



## **NEWS FROM NEW YORK FARM BUREAU**

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### **FARM BUREAU PRESIDENT NORTON TESTIFIES AT SENATE AGRICULTURE HEARING**

New York Farm Bureau President Dean Norton testified last week at a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing in Watertown, led by Sen. Darrel Aubertine.

Norton addressed the impact of the Farmworker Omnibus Bill on New York's family farms. The bill is currently pending in Albany.

"The business climate in New York, with our higher tax burden and cost structure, already is eroding some of our competitive advantage of being close to the market," Norton said. "Adding this bill to the mix simply doesn't make any sense at all for either the farm families or the farm workers, as without the farms, no one has a job."

"Our farms provide a good workplace environment for people who have agricultural skills and rural backgrounds and seek to make more money in our farms in one hour than they can make in one day in their country of origin," he said.

Norton also addressed the increasing problem of high property taxes and "nuisance" fees on family farm operations.

"New York farmers are becoming increasingly concerned at many of the 'hidden' costs that occurred in this year's budget process – such as the increased partnership fees, the LLC fees, and various Article 20-C licenses and food retail store licenses," Norton said. "We realize this is a very difficult budget year, but additional taxes and fees, on everything from truck registrations, to energy and insurance premium costs, just don't help our farm families hang on in years like this one."

Norton also supported the sale of wine in grocery stores.

"It's critical that market expansion for our winery members be allowed to continue, and frankly, allowing the sale of wine in food stores with protections both for wineries and for liquor stores is just good economic sense," he said.

Norton included testimony about New York Farm Bureau's advocacy support for dairy farmers, specifically addressing several federal issues that the organization is working to accomplish.

"The agricultural economy in New York should not be taken for granted, and the policy choices made by the state in the next several years will have a big impact on whether or not New York can fulfill the demand for New York grown foods for New York consumers," Norton said.

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*New York Farm Bureau is the statewide lobbying/trade organization that represents thousands of member families. Its members and the public know the organization as "The Voice of New York Agriculture." New York Farm Bureau is dedicated to solving the economic and public policy issues challenging the agricultural community.*