



## 2022 Governor's Candidate Agricultural Issue Survey

**1) Due to the land requirements for most types of agriculture, farms are typically located in more rural areas of the state. Given that a great number of New York lawmakers represent urban and suburban districts that may not have agricultural operations within their borders, how do you plan to help educate and influence urban/suburban representative's votes on legislation that impacts agriculture?**

I strongly believe that the Governor of New York should be the Governor for all New Yorkers. Over the past few decades, we have unfortunately seen the "three persons in a room" mentality take over government in New York State. As part of my Reform Albany plan, I intend to put that practice behind us. The Legislature should be required to much more actively utilize the conference committee process between the two houses to organize its deliberations, set priorities, and reach agreement on a budget. I believe this would encourage discussion throughout the rest of the Legislative session as well. Unfortunately, it seems that the three persons in a room are not taking the process very seriously. For example, the first and only public meeting that is on the Conference's website is a 15 minute long meeting from March 14th to discuss the Executive Budget.

As Governor, I would insist that the Legislature take this process seriously. Specifically, I would offer the Budget Director and other high level Administration officials to testify in front of the Committee so New Yorkers can get a better sense of where and how their elected officials are working for them. This would allow rank and file Legislators to get more involved in the budget process, including representatives from rural districts.

I would also actively work with all members of the Legislature to ensure that priorities from every corner of the state are being taken into consideration. Too often, we see certain parts of the state receive more attention than others. As Governor, I would work tirelessly to ensure that New Yorkers from every corner of this state feel they have sufficient representation in Albany and their concerns and grievances are heard loud and clear.

I would actively travel to rural parts of the state to bring government directly to the farmers as opposed to requiring farmers to figure out how to deliver their priorities to Albany. It is important we have experts in agriculture serving in policy making positions in state government. We need state agencies to understand and advocate for farming. I will also ensure that my office maintains an open door for farmers to share their ideas and concerns.

**2) It is no secret that the farm economy continues to struggle, with sky rocketing diesel and fertilizer costs, labor, both in New York and across the nation. What**

**steps would you take to support farmers to help them continue to produce food to feed the residents of this state?**

First and foremost, lowering the overtime threshold for farm workers from 60 hours per week to 40 hours per week will further burden New York's hard working farmers and hinder their ability to get workers for their farms, and compete with other states for business. New York should have laws that benefit and help our citizens, not ones that hurt them and encourage people to do business elsewhere.

Whether it's the supply chain crisis or the cost of inflation, energy, or more, the struggles of operating a farm have continued to be driven up. Think about the cost of utilities, the price of diesel – how much more expensive it is to transport these goods. This overtime rule will only add insult to injury and these are all costs that are going to be passed on to the consumer made up of everyday New Yorkers who are already struggling to put food on the table.

These farmers are still operating from the same pot of money before and after this overtime rule. That means they will need to cut hours, switch their business to less labor-intensive goods, move to those that are machine oriented, or pack up and start over again in another state that values their work. This rule is bad for New York and it's bad for our farmers, and as Governor, I would immediately work to reverse the ruling and decision.

Secondly, the ill advised ban on the safe extraction of natural resources in our state is further causing a strain on the agricultural industry. For example, many farms use diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) as fertilizer. As you probably know, DEF is made of high-purity synthetic urea deionized water. Urea is manufactured synthetically by reacting natural gas with several other elements. By prohibiting New York from tapping into its own resources, they are hiking up the prices of fertilizer and other critical resources needed to run any business, but specifically a farm.

**3) New York farmers depend on the use of a wide range of pesticides to protect their crops from insect damage and disease. Do you support efforts to restrict farm access to such products? How would you ensure the continued safe use on farms?**

New York has some of the strictest regulations in the nation. This rampant overregulation serves only to crush local businesses and families and drive them out of the state. The latest legislation (S. 8378-A/A. 9079-A), which allows local governments to further regulate pesticides in addition to the DEC and EPA, is a clear example of this mindset. This extraordinary expansion and decentralization is just another burden on farmers who will now have to deal with thousands of different local restrictions across their business and properties.

I strongly believe we must protect and preserve the environment. That stewardship goes hand in hand with protecting commerce in our regional economies where so many

jobs and small businesses depend on family farms, scenic parks, clean water and wineries to attract visitors and economic growth. However, this must be done in a way that supports the agricultural industry, rather than kneecap hard working farmers who play such a vital role in our economy and the supply chain. As Governor, I will work tirelessly to ensure that all impacted stakeholders are heard as we work to cut unnecessary red tape and develop more efficient, streamlined protections for our state's agricultural industry.

**4) Farmers rely a great deal on the land-grant research and extension activities of Cornell University, as well as the State Colleges specializing in agriculture such as Cobleskill and Morrisville. How do you envision this system continuing in the future for the provision of practical research and extension activities to farmers and the general public and educating future generations of farmers and agribusiness leaders?**

Knowledge is power and research is critical in any industry to ensure that businesses continue to grow and become more successful. Throughout my time in Congress, I have consistently supported funding for research through the SUNY system on a wide range of issues and topics, specifically partnering with Stony Brook University. There is also a Cornell Cooperative Extension in Riverhead, New York, which is in my Congressional District that I have worked closely with. As Governor, I would continue to support funding for research at educational institutions, such as Stony Brook University and other SUNY, CUNY, Community Colleges and private institutions.

I also believe there are incredible opportunities for SUNY, CUNY, and Community Colleges to partner with local businesses and farmers to help bridge the divide between education and employment. For example, local businesses, farmers, or other agricultural heavy employers could partner with colleges like SUNY Cobleskill and/or Morrisville to provide equipment, experts (professors), and career coaching for students going through an agriculture program. Once those students are finished with the program, they will have real life experience, working connections, and employment opportunities.

**5) New York farms rely upon smaller, targeted programs in the Agriculture and Markets section of the state budget to promote and market New York products, perform applied research for innovation and to work with farmers under stress. These programs have been and continue to be acutely vulnerable to state budget reductions. What are your views on providing appropriate budget funding for these programs?**

Millions of New Yorkers rely on the vital efforts of New York's farmers for food each day. Failing to support New York's farmers not only hinders their ability to succeed and compete with other states for business, but also sees increased costs passed on to the consumer made up of everyday New Yorkers who are already struggling to put food on the table. This has been abundantly clear the past few years with the various challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, supply chain issues, and inflation.

Unfortunately, New York has been plagued by an Albany-knows-best mindset that has failed to appropriately address concerns from all New Yorkers, including those whose livelihoods depend on the agricultural industry. The lack of support for our farmers has led to a ripple effect of a higher cost of living for not only farmers, but all New Yorkers who would very much like to choose to buy local, but can't because our agricultural industry is not supported enough. As I mentioned earlier, the Governor of New York should actively work to serve all New Yorkers, and as Governor, working with our farmers to ensure they have the resources they need to thrive in New York State would be one of my top priorities.

**6) Transitioning to renewable energy sources is a large goal for New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Although implementing large projects, such as solar, furthers the state's climate goals, and presents financial opportunities for landowners, it produces challenges to farmers who need land to grow crops and raise livestock. How do you plan to balance the opportunities found in solar installation and thus renewable energy while also protecting agricultural farmland and our greater agricultural food system?**

First and foremost, I believe the Climate Act's goals are not achievable without tremendous pain for people who can least afford it. The Climate Act is costly as it is and, without the infrastructure and technology in place around the state already, I'm afraid everyday New Yorkers are going to bear the brunt of the ramifications. Instead of mandating New Yorkers use certain types of energy, they should give New Yorkers the choice to choose what is best for them.

I believe in an all of the above energy strategy, which would include safely tapping into our very own resources in the Southern Tier and other parts of the state, expediting pipeline applications, and encouraging renewable energy when it's appropriate. Throughout my time traveling the state, I have heard from far too many New Yorkers about their concerns with certain renewable energy projects and how the State is not taking their concerns seriously. As Governor, I believe it is of the utmost importance that the communication is there between the state and the communities these projects are proposed to serve. No community should have a project forced on them which will make their way of life worse. That is why I believe residents deserve to have weighted input in any decisions when it comes to implementing energy plans in their communities, including when it comes to renewable energy.