

Lewis 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.

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Lewis County Farm Bureau Board of Directors

President: Ryan Nortz..... 315-777-2217

Vice President: Joe Shultz 315-376-7548

DIRECTORS:

Jen Karelus..... 315-486-8820

Julian Mangano..... 315-221-1897

Courtney Markham 315-486-1064

Melvin Phelps 315-688-2508

Barry Widrick..... 315-376-6910

Tim Yancey 315-346-6356

County Manager: John Wagner 315-761-9770

NYFB County Support Representatives:

Felicia Dougherty..... 518-431-5650

Jill Williamson 518-431-5670

Lewis County Farm Bureau meets the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Office in Lowville.

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.



Top:

Tastings from the Lewis County Farm Bureau and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Lewis County included maple cream, cheese curds & cowboy bacon. Left to right: Michelle LeDoux (CCE), member Ryan Nortz, member Roxaina Hurlbut, Melissa Spence (CCE), member Joe Schultz, member Courtney Markham and Kailyn Markham, President of the South Lewis FFA Chapter.

Left: Assemblymember Brian Miller (far left) receives a Farmers Voice Award during Lobby Day from Lewis County Farm Bureau members (center left to right) Courtney Markham, Joe Schultz, Ryan Nortz and Kailyn Markham. A Farmers Voice Award is given for a representative's positive voting record pertaining to agricultural legislation.



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.

President's Message, continued

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, our county and beyond. Know someone who should be a Farm Bureau member? Invite them to our next Lewis 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. The 2026 New York Farm Bureau Legislative Priorities are listed directly above this 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.

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,

Ryan Nortz

Lewis County Farm Bureau President

Lewis County Farm Bureau Attends State Annual Meeting

Lewis 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 in Albany and Washington, D.C.

Right: Lewis County Farm Bureau delegate Julian Mangano reviews the policy document for this year's New York Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.



2026 NYFB Agricultural Youth Scholarship Application

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 to access the application.

Deadline for submitting applications is April 1, 2026.

Eligibility requirements:

- 2026 graduating high school seniors who will continue their education to prepare for a career connected to the agricultural industry. This includes advancing their education through college or pursuing advanced training in the skilled trades.
- Must live or work on a farm or be involved with agriculture via any avenue
- Family Farm Bureau membership or Student Farm Bureau membership is required. Students can join for free as student members by using this link: www.nyfb.org/membership.
- Applicants under the age of 18 must also include the signature of a parent or legal guardian.

Process and Procedure:

- Students are required to complete an application, which is on the Reviewr online platform.
- After creating an account in Reviewr, the student will log in and begin the application. The student can stop, restart, and edit their application any time before the submission is due by logging into their Reviewr account.
- The responses to the questions and essay sections have character count limits. Before applying, a summary page will be shown. This page can be

printed to review the application answers.

- Applications must be completed and submitted by 11:59 pm on April 1, 2026.
- A district-level competition will be held. If applications do not meet the criteria to be a district winner, no district award will be given. Each district winner will receive \$250 plus a memento of their selection.
- State winner selection will be made from district winners, based solely on the submitted applications. District winners and two state winners will be announced by the end of May. The first-place state winner will receive a \$3,000 scholarship and the second-place state winner will receive a \$2,000 scholarship.

For more information, email proed@nyfb.org.

How to Strengthen County Farm Bureaus

Join a Listening Session

NYFB President David Fisher, fellow State Board members, and NYFB staff will be holding a series of important listening sessions focused on strengthening County Farm Bureaus and shaping future county compensation models. Listening sessions will be held in several locations, starting Feb. 17 and ending March 25.

Attendees will:

- Hear directly from President Fisher
- Share ideas on funding and compensation models
- Help grow local engagement
- Gain practical program planning insights

A light meal will be provided.

To register for a listening session in your area go to:
www.eventleaf.com/e/ListeningSessions

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 New York Farm Bureau
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