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I am Phyllis Couture, NYFB Board of Directors, and horticulture grower from West Valley, Cattaraugus County. My husband and I have owned and operated Fox Valley Greenhouse for 37 years: growing and selling bedding plants, vegetable plants and poinsettias. For the past 20 year I have also owned and operated Fox Valley Flowers, a retail florist shop with 2 locations.

NYFB's Board of Directors is comprised of farmer members who seek to serve and strengthen the agricultural industry throughout New York. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to speak here today to discuss some of the critically important programs that farmers in my area rely upon, that I would like to see included within the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal. While I realize it is a difficult fiscal year, it is also true that the programs that farmers rely upon have a significant economic development impact and also contribute to the overall environmental quality of our state. I would like to highlight a few programs that have been beneficial to my business, and the businesses of many of the farmers I represent in this area.

### **Economic Development and Promotion**

**New York Farm Viability Institute** is an independent, non-profit organization, led by farmers and dedicated to serving agricultural producers in New York by supporting applied research, education, information transfer, technology adoption and market analysis to reduce practical barriers to the success of farming enterprises.

***Funding request: \$5 million*** Website: [www.nyfarmviability.org](http://www.nyfarmviability.org)

((Through a grant from the Farm Viability Institute, my brother was able to develop and market shelf stable maple spread and create several new flavors of maple spread such as raspberry and cinnamon.))

**FarmNet (Farm Family Assistance)** provides technical consultation services to farmers in the middle of a farm transition, linking the next generation of farmers to existing farmers, and assisting farm families in adopting financial management strategies.

***Funding request: \$300,000*** Website: [www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org)

(another of my brothers was helped through the emotional time of taking in a non-family partner and planning for the farm transition by Farm Net counselors)

**Apple Association** funding assists in promoting healthy nutrition for children and adults, provides critical research dollars towards improving apple quality, and helps market and promote New York apples.

***Funding request: \$750,000*** Website: [www.nyapplecountry.com](http://www.nyapplecountry.com)

**NYS Seed Lab** provides important seed testing services, on a fee basis, to residents, growers, food processors, seed companies and government agencies.

***Funding request: \$200,000*** Website: [www.nysaes.cornell.edu/hort/seedlab/main.htm](http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/hort/seedlab/main.htm)

**Wine and Grape Foundation** provides critical research and promotion of New York's wine and grape industry throughout the country and world through popular advertising campaigns, including Uncork New York and the New York Wine and Dine program. This program also supports the concord grape juice industry, which is vital to my area of the state. Along with funding support for the Foundation, NYFB is also advocating for inclusion of authorization to sell wine in grocery stores within the Governor's budget proposal, as it would not only be a boon for New York's grape growers but also would increase state revenue.

**Funding request: \$3 million** Website: [www.uncorkny.com](http://www.uncorkny.com)

**New York State Maple Producers Association** works to support, market and promote the maple products industry in New York state in order to preserve the industry's long-term viability.

**Funding request: \$100,000** Website: [www.nysmaple.com](http://www.nysmaple.com)

(The Maple Producers Association has developed and promoted the highly successful "Maple Weekend" agri-tourism program. Thousands of non-farm families have been given an introduction to the production of maple syrup, had the opportunity to visit farms and woodlands and interact with today's producers. Hundreds of maple producers have shared their knowledge as well as increasing their agricultural income through sales of maple products. This income is either invested back into the business for new equipment or spent in the local community by the family.)

**Migrant Child Care** provides Head Start curriculum in child care centers to the children of migrant farm worker families in 14 Centers, as well as voucher programs to migrant farm worker children. The program also makes referrals to necessary health programs.

**Funding request: \$4,596,000** Website: [www.agri-business.org](http://www.agri-business.org)

New York farmers protect over 7 million acres of land in New York State. This is land that would otherwise be lying fallow, not producing any tax revenue or tangible jobs in the local community, and it is land that we strive to protect by providing good stewardship through working the land for food and ornamental production. NYFB strongly supports the Environmental Protection Fund programs that benefit farmers and the environment, and would also urge the Governor to increase staffing for the Department of Agriculture and Markets in the critical area of agricultural districts protection as well as farmland protection grants administration.

## **Environmental Programs**

### **Environmental Protection Fund**

- **Ag. Non-point Source Pollution and Abatement Program (Funded this year at \$28 million)**
  - *This program supports farm water quality projects, such as AEM and CAFO compliance. Additional funding is needed to help farmers comply with costly water quality regulations*
- **Farmland Protection Fund (Funded this year at \$12.8 million)**
  - *This program provides funding for farm conservation easements. Additional funding and staff is needed to expand the program meet program needs.*
- **Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Funded this year at \$3 million)**
  - *Districts work in the "trenches" to provide farmers with technical assistance and on-farm conservation work to enhance farm environmental management.*

**Enactment of the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill**

- The bottle return statute must be expanded to include non-carbonated beverages, such as bottled water and Gatorade to curb litter in farm fields and bring hundreds of millions of dollars in additional return revenue to help fund farm environmental programs.

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