

NEW YORK STATE

Monthly Harvest



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Commissioner Ball Ushers in the Start of the Harvest Season With Maple Month

Every year, March brings with it signs of the harvest season to come, starting with maple - the first agricultural crop of the year! New York is home to the largest resource of tappable maple trees in the United States and our hardworking producers help make our state second in the nation for maple production.

New York has a long history with this delicious crop, whose discovery and production dates to early Native American tribes. While maple production has become more streamlined and efficient over time, the process remains deeply rooted in tradition as a beloved community endeavor. This year, during the weekends of March 16-17 and March 23-24, maple farms across the state will welcome visitors for Maple Weekends, inviting them to taste pure maple syrup right from the source, partake in pancake breakfasts, and take tours, experiencing firsthand what it's like to make maple syrup. I encourage you to read below to find out more on how to support our maple producers this month and all year long.

March also offers more opportunities to celebrate agriculture in New York State, including through Agricultural Literacy Week, held from March 18-22,

which highlights the importance of fostering an understanding and appreciation of where our food comes from, especially for our younger residents. During this annual celebration, volunteers throughout the state – including farmers, FFA and 4-H members, and others working in the agricultural industry – will read a book with an agricultural theme to elementary school students. This year’s book, *I LOVE Strawberries*, by Shannon Anderson, tells the story of a young girl and her rabbit on a mission to grow their own strawberries!

We are also excited to pay tribute to agriculture this month during National Agriculture Week, March 17-23, and National Ag Day on March 19. New York has diverse, deep roots in agricultural, with growers and producers whose innovation, resiliency, and dedication consistently bring New York to the national and global conversation about agriculture.

Of course, March also ushers in the start of spring and the beginning of a new growing season here in New York, which for me always brings a sense of hope and optimism for a new growing season and new beginnings. With so much to celebrate this month, I hope you’ll join me in reflecting and raising awareness on the importance of our industry and its impact on the state’s economy and on the health and well-being of our communities.

Commissioner Richard Ball

During FFA Week, Governor Hochul Announces Growth of New York’s Agricultural Education and FFA Programs

Every year, National FFA Week give the Department the opportunity to spotlight the invaluable work that FFA chapters are doing across the state to ensure young New Yorkers have the resources they need to be successful in our industry, whether it’s helping to develop quality agricultural education or expanding opportunities for youth in agriculture.

Earlier this month, Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) that, since 2016, the number of agricultural teachers across the state has increased by 75% - significant growth and an impressive feat for New York State.

The increase in agricultural teachers is allowing more schools and students to participate in a formal agricultural curriculum, boosting the pipeline of students who will go on to enter into the agricultural industry as a future career. In addition, the number of FFA charters and members has also increased. With 200 chapters established in 53 of New York’s 62 counties, there are now nearly 12,000 FFA students in New York State, an increase from 9,300 in 2022.

Seeing the next generation so passionate about our industry’s viability and evolution is incredibly heartening. Investing in agricultural education and teachers means investing in a generation of young people who understand where our food comes from, value the work of our farmers, and are committed to supporting our agricultural communities and food systems. We’re grateful to

New York FFA as a partner for all they do to help the Department uplift and invest in our youth, and we have no doubt that the leadership of the many bright and talented minds in the New York FFA will continue to bring success to New York's agricultural industry.

Applications Open for 2024 AEM Leopold Conservation Award

In February, Commissioner Ball announced applications are being accepted for New York State's 2024 Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Leopold Conservation Award. Presented in partnership with the Sand County Foundation, the annual award honors a farm and its nominating Soil and Water Conservation District for extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. In New York, the \$10,000 award is presented in partnership with national sponsor American Farmland Trust, and state partner Cornell Cooperative Extension.

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts apply for the award on behalf of the farm. Eligible candidates successfully incorporate AEM Best Management Practices into the management of the farm, assisting the landowner in meeting business and environmental goals.

Applicants should demonstrate conservation leadership and outreach in the agricultural sector and be an inspiration to other landowners. Applications must be received by the Department by May 15, 2024. Nominations will be reviewed by an independent panel of conservation leaders. Interested candidates should contact their local county Soil and Water Conservation District. Contact information can be found at <https://agriculture.ny.gov/soil-and-water/soil-water-conservation-district-offices>.

The application can be found at www.sandcountyfoundation.org/ApplyLCA.

Council on Hunger and Food Policy Issues Annual Report

Combatting food insecurity and strengthening our food supply has long been a top priority of the Department's, especially as, in recent years, the State has worked to rebuild and reshape the post-pandemic world. The Council on Hunger and Food Policy, which was formalized in statute in 2023, was charged by Governor Hochul to outline ways to increase the use of healthy and locally grown foods in school meals, expand food access to underserved communities, and boost agricultural production and processing.

Last month, the Council [issued its annual report](#), which provides a thorough, thoughtful examination of how to help increase the resiliency of the state's agri-food value chain and economic vitality while also supporting New York's agricultural community. These recommended policies include institutional

purchasing of local agriculture, strengthening food assistance networks, and expanding food access.

The full report is available on the Department's website at: <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/council-hunger-and-food-policy-2023-report>.

Department Celebrates a Centennial of Safe Milk

Today, milk is one of the safest foods to consume in the United States, in no small part due to the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO), developed by the US Public Health Service in 1924. The PMO provided uniform regulations for the dairy industry to reduce the risk for foodborne illness in dairy products, laying critical groundwork for the quality and safety standards we have in place today to keep delicious, healthy milk and dairy products safe to eat and enjoy.



With this year marking the 100th anniversary of the PMO, the Department is proud to join the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in raising a glass of delicious New York milk to celebrate all the hardworking people who have helped us achieve a century of safe dairy. Cheers to another centennial of safe, delicious dairy products!

To learn more about how the FDA is celebrating the centennial, visit: <https://www.fda.gov/food/milk-guidance-documents-regulatory-information/pasteurized-milk-ordinance-centennial>.

USDA Launches New Opportunity to Help Farmers Reduce Costs with Underutilized Renewable Technologies



The US Department of Energy (DOE) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) are launching a new initiative to help farmers cut costs and increase income using underutilized renewable technologies including smaller-scale wind projects. Through the **Rural and Agricultural Income & Savings from Renewable Energy (RAISE)** initiative, USDA is setting an initial goal of helping 400 individual farmers deploy smaller-scale wind projects using USDA's [Rural Energy for America](#)

[Program](#) (REAP).

For more information about this opportunity, visit: <https://www.energy.gov/articles/doe-usda-launch-initiative-help-farmers-reduce-costs-underutilized-renewable-technologies>

The Department Gets Cheesy for Valentine's Day

Nothing sweetens the season of love like a sprinkle of farm-fresh humor! From all of us at the Department to you and yours, we hope you had a pun-derful Valentine's day. If you're still sowing the seeds of affection, you can [download our collection of Valentines to share with your soil-mate](#).

New York State Fair Builds Entertainment Line-Up

It's may only be March, but it's never too early to start getting excited for The Great New York State Fair! With returning fan favorites like Chubby Checker, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, and TLC, as well as first-time fair performers like Sophie B. Hawkins and Brian Kelley, the Chevrolet Music Series concert and entertainment schedule is gearing up for a magnetic musical showcase this summer. To date, The Fair has announced an exciting entertainment schedule, which can be viewed at nysfair.ny.gov. Keeping with Fair tradition, all performances in the Chevrolet Music Series are free.



Taste NY Launches Inaugural “Sandwich Showdown” Competition

On Friday, March 1, the Taste NY program kicked off its inaugural #SandwichShowdown event – a student-led friendly competition between two Taste NY locations in the Mohawk Valley region. Developed in collaboration with SUNY Cobleskill ag students as part of their agricultural business coursework, the Sandwich Showdown competition asked staff at the Taste NY Market at the Mohawk Valley Welcome Center and the Carriage House Café and General Store at SUNY Cobleskill to each develop a sandwich using more than 50% local New York State ingredients.

Featuring several products local to the Mohawk Valley region and the greater state of New York, the two competing sandwiches are named the “General

Herkimer Veggie,” created by Taste NY at the Mohawk Valley Welcome Center, and “The Carriage House,” created by the Carriage House Café and General Store at SUNY Cobleskill. The ingredients of each sandwich are listed below:

The General Herkimer Veggie - A tribute to

Herkimer County's rich history and Heidelberg Baking Co.'s exquisite Italian bread. Stacked with locally-sourced chèvre from Lively Run Dairy, beets from Remembrance Farm, a hearty beefsteak tomato, crisp romaine lettuce, red onion, and a slather of basil pesto from Whole in the Wall. Created with pride by Taste NY at the Mohawk Valley Welcome Center.

The Carriage House - A celebration of

SUNY Cobleskill's campus-grown produce, featuring arugula and beefsteak tomatoes, paired with slices of Heidelberg French peasant bread, Cabot New York extra sharp cheddar, and a unique smoked maple mustard by Yo Pitts! Foods. A true testament to the campus community and agricultural expertise, crafted by the Carriage House Café and General Store.

Visitors can still get in on the action by visiting **the Carriage House Café and General Store at SUNY Cobleskill Tuesday, March 12 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm**. The sandwich with the most votes after the sampling events will be added to the menu at both locations for a limited time. Welcome Center staff and SUNY students will be present at the events to talk up their creations and promote the local products that were used.



NYS Grown & Certified *updates*

Commissioner Ball Kicks off Maple Month at Grown & Certified Producer Dutch Hill Maple

On the first day of Maple Month, Commissioner Ball [visited](#) Dutch Hill Maple, a family-owned farm in Tully, NY, for the Department's annual maple tree tapping to highlight New York's maple industry and the maple producers participating in the New York State Grown & Certified program. The event also included a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Dutch Hill Maple's new sugarhouse, which was completed in 2023.

Dutch Hill Maple is one of the nearly 150 maple sugarmakers who will host Maple Weekends, helping to boost agri-tourism across New York State. Nate Williams, who grew up with the beloved family tradition of making maple syrup every year with his father and brother, purchased the property that would

become Dutch Hill Maple in 2014 with his wife and co-owner Cristy. In 2022, they began construction of a brand-new sugarhouse to better accommodate the needs of their business. In their 2023 season, Nate and Cristy produced over 5,000 gallons of maple syrup, their highest production yield to date. With the 2024 maple season marking the first year of making syrup in their new sugarhouse, the Williams hope to further expand production.

As a participant in the New York State Grown & Certified program, Dutch Hill Maple Farm is one of over 90 maple producers who are adhering to a higher standard for food safety and environmentally friendly practices. A current list of maple producers who are a part of the NYS Grown & Certified program is available at <https://certified.ny.gov/wheretobuy>.

March: The Magic of Maple

In January, the Department announced a new photo contest on social media, which is highlighting the best of New York agriculture with a different category and winner each month. Our first-place winners each month will have their photo included as part of a 2025 calendar. Winners will also receive a copy of the calendar!



March's photo challenge category is "The Magic of Maple," celebrating New York's long history with the delicious first agricultural crop of the year. As sap begins to flow in the late winter, sugarmakers across the state tap into maple trees with meticulous care to collect the clear, watery sap that is boiled into the delicious liquid gold we all know and love.

This month, we want to see our agricultural alchemists' photos of all things maple, whether that be the production process or the delicious meals and treats you make with the finished product!

To learn more about the contest and see the full requirements for submitting a photo, visit: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/2024-agricultural-photo-contest>.

Follow along on the Department's social media pages to stay up-to-date throughout the year!

Current Funding Opportunities

- [RFA 0294 - Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Round 19 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Projects](#)
 - Applications are taken on a rolling basis.
- [RFA 0263 - Municipal Agriculture and Farmland Protection Planning Grants](#)
 - Applications are taken on a rolling basis.
- [RFA 0262 - County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Planning Grants](#)
 - Applications are taken on a rolling basis.
- [RFA 0181 - Source Water Buffer Program](#)
 - Applications are taken on a rolling basis.

[For more information on these or other funding opportunities, please visit our Funding Opportunities page.](#)

Spotlight: Commissioner Ball joins Governor Hochul at the New York Farm Bureau Taste of New York Reception

Commissioner Ball was joined by Governor Hochul for a delicious sampling of New York State products at the New York Farm Bureau’s annual Taste of New York Reception at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. The reception, which brings together county Farm Bureau members, elected officials, agricultural partners, and members of the public, showcases the rich diversity of New York State agriculture. From artisan cheeses crafted along the state’s Southern Tier, to sweet and crunchy apples grown in Western New York orchards, hydroponic vegetables produced by SUNY Cobleskill agriculture students, oysters harvested on the shores of Long Island, and more – this event is always proves to be a true testament to the quality and diversity of New York farmers and producers.

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