

Infrastructure and Rural Life

Supporting the Needs of Rural Communities



New York Farm Bureau • 159 Wolf Rd., Suite 300, Albany, NY 12205 • 1-800-342-4143 • <http://www.nyfb.org>

ROADS, BRIDGES, WATERWAYS:

Farmers rely on roads, bridges, waterways, locks and dams and seaports to get their goods to market both here in the U.S. and abroad. However, deteriorating rural infrastructure, greatly impacts the health and well-being of rural New Yorkers as well as the competitiveness of New York agriculture. Without safe and reliable infrastructure, production and transportation costs rise, trucks drive greater distances using more fuel, and the risk of food spoiling in trucks, railyards, and ports increases.

NYFB supports the development of a long-range national transportation policy that views transportation as a holistic system servicing the needs of both passengers and freight across all modes and recognizes the importance of connectivity between modes. We support more allocation of funds for the maintenance and improvement of our transportation infrastructure, including:

- Farm-to-market roads;
- Rural highways;
- The lock and dam system and waterways;
- Railroad systems;
- Pipelines; and
- General aviation airports.

Action: Support funding for infrastructure investment in rural communities and America's roadways, bridges, and waterways.



RURAL BROADBAND:

Access to affordable and reliable broadband is critical to modern agricultural practices and the quality of life for rural New Yorkers. Technological advances are relying more and more on connectivity, which makes it increasingly imperative to close the digital divide between rural and urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of increased access to broadband not only for rural health care including telehealth, but also for education and farming. Now, more than ever, broadband is a necessity.

- 26.4% of rural Americans lack access to fixed broadband compared to only 1.7% of urban Americans (FCC).
- The 2017 Ag Census reported that 76% of New York farmers have internet access. The primary method for internet access on New York farms is cable (35%) and DSL (30%) followed by mobile, satellite, and dial-up.

In rural America, broadband services increase economic development through new business opportunities. Farmers are better able to communicate with current and prospective customers as well to market and sell their products. Precision agriculture also relies on broadband services so farmers can manage efficient, economical, and environmentally conscious businesses.

Action: Support legislation which provides funding and access to all portions of rural communities. It's also important to improve the accuracy of broadband coverage maps and better direct federal funds for broadband buildout.

RURAL LIFE

Rural communities play an important role in New York's economy as they are home to most farmers and agri-businesses. The current pandemic, challenging weather, destructive pests, trade disputes, labor shortages and market volatility over the past few years have brought an unprecedented level of pressure on America's farmers. A 2019 Farm Bureau survey shows that an overwhelming majority of farmers and farmworkers say financial issues, farm or business problems and fear of losing their farm negatively impact their mental health. It is critically important that resources are provided to rural communities in the form of mental health services including programs like FarmNet in New York.

Action: Support increased funding and access to mental health services in rural America, reduce the stigma surrounding the topic of mental health, and provide relevant information to farm families on this important topic.