

Jefferson County Farm Bureau

February 2026



To Serve and Strengthen Agriculture



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

As we forge ahead into the new year, I wish you, your farm families and your businesses a productive and successful year ahead.

I'm thrilled to announce that New York Farm Bureau has officially reached our goal of 9,650 voting members! This milestone could not have come at a better time. It demonstrates that our grassroots organization continues to find meaningful pathways to success and creates significant impact in the agricultural community. The more members we have, the stronger our collective voice becomes in shaping the future of agriculture.

As most of our members' renewal dates fell in December, I want to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who renewed. You may not always see it firsthand, but your membership and support are incredibly valuable to our agricultural community,

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Jefferson County Farm Bureau Board of Directors

President: Kyle Hafemann	315-778-6457
Vice President: Michael Kiechle	315-778-8110
2nd Vice President: Fred Matthews..	315-658-2351
Past President: Devon Shelmidine..	315-486-8959
P&E Chair: Tedra Bean.....	315-783-7067
YF&R CHAIR: Joseph Canzonier	N/A
Jay Canzonier	315-523-0760
Kirby Klock	315-405-9723
Jay Matteson	315-783-2251
Adam Miner.....	315-775-3774
Austin Weaver	607-592-3149
County Manager: John Wagner	315-761-9770
NYFB County Support Offices:	
Jill Williamson.....	518-431-5670
Felicia Dougherty	518-431-5650

Jefferson County Farm Bureau meets on the first Wednesday of each month (except June and December) at SN Partners in Watertown.

NYFB Taste of New York and Lobby Day

New York Farm Bureau hosted its annual Taste of NY Reception at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center, bringing together Farm Bureau members, public officials, and agricultural partners to highlight the diversity of New York agriculture.

Lobby Day followed the next day, giving members the chance to meet with legislators and advocate for agriculture priorities voted on at the State Annual Meeting.

Pictured (Top Right): Jefferson County Farm Bureau booth at Taste of New York featuring maple cotton candy courtesy of Sugar Daddies Maple and cheese curds provided by Great Lakes Cheese. From l-r: Jefferson County Farm Bureau member Austin Weaver, Assemblymember Scott Gray, Jefferson County Farm Bureau members Devon Shelmidine and Adam Miner.

Pictured (Bottom Right): Jefferson County Farm Bureau members, along with Morrisville Collegiate Farm Bureau members met with NYS Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman on Lobby Day and presented her with a Farmers Voice Award for her positive voting record toward agricultural legislation. From l-r: Isabella Esposito (Morrisville); Devon Shelmidine, Austin Weaver, Assemblymember Hyndman, Adam Miner, Hailey Lincoln Williamson (Morrisville).



2026 New York Farm Bureau Legislative Priorities

Below are the New York Farm Bureau 2026 Legislative Priorities. These priorities are a culmination of the grassroots efforts which began last fall at county annual meetings and culminated at the State Convention held in December. These priorities reflect the collective interest of our members and rural communities and will determine the focus of our advocacy discussion and action for the year ahead.

- **Support** critical funding for current agricultural animal health, promotion, research, and environmental programs in the final FY 26/27 state budget.
- **Support** for a significant funding investment in the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Science to forward its mission of collegiate agricultural education, research, and extension.
- **Extend** the refundable investment tax credit and allow construction costs for farmworker housing to be eligible for the tax credit.
- **Move** the administration of product marketing and research orders from Empire State Development to the Department of Agriculture and Markets.
- **Remove** the requirement for overtime payment on the weekly consecutive 24-hour rest period when total work hours are still below the overtime threshold.
- **Support** legislation that would develop a Clean Fuel Standard.
- **Support** funding for the NY Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health to do research and promote education on temperature-related working conditions before any legislation (such as the Temperature Extreme Mitigation Program Act) is passed.
- **Support** the exemption of agricultural businesses from Extended Producer Responsibility legislation until a cost-effective and practical agricultural recycling program is established and funded by the state.
- **Support** mandating that fire, rescue, library, and other ad valorem taxing districts use agricultural assessment values when calculating property taxes.
- **Support** renewable energy policies that incorporate common-sense timeframes for adoption based upon grid capacity and support for the use of other energy sources including nuclear. Strongly oppose all-electric mandates and bans on the use of propane, wood burning, oil, or natural gas appliances.

Presidents Message continued

our county and beyond. Know someone who should be a Farm Bureau member? Invite them to our next Jefferson County Farm Bureau meeting, or simply share a cup of coffee and talk about how Farm Bureau has helped you succeed.

NYFB has been busy planning for the year ahead, including putting together a comprehensive document outlining our state priorities. These priorities were critical to Lobby Day meetings in Albany and will continue to guide discussions as the legislative session gets underway and continues through June. New York Farm Bureau's 2026 Legislative Priorities are listed in the above article.

As I write this, a robust 2026 calendar is under way at both the county and state levels, including events, workshops and webinars. Please keep an eye on your weekly news emails for updates and opportunities. Upcoming statewide events to mark on your calendar include a D.C. lobbying trip on March 12 and the Young Farmers & Ranchers Conference on March 21-22. Details on these and future events can be found at www.nyfb.org/events. Financial support to attend

these events may be available through your County Farm Bureau.

If you have ideas for events, workshops or other opportunities, or if you would like to be involved, please reach out. I truly value your input, and your feedback helps shape what we do for our members.

As part of your PAID 2026 membership, we're pleased to be sending along a discount card to Texas Roadhouse - it's included in this mailing! When using your discount card at our local Texas Roadhouse, you'll receive 10% off all food purchases through 12/31/26!

If you have ideas for events, workshops or other opportunities, or if you would like to be involved, please reach out. I truly value your input, and your feedback helps shape what we do for our members.

Thank you again for being a member of New York Farm Bureau. Your support makes a difference every day, and I look forward to working with you this year.

Regards,

Kyle Hafemann

Jefferson County Farm Bureau President

JEFFERSON COUNTY FARM BUREAU ATTENDS STATE ANNUAL MEETING

Jefferson County Farm Bureau helped chart the course for agriculture's future at the New York Farm Bureau 2025 State Convention (StaCon) December 2-4 at Turning Stone Resort Casino in Verona. This year's theme was "Navigating Your Ag Future." Workshops and an engaging program were offered to help NYFB members, farmers, and agricultural professionals better plan for the future. Member delegates also voted on public policy positions that the state organization will advocate for the 2026 year in Albany and Washington, D.C.

Photo right: Devon Shelmidine and Mike Kiechle review proposed policy recommendations as part of this year's New York Farm Bureau Annual Business Meeting. Also in attendance representing the county were Austin Weaver, Jay Matteson and Doug Shelmidine. We also want to thank our very own Adam Miner for his continued service on the NYFB State Board of Directors representing District 6.



Jefferson County Farm Bureau Awards Scholarships

The Jefferson County Farm Bureau has awarded two scholarships to Jefferson Community College (JCC) students. Congratulations to Wyatt Phelps and Kagen Simpson, each currently attending JCC and each awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

For more information about the Jefferson County Farm Bureau Scholarship, visit:

<https://sunyjefferson.academicworks.com/opportunities/4815> or contact the Jefferson Community College Foundation at foundation@sunyjefferson.edu.

Pictured L to R: Benjamin Foster of JCC, Jay Matteson of Farm Bureau, Wyatt Phelps and Kagen Simpson (both JCC students and this year's award recipients) as well as John Wagner of NYFB and Mike Kiechle of Jefferson County Farm Bureau.



Dairy on Ice with the Watertown Wolves



Dairy on Ice Night with the Watertown Wolves on Jan. 3 was a great success! The Dairy Ambassadors, CCE Jefferson County, and CeCe the milking cow joined the fun, with trivia, a cheese toss, and other dairy-themed activities. The pedal tractor race was a crowd favorite with exciting on-ice action.

Thanks to Farm Credit East, Crop Growers, Country Living Loans, Dairy Farmers of America, and AminoMax for sponsoring the night.. Also, a big thank you to Silly Tillie's Tees and More for donating some great dairy themed t-shirts to toss! We hope you had as much fun as we did!

NYFB Agricultural Youth Scholarship Applications open

New York high school seniors who are graduating and interested in pursuing a career related to agriculture can apply for New York Farm Bureau's Agricultural Youth Scholarship. Eligible students can use the financial award for college or advanced training in the skilled trades.

Use the QR code provided for details and to access the application.

Deadline for submitting applications is April 1, 2026.

For more information, email proed@nyfb.org or call 1-800-342-4143.



Jefferson County Agricultural Development Conference `26

March 27, 2026

Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown, NY

9 a.m. - 5 p.m.



Jefferson County Economic Development



Join Jefferson County Economic Development and Jefferson County Farm Bureau as we examine the future of agriculture. We have Commissioner Richard Ball scheduled as our opening speaker at 9 a.m. Commissioner Ball will be speaking about Agricultural Economic Development in New York State.

We'll also have speakers discussing important issues such as: agriculture economics, labor resources and Insuring for the future. Join us as hosts and speakers lead great conversations on important issues.

We approach these topics from a high-level perspective, to help our industry look to the future, be inspired for great things to happen and be prepared for the inevitable challenges we face.

**FREE to attend, but
You MUST be registered for this event**

www.eventleaf.com/e/JCIDA26

Complimentary lunch provided by the Jefferson County Economic Development Agency.



Opening Speaker:

**Commissioner
Richard Ball**

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