

## **Marcus Molinaro**

What do you think is the largest issue facing farmers in this district? What solutions would you seek?

**It all comes down to costs. Rising input costs force farmers to push costs onto consumers or to decrease their margins. Milk prices are regulated beyond their control and any input costs must be absorbed.**

**The Farm Laborers Wage Board's recommendation to lower the overtime threshold to forty hours was made despite ample evidence of the negative effects it will have. The overtime cap must be repealed.**

**Inflation is driving up costs too- from fertilizer to electric to diesel- exacerbating already slim margins. Fertilizer prices are high due to our reliance on foreign nations to produce chemicals like ammonia and nitrogen. We must consider clean energy options like nuclear and minimize solar impact on viable farmland and farmers that lease their land.**

**Steps must be taken toward addressing the high costs of labor and energy, and essential supplies, by relieving regulatory burdens and preventing bad policy.**

One of the biggest challenges for New York agriculture is having access to reliable, skilled labor when domestic workers cannot meet this need. Delays in the H-2A program have frustrated farmers and led to loss of crops and unknown legal status of current workers are all concerns that farmers have when it comes to a dependable workforce. How do you see Congress moving forward to address agricultural immigration in a bipartisan manner?

**With the consideration of a Farm Bill next year, Congress must use this opportunity to build a consensus on H-2A visa issues. In Congress, I will seek to serve on the Agriculture Committee to ensure Upstate farmers have a loud voice during these deliberations. The worker shortage has led to increased labor costs and consumer price increases. More H-2A visas would ease the burden on farmers to find help and stabilize prices. Beyond that, granting some visa holders permanent status would help industries like dairy which can't rely on seasonal workers. Small and large businesses across the country are facing worker shortages and there is a growing bi-partisan consensus to address it. In Dutchess, our county is a mix of rural and urban and I have worked to bridge that gap so that each may benefit the other. I will work with anyone honest and earnest about solving this problem.**

Despite growing and raising diverse agricultural products in New York, farmers still face challenges in getting food from the rural areas of our farms to the suburban and urban locations of so many consumers. What would you do to help bridge this divide? What efforts would you take to ensure farmers are able to have reliable markets for their goods?

**I was raised on food stamps. I know the Farm Bill from the food & nutrition side as well as the agriculture side. We can better connect those two items and ensure those receiving government assistance have access to fresh, local, and healthy food. Part of that means producing and getting food from rural areas to dense urban areas. Our young people have been pushed away from blue-collar jobs and this has hurt the agriculture and trucking industry tremendously. We must prioritize vocational and agricultural education to create pathways for blue-collar jobs for our children.**

**Over-regulation doesn't help either. I have joined Albany lawmakers in support of re-introducing 2% and whole milk in schools. This ban took away healthy and filling options and pushed kids towards sugary drinks. This is just one example of lawmakers restricting the obvious and easy local food pipeline option for schools.**

Farmers are known as stewards of the land, and agriculture plays a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through conservation practices and renewable energy. As Congress works to address climate change, how will you ensure that agriculture is part of the conversation?

**As Dutchess County Executive, we have preserved over 8,000 acres of farmland and open space through a public-private partnership to purchase development rights. This injects cash into the farm operation, brings down assessment values, and guarantees the land is preserved forever. The federal government can provide funding to local municipalities to replicate this program and ensure the preservation of farmland across Upstate and the nation.**

**Upstate New York's electrical generation is 92% emission-free coming from nuclear, hydro, and solar. We are practicing what others preach and we cannot unfairly punish our farmers for the failure of others to adapt. Farmers can act as conservation partners and provide land for clean energy production but must not bear the brunt of unnecessary agricultural regulatory burdens.**