \$5.3 billion across the state, according to the latest figures from the National Agriculture Statistics Service, it is important that tools be in place to help farmers weather the downturn. This initiative would incentivize farm investment to meet the needs of global competition.

In addition, farmers pushed to double the minimum wage tax credit from \$30 million to \$60 million. The first step of the minimum wage hike climbed at the beginning of the year on its way to \$15 for farms on Long Island and \$12.50 for upstate farmers. NYFB led the way in opposition to the hike last year, resulting in a \$250 tax credit per employee for this first year of

the increase. That will cover only a small fraction of what it will cost family farms to implement the wage hike.

State funding for critical farm programs is another top priority for Farm Bureau. The Governor included a number of things in his budget plan which would help agriculture in the state. This includes funding for the Environmental Protection Fund, which will assist farms with water quality, conservation and farmland protection programs, as well as necessary investments into animal health programs. Farm Bureau also asked lawmakers to restore funding for promotion and research programs that also benefit agriculture. NYFB also supports the Governor's proposed \$2 billion clean water infrastructure program that includes \$70 million for nutrient management and conservation programs to reduce farm runoff.

The Farm to Food Bank Bill is another top priority for NYFB members who have seen the Governor veto the popular legislation the past two years. Members asked their lawmakers to include the tax credit that encourages greater fresh food donations to regional food banks and local food pantries to be included in their one-house budget bills.

These priorities are based on member-approved public policies that originate every year at the county Farm Bureau level and are passed by the full delegate body at New York Farm Bureau's State Annual Meeting in December.

In addition to advocating for priorities with lawmakers, members also participated in a special panel discussion with the Commissioners from the Departments of Agriculture and Markets, Environmental Conservation and Labor. Members asked the public officials questions about a number of issues facing the state's family farms.

"Our organization is grateful for the time our members spent off their farms to advocate on these important issues in Albany. The Board of Directors would like to thank them for their efforts. In addition, New York Farm Bureau appreciates the time lawmakers and staff spent meeting with their constituents. The relationships we have built on both sides of the aisle serve our members well as legislators make policy decisions in Albany that impact every farmer in this state," said Fisher.