

High Lonesome Farm
2273 Stafford Road
Cincinnatus, New York 13040
607-863-4303
fredgriffen@frontiernet.net

NYS PUBLIC HEARINGS REGARDING THE 2008-09 BUDGET-- Utica, NY
Testimony Given by Fred Griffen – High Lonesome Farm

November 27, 2007

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you so much for being here, and listening to the people of New York.

I own a certified organic farm in Cortland County raising certified organic registered Angus beef cattle and custom grazing organic dairy heifers. My animals are 100% grass fed, and I hope to serve the people of New York in response to their growing demand for healthy, natural foods from animals humanely raised animals by their neighbors.

Since the days when my grandparents farmed in the 30's, 40's and 50's agriculture has undergone a protracted period of what I call "experimentation" that has taken us so far away from the small, accountable family farms that many people now literally have only the vaguest awareness of where their food actually comes from. Instead of getting into the specifics of the industrialization and, in my opinion, the degradation of our food supply, I wish to focus on the rebirth of the small family farm and the peoples' desire and eagerness to participate in the process by which their food is grown, harvested and delivered into their hands. I would ask that among the many considerations you will be required to address that you please give serious attention to the future of New York's small family farms and the small rural communities in which the farmers live and work, as well as their importance to the larger metropolitan areas wherein farmers' markets are jammed with people clamoring for locally grown, environmentally sensitive, "whole" foods.

The small family farmers mentioned above are producing high quality fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs and dairy products, more and more of them using organic methods. A major challenge facing them is access to markets where they can receive a fair price for their products. Inherent in that challenge is the very real difficulty they have finding state and federally inspected facilities at which their products can be processed. I'm speaking primarily of beef and poultry farmers, but virtually all New York farmers and consumers would benefit from increased access to these facilities. Please strive to provide funds to help facilitate the establishment of a processing infrastructure to serve New York's farmers and consumers so that both can profit from the state's bounty. This bounty could increase dramatically and many more New Yorkers could benefit from healthy, locally grown foods if the facilities existed to prepare them for delivery to the consumer.

I would also hope that further efforts and funds could be directed to farm to school programs so that the younger generation of our children would have access to fresh, healthy foods that haven't been processed almost beyond recognition so they can survive a three thousand mile trip to their plates. That model of a food system is economically and environmentally unsustainable, and evermore so as fuel prices rise and climate change looms.

Finally I would ask your consideration of the fact that part of the new consumer food paradigm is the desire for grass based food products from animals raised in their natural environment, and here is another area where New York can be a leader. Grass-based agriculture (animals grazing high quality pastures) is inherently sustainable, environmentally friendly, energy efficient, and esthetically pleasing. New York is blessed with millions of acres of this natural agricultural resource, and there are several groups of farmers, educators, extension personnel, private and governmental entities working very hard to enhance and increase the utilization of this most "natural" farming method. Among them are The Cornell Small Farms Program, the New York State Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (I proudly serve on its Steering Committee), and GrazeNY (currently and unfortunately unfunded). Please strive to establish, continue or increase funding for these important programs. There are others and I am confident you will hear of them as your discussions progress. They are all vitally important if New York is to become more food secure, healthier, self-sustaining and self-reliant.

Thank you again for your attention and I wish you luck in your difficult endeavor.

Yours truly,

Fred Griffen