



New York Farm Bureau

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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

H.R. 2642 —Agriculture Act of 2014—“Farm Bill”

Date: January 28, 2014

New York Farm Bureau, the state’s largest general agricultural advocacy organization, urges your support of the Farm Bill, as reported by the conference committee. The *Agricultural Act of 2014* has many improved provisions that will help New York farmers and consumers.

Dairy—This bill adopts a dairy margin insurance program that dairy farmers have been asking for to replace the inadequate safety net of the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program. This was one of our top priorities for this Farm Bill. NYFB believes the negotiated dairy program is a stronger safety net to help dairy farmers of all sizes when they need it. This program does provide special consideration for smaller dairy farms, those under 200 cows, by making higher levels of protection more affordable.

Crop Insurance Protection—Providing expanded crop insurance options and addressing the needs of underserved crops was also a priority in this Farm Bill and the conference report provides for broader protection and a stronger safety net for New York’s fruit and vegetable producers and diversified operations. It allows for a buy-up option of the Non-insured Assistance Program (NAP) for crops that do not have available crop insurance programs. It will also provide fruit growers whose crops were destroyed by the 2012 early frost a retroactive NAP program option to help recover from those losses.

Specialty Crop Research and Support—Just as important as protection is the research that allows our specialty crop farmers to address cultivation and marketing challenges. The Specialty Crop Block Grants, Specialty Crop Research Initiative, National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative, Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives, and the Maple Promotion Program will all help farmers meet challenges today and in the future.

Disaster Assistance—Reauthorizes agricultural disaster assistance programs for trees and livestock, including the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) and Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP). These programs expired in 2012 and provide valuable assistance to farmers in the case of natural disasters.

Conservation—The bill streamlines many conservation programs so they can more effectively be used by states and landowners to protect the environment. Essential programs to New York, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and farmland protection programs are extended in the bill and will continue to help farmers protect New York’s rural landscapes.

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Rural Development—A variety of programs in the Farm Bill will help rural communities, from broadband deployment to water system development. Several programs also provide grants and loans for rural business development, including value-added producer grants and rural microentrepreneur assistance. These opportunities will help the rural areas in the state and encourage residents to build and diversify their businesses, including farmers.

Farm to Consumer Programs—New York has been working on better ways to move food from the farm to the consumers who need it and many programs supported by NYFB have been reauthorized and expanded in the Farm Bill. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program will continue to provide fresh produce to low-income students at school, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program will still provide this at-risk population with access to farm products, and the Farmers Market Promotion Program has been expanded to include Local Food projects, which could now help develop new food hubs and the aggregation, distribution and transportation infrastructure we need.

Beginning Farmer Support—The Farm Bill supports Beginning Farm Development programs and will provide these new farmers a discount on crop insurance and credit opportunities to start their businesses.

These are just some of the many programs in the Farm Bill that will support New York's agriculture, rural communities and food systems for the next five years. Passage of this bill will allow critical programs in this bill to move forward and improvements to be implemented.

For these reasons, New York Farm Bureau requests that you support this bill and vote in favor of the Farm Bill.

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