

Tioga County Legislature Proclaims March Agriculture Month

By: Miranda Palmer

Nearly two weeks ago, a large rodent peered out of his den to tell us that spring was right around the corner. When Punxsutawney Phil appeared, he didn't see his shadow, so as tradition tells us spring will arrive six weeks early. Though Phil doesn't have a great track record, only being right about 39% of the time, spring comes early every year for the agriculture industry. Farmers across the state, and the county are dusting off equipment, and making preparations for a busy upcoming planting season. March brings a promise of blue skies, greening grass, and birds singing. What better month to celebrate agriculture, the industry that is responsible for feeding, clothing, and providing shelter to our community than March!

The Tioga County Legislature agreed, and on February 11, 2020, at the Legislative Workgroup meeting they presented an official proclamation to Tioga County Farm Bureau President Cub Frisbie and Newark Valley FFA Chapter members Mara Skellett, Madison Peabody, and Joree Gregrow. New York is a leading agricultural state with a \$5.75 billion revenue in 2017. According to the 2017 Ag Census, there were 33,438 farms in New York and 6,866,171 acres in production. New York Farm Bureau boasts that the agriculture sector is responsible for employing around 55,000 people throughout the state, and nearly 200,000 people are involved in other sectors of agriculture employment.

The importance and awareness of agriculture in our community continues to grow. This year, two new Future Farmer of America (FFA) Chapters were added, one at Tioga Central School District, and one at Owego Apalachin Central School District. Newark Valley FFA Advisor and Agriculture teacher Greg Schweiger was honored to have his FFA members and students involved in the proclamation stating, "Agriculture education is important because it encourages students to think critically about how and where our food is produced. It is key for them to see first-hand the support of agriculture in our community, and this proclamation from the County Legislature is a great illustration of that." Schweiger continued that, "In addition to the multitude of hands on learning activities that agriculture education provides, it also empowers and inspires students to learn in ways that are different than the traditional classrooms. Agriculture education also serves as a means to promote career exploration in the many fields that the agriculture sector has to offer." Newark Valley FFA Reporter Joree Gregrow added "Not everyone realizes how important agriculture is until someone informs them how much agriculture fills the community. I feel that March should be proclaimed Agriculture Month because everyone should be informed about the agriculture world and be aware of how agriculture is performed. People need to understand the importance or how much agriculture is involved in everyday life."

So, during the month of March, I challenge you to celebrate Agriculture in our community. Join us in recognizing the importance of our food, the agriculture industry, and those who support the agriculture industry. You can do this by thanking a farmer for providing the food we eat, support them by visiting them at their storefronts or at a local farmers market. Give a friendly wave to the log truck driver you pass. Be patient when you get stuck behind a tractor hauling manure to spread valuable nutrients on their crop fields. Thank your local agriculture teacher for giving our youth the tools and knowledge to be successful in such a diverse and important industry. Give compliment to the agencies throughout the county that promote the preservation of our natural resources and assist our local producers be environmentally conscious, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Farm Service Agency, National Resource Conservation Service, and the Soil and Water Conservation District. To all of you, Thank You!



The proclamation being read at the Tioga County Legislative Workshop Meeting on February 11, 2020.



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