

# Cayuga County Farm Bureau

March 2022



## President's Report



Hello to our Cayuga County Farm Bureau members, I am Jon Patterson, the new president of Cayuga County Farm Bureau, having been elected at last fall's county annual meeting. I am the owner/operator of Patterson Farms where we milk over 1,700 cows and raise over 1,100 heifers. We farm 2,500 acres of corn, hay and grains for feed as well. I have some pretty big shoes to fill as I take over as president from Ray Lockwood. I plan on continuing with the great work that Ray did over the years supporting and promoting agriculture in Cayuga County.

The county Farm Bureau has been continually working on behalf of our members on a myriad of issues. We have been proactively working with county leaders, Cayuga County Soil & Water, Cornell Cooperative Extension, planners and engineers who work with farms on environmental management, and area groups looking at improving water quality in the region.

We were recently contacted by new District 3 County Legislator Lydia Patti Ruffini to address the County Legislature at a monthly meeting. Being that

it was National Agriculture Day, I was able to stress the importance of agriculture in Cayuga County. I talked about the diversity of agriculture, along with the revenue that it brings into the county through the tax base, number of jobs created and local businesses and suppliers it supports.

The most exciting opportunity at the legislative

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**Pictured:** Jon Patterson addressing the Cayuga County Legislature.

## District 3 Directors Report



Cayuga County Farm Bureau Members,

As winter winds down, state budget negotiations are heating up. While we are advocating for many of the usual budget items, such as environmental protection cost sharing, animal and plant agricultural research funding, and new ones like meat processing expansion and

efficiency money, we are finding ourselves negotiating for something we never asked for. That is the overtime tax refund proposed by Gov. Hochul.

If you were not aware, the Farmworker Wage Board that was created with the passage of the NYS Farm

Laborers Fair Practices Act of 2019 reached a 2 to 1 decision on January 28 to recommend lowering the threshold for which OT is paid to farm employees from 60 hours to 40 hours. This will be implemented gradually over a 10-year period as follows:

- 1/1/2024 – 56 hour threshold
- 1/1/2026 – 52 hours
- 1/1/2028 – 48 hours
- 1/1/2030 – 44 hours
- 1/1/2032 – 40 hours

On February 4, NYFB President, David Fisher met

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## President's Report *(cont'd)*

meeting that was offered to us was that we were asked to submit a proposal that would provide economic support to farmers in Cayuga County. Our proposal, asking for approximately \$2.5 million of money received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), would potentially fund three projects: The first project would be for upgrades to the sewer system at the Cayuga County Industrial Park. Currently, the sewer system does not meet the needs of the type of agricultural industry that has moved into the park and is limiting growth of current businesses. The second project would provide funding to the Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District to develop whole farm environmental plans for farms in Cayuga County that currently don't have one. Our third proposed project would provide funding to the Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District to implement Best Management Practices on farms based on these whole farm plans. This third project

would be a proactive step to support local agriculture while also building on water quality protection that looks to help the diverse farm community we have in Cayuga County.

As the Cayuga County legislature mulls our proposal, I'm excited about the future of farming in the county. I look forward to having more interactions and discussions as we find the solutions that will help maintain a viable agricultural industry in New York.

**Jon Patterson, President**

## **TRACTOR SAFETY CERTIFICATION CLASSES**

The 4-H Youth Development Program of Cornell Cooperative Extension in Cayuga County will be conducting Tractor Safety Certification classes for youth between the ages of 14 and 16. Classes begin Monday, April 18, 2022. **Must be pre-registered to attend.** Contact Erin Humphrey at 315.255.1183, ext. 2872 or email: [emw54@cornell.edu](mailto:emw54@cornell.edu).

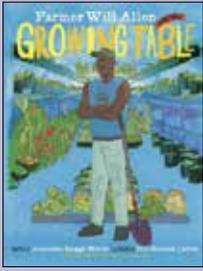
## **2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Below are the New York Farm Bureau 2022 Legislative Priorities. These priorities are a culmination of the grassroots efforts which began last fall at county annual meetings and culminated at the State Annual Meeting 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.

- Double the Agricultural Workforce Retention Tax Credit
- Establish a refundable investment tax credit for agriculture.
- Support critical funding for current agricultural animal health (such as the Avian Disease Program), promotion, research, and environmental programs in the final FY 22/23 state budget, including a \$500 million Environmental Protection Fund.
- Support legislation that adjusts New York's unemployment insurance employer contribution rate, which would allow New York to replenish the UI trust fund without overburdening businesses with high UI tax bills as they recover from the pandemic.
- Support legislation allowing direct to consumer shipping for all New York-produced farm beverages, including beer, cider, and distillates.
- Support farmers in their efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change through funding of critical programs in the Environmental Protection Fund and legislative programs that support on-farm renewable energy.
- Support the development of solar energy that balances private property rights and current and future land needs of agriculture in the state. Whenever possible, prime soils and actively farmed lands should be avoided in favor of previously disturbed or fallow lands and rooftop development for distributed generation. Power should be generated more closely to where it is going to be used.
- Support investment in new meat, vegetable, fruit and seafood processing facilities in New York.
- Oppose legislation that prohibits the use of agricultural pesticides.
- Oppose Extended Producer Responsibility legislation that doesn't require consumer responsibility of packaging they receive.
- Ensure a common-sense resolution to DEC's water withdrawal regulatory actions for farms.
- Pursue legislation that would require utilities to maintain a minimum height of 20 feet for power lines and 18 feet for other lines over farm fields upon request of landowner or farmer who is leasing the land.

## AGRICULTURAL LITERACY WEEK

March 21-25, 2022



For the past 17 years, volunteers throughout the state have helped to celebrate New York agriculture by reading a book with an agricultural theme to elementary school students.

This year's featured book, *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*, written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin with art by Eric Shabazz Larkin,

focuses on farmer Will Allen who is no ordinary farmer. A former basketball star, he's as tall as his truck, and can hold a cabbage, or a basketball, in one hand. Farmer Will sees what others can't, the opportunities for growing food whether you have 100 acres or a rooftop and shares the journey from soil to table with those around. This book will take students on an explorative journey learning about community gardens and inspire them to build communities through food, even if they only have a pot on their porch to cultivate. Hands-on activities related to the book are also offered to extend learning. Books are then donated to the school or classroom library. Cayuga County Farm Bureau is pleased to be able to purchase the books this year for use and donation to our local schools. Last year 2,300 books were donated while 75,000 elementary students participated in a related learning activity throughout New York State.

## SPRING TREE SEEDLING AND GROUNDCOVER SALE

The Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District will be holding its 51st Annual Spring Tree Seedling and Groundcover Sale. As in the past, the District is offering a variety of New York grown conifers, hardwoods, shrubs, and groundcovers. These seedlings, transplants and other plants are a very low-cost way to prevent erosion, improve water quality in our lakes and streams, to promote wildlife in your area, as well as create noise and visual buffers, and both snow and wind breaks. The Conservation District will be taking orders through **Tuesday, May 3, 2022**. Pickup date will be Friday, May 13, 2022. Supplies are limited, so order early for the best selection.



To obtain an order form, call the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District at 315-252-4171, ext. 4, or email them at: [cayugaswcd@cayugaswcd.org](mailto:cayugaswcd@cayugaswcd.org). The office is open Mon- Fri from 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Order forms and online ordering are also available on their website: <http://www.cayugaswcd.org>

## District 3 Directors Report (cont'd)

with Gov. Hochul to discuss this issue. She stated that she was committed to the "path to 40" but also committed to support the farmers. Our surprise was that she wants to issue a tax refund paid to farm employers for any overtime paid up to 60 hours. For example, if the threshold is 52 hours and a farm employee works 64 hours, NYS will pay for the OT above the regular hourly rate for 8 hours (the difference between 60 and 52), but not for the 4 hours above 60. This sounds somewhat complicated and expensive to the state.

Do we want to support this kind of policy? Typically no, unless the only alternative is the path to a 40 hour threshold with no tax refund. There are other questions and requests to address which we are working on.

1. It must be permanent in the state budget – we must have certainty now and into the future in terms of funding or the wage board decisions cannot stand.
2. The tax credit must be fully funded including the "multipliers" of payroll such as FICA, Workers' Comp, and Unemployment Insurance.
3. There must be a way to expedite the refund so it addresses immediate needs. We are asking for quarterly refunds instead of waiting until the following year.

At the writing of this letter, the Senate and Assembly budgets are different and have varied language addressing parts of the three aforementioned items. Likely, these matters will be decided around the time you receive this newsletter. If Gov. Hochul is not satisfied with the budget outcome regarding the farmworker OT, it is possible she may not sign the wage board decision and we will have to strategize to decide the next steps.

Thank you to all members who have participated in the extensive fundraising, lobbying and social media efforts to minimize the damage of this law and wage board decision.

Sincerely,

**Kim Skellie, District Director**



New York Farm Bureau  
 159 Wolf Road, Suite 300  
 Albany, NY 12205



Cayuga County Farm Bureau



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<p><b>SAVE \$200</b>          on Farmall® Compact A &amp; C series, Farmall utility A, C, U series, Farmall 100A series, Farmall V &amp; N series, as well as round and small square balers, and disc mower conditioners</p>	<p><b>SAVE \$500</b>          on Vestrum® and Maxxum Series Tractors, Large Square Balers and Self-propelled Windrowers</p>
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A current Farm Bureau membership verification certificate must be presented to the Case IH dealer in advance of product delivery to receive the incentive discount. Members can download a certificate at [www.nyfb.org/member-benefits](http://www.nyfb.org/member-benefits)

[www.NYFB.org](http://www.NYFB.org)  1.800.342.4143

**CAYUGA COUNTY FARM BUREAU  
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**VICE President:** Dale Kehoe ..... 315-406-1325  
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 Matt Pinckney (YF&R Co-Chair)..... 315-497-2713  
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**COUNTY FARM BUREAU RELATIONS & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**  
 Mark James..... 585-738-0242  
**NYFB COUNTY SUPPORT OFFICE**  
 Jill Williamson..... 315-252-1367

Cayuga County Farm Bureau board meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Natural Resource Center on County House Road in Auburn, NY.