



New York Farm Bureau * 159 Wolf Road, PO Box 5330 * Albany, NY 12205* (518) 436-8495 Fax: (518) 431-5656

November 27, 2007

Paul E. Francis, Director
New York State Division of Budget
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224-0341

Dear Mr. Francis:

As President of the state's largest general farm advocacy organization, I am writing to share New York Farm Bureau's preliminary budget requests for the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year. In addition, I would like to applaud the Division of Budget's leadership and aggressive public hearing schedule to gain input on budget recommendations for the coming year.

As you are aware, the last few years have been challenging for the agricultural industry with a cycle of extremely low dairy and other commodity prices, along with greatly increasing energy costs and property taxes. In fact, over the last year or so, we have lost over 500 farms in New York State.

While milk prices have rebounded over the past months, we are at a pivotal time within our industry and look to your leadership to help grow farm businesses and the upstate economy. Continued investments are needed to promote farm efficiencies and viability on a whole host of fronts including renewable energy, biotechnology research, and marketing and promotion, among many other items. Furthermore, current vital programs administered by the Departments of Agriculture and Markets and Environmental Conservation must be maintained to provide needed funding to ensure sound and profitable farm businesses, enhanced open space and working farm landscapes and sound environmental management.

To these ends, I have included below our preliminary programmatic budget requests (with website addresses by program) for the coming fiscal year. The requests pertain to the Department of Agriculture and Markets programs, the pertinent farm environmental lines within the Environmental Protection Fund and our strong support for expansion of the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill. The requests are also grouped under the headings of Economic Development and Promotion, Animal and Public Health and Environmental Programs.

New York Farm Bureau certainly recognizes the current budget constraints under which the state is operating and is seeking level funding in the Governor's proposed budget for those programs. However, it must be recognized that many of these programs have not seen increases in funding for a number of years and, as a result, funding has not kept up with the annual rate of inflation, thereby actually decreasing support for needed programs.

In addition, we also recognize the need for additional critical staff at the Department of Agriculture and Markets for compliance-based water quality protection activities through the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee and within the extremely understaffed Farmland Protection unit. Any support for these staffing additions from the Governor would be greatly appreciated.

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. *Also, included under the Institute is the Center for Dairy Excellence, with an additional continued funding request of \$750,000*, which provides coordination and leadership for collaborative, focused efforts that prioritize opportunities and obstacles to profitability on New York dairy farms and in the Northeast dairy industry.

Funding request: \$5 million Website: www.nyfarmviability.org

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

Pro-Dairy works to facilitate New York State economic development by increasing the profitability and competitiveness of its dairy industry. Their mission is to serve as a NYS dairy industry educational program, enabling farm families and other agricultural professionals to realize their values and strive to achieve their professional and personal goals.

Funding request: \$717,500 Website: <http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/>

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

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

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.

Funding request: \$3 million Website: 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

Animal and Public Health

Apiary Research and Inspection Program funding enables research and inspection on ways to protect apiculture from diseases and introduced pests, and is critical for pollination purposes and honey production.

Funding request: \$285,000 Website: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/PI/PIhome.html

Avian Disease Program ensures that the state's poultry producers are free of disease, such as avian influenza, and that New York eggs continue to be salmonella free.

Funding request: \$315,000 Website: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AI/AvianFlu.html

Cattle Health Assurance Program works with livestock producers to develop comprehensive health management plans for improved biosecurity controls and cattle health, which translates into greater food safety.

Funding request: \$350,000 Website: www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu

Cornell Johnes Disease Program complements the efforts of the Cattle Health Assurance Program by helping livestock producers control and contain the spread of Johnes disease.

Funding request: \$300,000 Website: www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu/module/johnes/johnes.asp

Diagnostic Lab at Cornell is critical to food safety and animal health efforts in New York, with the Lab recently receiving the designation as the BSE testing Lab in the Northeast.

Funding request: \$1,945,000 Website: www.diaglab.vet.cornell.edu

Golden Nematode program provides pertinent research and new potato varieties to enable potato growers to continue to grow and sell their products interstate in areas impacted by the damaging golden nematode pest.

Funding request: \$51,000 Website: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/PI/capslinks.html#6

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

Quality Milk Promotion (Mastitis Control) Program ensures that mastitis, an inflammation of the udder that can impact milk quality, is controlled in New York State's dairy herds through laboratory testing and research and extension activities.

Funding request: \$1,084,000 Website: www.cornelldairyresearch.com/mastitis.htm

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.
- **Invasive Species (Funded this year at \$5 million)**
- This program provides funding for research and eradication for invasive species that negatively impact farm and forestry crops in New York State.

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.*

Thank you for your consideration of these budget requests. As always, should you have any questions on the requests or programs, please do not hesitate to contact me or our New York Farm Bureau staff at (518) 436-8495.

Best wishes for the holiday season.

Sincerely,

John W. Lincoln, President
New York Farm Bureau

cc: Judith Enck, Deputy Secretary to the Governor
Patrick Hooker, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Markets