

# Ontario County Farm Bureau

March 2022



## President's Report



Hello everyone. I am Eric Amberg, the new president of the Ontario County Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Just to introduce myself, I am a grapevine nursery farmer outside of Seneca Castle. I am looking forward to leading the county board this year.

We have already had a busy year:

Ontario County Farm Bureau earned the Gold Key Award as a recognition of our overall program achievements in NYFB's County Excellence Awards Program. Only four counties receive this award each year. This achievement honors the work of our past president, Martha Hilton and the 2021 OCFB board.

Farm Bureau members have been meeting with several Albany legislators to lobby our legislative positions from agriculture labor issues to neonic insecticides on seeds. We also successfully petitioned for the Ontario County Board of Supervisors to send a resolution to Albany to support a hold on the overtime threshold for farmworkers to 60 hours per week.

This year we are working on several projects including preparations for the return of Fun on the Farm this September. The Young Farmer committee has been organizing multiple activities including

a book club and a trivia night on March 4. We are continuing our membership drive, utilizing some new data and resources from NYFB to hopefully exceed our membership goals. We are also involved in a new initiative to increase the collaboration of Ontario County Farm Bureau with the other ag related organizations and associations in the county. This is certainly turning into a full and exciting year!

As I sign off, I'd just like to remind everyone of the tag line that New York Farm Bureau developed a few years ago: "Every farmer needs Farm Bureau, and Farm Bureau needs every farmer." This couldn't be more true today. We are seeing major challenges coming--overtime being pushed by the Farm Labor Board to 40 hours, environmental regulations, inflationary costs, limited processing, and much more. These things will be hitting our farms in one way or another. New York Farm Bureau will continue to work on behalf of all of its members, but they need their members to be engaged as well, whether it's attending a board meeting, joining a committee or e-lobbying for specific concerns on the NYFB website. It's important that we all stand up for what is best for our farming community. Together we can help to maintain a viable agricultural industry in New York.

**Eric Amberg, President**

## District 3 Director's Report



Fellow Ontario 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 Jan. 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 Feb. 4, NYFB President David Fisher met

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## AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY LEADER AWARDS PRESENTED

Ontario County's Agriculture Appreciation Banquet was held recently in Geneva. Celebrating agriculture in Ontario County, the banquet helps to recognize and honor the leaders that make the agriculture industry a key part of Ontario County. Persons recognized for their contributions and receiving Agriculture Industry Leader Awards for the evening were as follows:

### **Rodney Lightfoote Agricultural Innovation Award**

Pete & Julie Maslyn

**Paul and Peg Zimmerman**

### **Outstanding Young Farmer Award**

Jake Minns

### **Jackie Kunes Outstanding Woman in Agriculture Award**

Martha Hilton

### **Jerome Family Scholarship**

Izzy Raes

### **Agricultural Citizenship Scholarship**

Allison Fellows

Gabriella Taylor



*Ontario County Agriculture Appreciation Banquet award recipients.*

*Pictured (l-r): Izzy Raes, Julie Maslyn, Pete Maslyn, Jake Minns, Martha Hilton, Allison Fellows. Absent: Gabriella Taylor.*

*Photo courtesy of: Jim Hooper*

## 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 culminate 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.

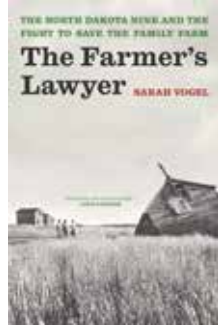
- Double the Agricultural Workforce Retention Tax Credit
- Establish a refundable investment tax credit for agriculture.
- Support critical funding for current agricultural animal health (such as the Avian Disease Program), promotion, research, and environmental programs in the final FY 22/23 state budget, 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.



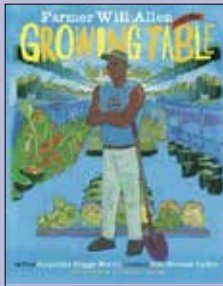
## YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS ACTIVITIES

The Ontario County Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers had our annual trivia night after a two-year hiatus, and it was very successful. We were able to raise a few hundred dollars for high school scholarship and had a lot of fun doing it.

Another event we have planned is the monthly book club, this month we have been reading *The Farmer's Lawyer* by Sarah Vogel, a captivating read about farmer's struggle during the 1980s. There is still time to check the book out and join us for discussion! We'll be meeting on April 23 with location TBD. We have other events we would like to do this year and if you might like to help or join the young farmer committee in planning future events please don't hesitate to contact Jacob Maslyn, current Young Farmers and Ranchers Chair for Ontario County Farm Bureau at 585-626-9958 or email:maslynj32@gmail.com



## 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. Ontario County Farm Bureau is pleased to be able to purchase the books being read to local classrooms this year. The books will then be donated to the school or classroom libraries so that all can enjoy. Last year 2,300 books were donated while 75,000 elementary students participated in an experiential learning activity in New York State.

## District 3 Director's Report Continued. . .

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 eight hours (the difference between 60 and 52), but not for the four 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 farm worker 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**

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**SEPT. 24, 2022**  
**for Fun on the Farm**

to be held at  
FA BA Farm on Cooley Road in Canandaigua  
owned by John and Lorelei Knopf



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



Ontario County Farm Bureau



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Jacob Maslyn (YF&R Chair) ..... 585-626-9958

**FIELD ADVISOR:** Mark James ..... 585-738-0242

**County Support OFFICE:** Jill Williamson 315-252-1367

Ontario County Farm Bureau board meets the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Cooperative Extension Office in Canandaigua.