



New York Farm Bureau • 159 Wolf Road P.O. Box 5330 • Albany, New York 12205 • (518) 436-8495 Fax: (518) 431-5656

NEWS FROM NEW YORK FARM BUREAU

Contact: Steve Ammerman, Manager of Public Affairs
518-431-5643 (Office) 518-573-3617 (Cell), sammerman@nyfb.org

For immediate Release:

September 11, 2015

PRESIDENT NORTON'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNOR CUOMO'S \$15 MINIMUM WAGE PROPOSAL

“New York Farm Bureau has serious concerns about Governor Cuomo’s proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$15. Farmers in New York are already at a competitive disadvantage compared to those with lower labor costs in other states. They cannot make up the increased spending by simply raising prices because they are competing in a global market where supply and demand dictate what consumers pay. For example, if Michigan growers can offer cheaper apples to grocery stores that is what largely will be purchased on the open market. In turn, New York farms will be forced to absorb the higher labor costs. For those who sell directly to consumers, higher food prices will become the norm.

In general, farms in New York already pay more than the current minimum wage. According to the USDA, the average agriculture wage rate in the state is \$12.15. Upping the minimum wage would lift all farm wages. A worker who already earns a higher hourly rate based on experience and time on the farm would still expect a higher salary than those who are newly hired. This proposal would likely force the average wage rate well above the \$15 mark.

The impact will be clear. We have already seen farmers, who can afford it, turn to automation to milk cows and harvest crops in order to reduce labor costs. This trend will only be exacerbated by an extreme minimum wage hike thereby shrinking the agricultural workforce across New York. The wage hike will also be a bigger barrier for smaller farms who are interested in hiring new employees to grow their businesses. This will ultimately be bad news for the rural economy that depends on agriculture as its bread and butter,” said Dean Norton, New York Farm Bureau President.

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New York Farm Bureau is the State's largest agricultural lobbying/trade organization. Its members and the public know the organization as "The Voice of New York Agriculture." New York Farm Bureau is dedicated to solving the economic and public policy issues challenging the agricultural community.