

# 2023 Farm Bill Listening Session

## Binghamton, NY- April 14, 2023

### David Fisher, NYFB President

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#### Opening Comments:

Thank you to Chairman Thompson and Representative Molinaro for hosting this Farm Bill listening session in New York to gather input from New York farmers as we look to the 2023 Farm Bill. My name is David Fisher, and I'm the President of New York Farm Bureau as well as a dairy farmer in Madrid, New York.

I have the pleasure to represent over 33,000 farmers across the state of New York. New York is truly unique due to the nature of agricultural products that are grown and made including livestock, dairy, specialty crops, row crops, and aquaculture, but also the interactions with urban areas of the state, including one of the largest markets in the world, New York City. The Farm Bill provides a critical safety net to New York farmers as well as provides critical resources to ensure the longevity of the agriculture industry.

As Congress drafts the 2023 Farm Bill, there are several overarching priorities that I wish to highlight. As farmers continue to face increased input costs, supply chain issues, and inflation, it is critical to protect current Farm Bill baseline spending and ensure that funds are maintained for agriculture programs. Risk management tools, whether for row crop producers, dairy, specialty crop growers or others are critically important and should be top funding priority. In addition, funding for USDA staffing capacity and technical assistance is vital to ensuring the continued operation of programs. Here in New York, there had been issues with recruiting and maintaining the vital workforce needed to administer programs.

*I know others have given remarks on the dairy programs and needed changes so my focus will be on other priorities that are essential to New York farmers.*

Conservation programs are essential to assisting farmers to implement conservation plans on their farms to not only protect environmental resources but also ensure the viability of the farm operation. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program or EQIP is able to provide funds to help farmers implement conservation programs on their operations. In New York, farmers have utilized EQIP on 25,600 acres. In addition, the conservation title provides funds for continued conservation program investment, farmland protection, and regional watershed program investments. Farmers are also committed to working with Congress to address climate change initiatives in the Farm Bill that will support farmers through voluntary climate-focused conservation practice adoption.

New York is one of the most diverse states for specialty crop production, and risk management tools like the Whole Farm Revenue Protection Program as well as NAP remain the primary option for these growers. We ask that Whole Farm remain a pilot program and that coverage levels for NAP be expanded to provide better coverage to producers.

Funding for research and marketing of specialty crops is also imperative to the success of our producers. Increased funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant and Extension services help our farmers manage disease and pest infestation, develop and grow varieties suited to our growing conditions in the Northeast and allow our farmers to remain competitive.

In summary, I want to briefly highlight other priority items that farmers have spoken with me about including continued funding for agricultural research and education, resources for organic production, trade programs that increase marketing of U.S. agricultural programs, credit and loan programs that are keep pace with current farmland prices, support and assistance for new, beginning and urban farmers, as well as ensuring rural development programs, including broadband access, meet the needs of rural communities.

Thank you again to the Chairman and Rep. Molinaro for hosting these hearings, and I look forward to working towards a 2023 Farm Bill that meets the diverse needs of New York farmers.