

NEW YORK STATE

Monthly Harvest



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A Message from Commissioner Ball: Spring is on its Way!

Every year, March is a sweet reminder that spring is waiting just around the corner, along with it the beginning of a new growing season here in New York, and, of course, the first agricultural crop of the year, maple.

New York has a long history with this delicious crop, whose discovery and production dates to early Native American tribes. Today, New York State 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. While maple production has become more streamlined and efficient over time, the process remains deeply



rooted in tradition as a beloved community endeavor. 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 know and love. Follow along this month as we continue to celebrate all things maple, including Maple Weekends at farms across the state! Maple Weekends will be held March 22-23 and March 29-30.

March also offers us many opportunities to celebrate agriculture in New York State, including through Agricultural Literacy Week, held from March 17-21, as well as National Agriculture Day, which recognizes the agricultural community on March 18.

New York has diverse, deep roots in agriculture, with growers and producers whose innovation, resiliency, and dedication consistently bring New York to the national and global conversation about agriculture.

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.

From all of us here at the Department, we wish you and yours a sweet Spring!

Commissioner Richard Ball

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Update



New York State recently announced several new actions as part of its aggressive, proactive response to the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), or the bird flu.

A [new Notice and Order](#) issued by the Department requires that poultry now be tested for HPAI at their source prior to being permitted to enter live bird markets in New York State.

This additional measure follows the State's temporary shutdown of more than 80 live bird markets on [February 7, 2025](#) to facilitate a break in HPAI virus transmission within the markets and further protect animal and public health. All live bird markets that had previously been closed have been cleaned, sanitized, and inspected and are now reopen.

The Department is emphasizing that the risk to humans remains low.

As the Department continues to monitor for avian influenza in New York's poultry and livestock, the State is also reminding farmers to follow good biosecurity measures.

Find more information on biosecurity measures and the State's measures to

prevent the spread of HPAI [here](#). Stay up to date with news and alerts on HPAI [here](#).

Governor Hochul Convenes Roundtable of New York Ag Leaders to Discuss Global Competitiveness and Economic Resiliency

Today, Governor Kathy Hochul convened a roundtable with New York agriculture leaders to discuss global competitiveness and international markets in the wake of the Trump Administration's trade tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China. Starting today, the Trump Administration has placed a 25 percent tariff on all goods from Canada and Mexico as well as a 10 percent tariff on energy resources from Canada. The impact is expected to raise costs for the average New Yorker by as much as \$1,200 a year and will additionally affect New York farms and businesses.

To continue the Governor's steadfast support for New York's farms and agribusinesses as trade tariffs take effect, New York State has established an email address for businesses, including farms, to report the effects of these tariffs. While the new policy begins to take effect, information provided to TariffImpact@esd.ny.gov will help provide a real time understanding of the impact of the tariffs on the New York agricultural industry and other sectors across the state.

[Learn more about the roundtable event.](#)

Applications Open for the 2025 AEM-Leopold Conservation Award

Each year, a New York farm is awarded the annual (Agricultural Environmental Management) AEM-Leopold Conservation Award by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and their Sand County Foundation for their collective efforts to protect the environment. If that sounds like you – or someone you know – we encourage you to work with your local Soil and Water Conservation District to apply for the 2025 AEM-Leopold Conservation award!



Agriculture and environmental stewardship go hand in hand, and here in New York State, many farming families have long been dedicated to implementing best practices that protect our natural resources and conserve our environment – both on their farms and in their communities. In February, Commissioner Ball announced applications are now being accepted for New York State's 2025 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.

Applications are being accepted through May 15, 2025. To learn more about the award and how to apply, visit: agriculture.ny.gov/news/nominations-being-accepted-2025-aem-leopold-conservation-award.

\$1 Million is Available to New York Farmers' Markets



New York State is home to more than 400 farmers' markets, 250 farm stands, and 10 mobile market operators. They provide outlets for agricultural producers to meet the rising consumer demand for a variety of fresh and affordable products grown directly from the farm.

To continue to support our farmers' markets, \$1 million is now available through the third round of the Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant Program. Grant funding will help farmers' markets across the state to

make significant improvements by enhancing infrastructure, modernizing systems, and increasing marketing and promotion efforts.

Funding for the Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant Program is a part of Governor Hochul's strong investment in New York's agricultural and food industries, aimed at boosting demand for New York agricultural products, bolstering New York's food supply chain, ensuring all New Yorkers can access fresh, local foods, and creating a resilient food system that can withstand extreme events. [Awards for Round 2 of the program were announced in 2024](#)

Grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 will be awarded to successful applicants. The deadline for applications is 3:00 pm Tuesday, May 27, 2025. Applications for funding must conform to the format provided in the SFS and will be awarded on a rolling basis until funds are expended. Eligibility criteria and more information on the program, including how to apply, can be found on [the Department's website](#).

Department Announces Upcoming Enhancements to

FreshConnect Checks Program

The Department announced that, starting in 2025, farmers and vendors participating in the FreshConnect Checks (FCC) Program will now be able to redeem program coupons electronically, providing participating farmers and vendors more flexibility and options to facilitate reimbursement.



The FCC Program provides Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries at participating farmers' markets with \$2 coupons for every \$2 spent as part of the SNAP program – increasing the purchasing power of SNAP benefits used at farmers' markets. Customers can then use their FCC benefits to purchase SNAP-eligible food items, such as fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, eggs, honey, breads, cereals, and more, at farmers' markets, farm stands, and mobile markets. In 2025, \$3.2 million in FCC coupons will be available to eligible New Yorkers, continuing the program's goal to expand access to fresh food in underserved communities while also helping our farmers reach new customers.

Learn more about the new enhancements [here](#).

2025 Overtime Credit Advance Registration Now Open



Registration is now open for New York's 2025 Farm Employer Overtime Credit Advance program. The Farm Employer Overtime Credit is a refundable tax credit available for eligible farm employers who pay overtime wages based on the gradual phase-in of the overtime threshold in New York State. Farmers are now encouraged to begin recordkeeping for the January 1 through July 31, 2025 timeframe to apply for reimbursement later this year.

Farmers can apply for this refundable credit if they or their business are an [eligible farmer](#) and they employ eligible farm employees that were paid eligible overtime.

For detailed information on how to apply for this program, please visit the Department's website [here](#).

Department Releases Updated Environmental Bond Act Draft Eligibility Guidelines

The Department announced the public comment period is open for new eligibility guidelines to allocate funding for farmland protection projects under the historic \$4.2 billion Environmental Bond Act. Feedback from the draft criteria will be used to develop forthcoming grant opportunities to award farmland protection projects through the Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) program.



The Department encourages members of the public to comment on the draft eligibility guidelines, which are available [here](#) in the February 27 [Environmental Notice Bulletin](#). The final guidelines will inform the allocation of \$150 million of Bond Act resources to FPIG over three years and will accelerate locally led farmland protection project implementation across the state.

The FPIG Program provides financial assistance to counties, municipalities, soil and water conservation districts, and land trusts to enable these entities to implement farmland protection activities consistent with local agricultural and farmland protection plans. To date, the FPIG program has helped preserve more than 124,800 acres of New York farmland through completed conservation easement projects, totaling more than \$303 million on 419 farms.

Learn more [here](#).

Northeast Regional Business Center Launches Business Builder Awards



The Northeast Regional Food Business Center recently launched the first round of Business Builder sub-awards, designed to strengthen local and regional food systems by providing direct funding to small- and mid-sized farm and food businesses. In this third round, \$10 million is available, with awards ranging from \$15,000 to \$100,000 to support businesses in scaling their operations, expanding markets and connecting various segments of the regional food supply chain. The Business Builder program will fund

projects through three specialized funding tracks:

Track 1: Equipment (\$25,000 - \$50,000)

- Supports the purchase of special-purpose equipment for post-harvest activities, from processing to market. Farm and food businesses with \$350,000 or less in annual sales are eligible to apply.

Track 2: Business Development (\$15,000 - \$25,000)

- Supports business financial acumen and industry knowledge. Farm and food businesses with \$350,000 or less in annual sales are eligible to apply.

Track 3: Product & Market Expansion (\$50,000 - \$100,000)

- Assists businesses in expansion through new products, broader markets and wider distribution. Farm and food businesses with \$1 million or less in annual sales are eligible to apply.

Applications opened February 4 and will close April 7. Awardees will be announced in July, and funded projects are anticipated to begin activities in August.

To learn more about how to apply, visit: nasda.org/foundation/nerfbc.

New York Farm Awarded National Conservation Award

Ben Wever Farm of Willsboro was awarded the 2024 Hugh Hammond Bennett National Producer Award in Salt Lake City at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual conference. This award is given to a farm that has “exemplified outstanding service through development and implementation of sound conservation planning and other conservation techniques.” We congratulate Shaun and Linda Gilliland for this well-deserved recognition.



Taste NY Partners with CCE and Agritech on Training Opportunity

Taste NY is partnering with Cornell Agritech and Cornell Cooperative Extension for an opportunity to train Extension staff and program development partners to assist producers in bringing their products to retail shelves. The workshops will be led by Food Scientists Dr. Bruno Xavier and Cynthia James with Cornell AgriTech, who will share processes and walk through the toolkit to help producers to prepare products for retail and institutional sales.

Reserve your spot today at one of these valuable training sessions and become a boots-on-the-ground educator—helping producers succeed and strengthening the New York State economy!

Sign up now to secure your place! Email Vicki Giarratano at vlq4@cornell.edu for more information on how to sign up.



NYS Grown & Certified *updates*

G&C: Celebrate Maple Month with NYS Grown & Certified!

Happy Maple Month, a time spotlight the sweet, unique, first crop of New York's agricultural season! This month, maple farms across the state will welcome visitors for Maple Weekends, March 22-23 and March 29-30, 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.

There are over 90 maple producers across the state who are adhering to a higher standard for food safety and environmentally friendly practices by participating in the NYS Grown & Certified Program. A current list of maple producers who are a part of the NYS Grown & Certified program is available at certified.ny.gov/wheretobuy. We hope you check them out!



The Department's year-long Agricultural Photo Contest spotlights 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 2026 calendar and will also receive a copy of the calendar!

This month, we are spotlighting Ag Education in Action. Every March, we look forward to helping New York Agriculture in the Classroom to celebrate Ag Literacy week, an opportunity to help jumpstart a curiosity and appreciation for agriculture in our next generation of leaders. New York State is home to one of the longest running and largest Agricultural Literacy Week programs in the country. In fact, this year marks 20 years of the Agricultural Literacy Week program, as well as the 40th anniversary of the New York Agriculture in the Classroom program!

To spotlight the incredible work of our ag educators across the state, our March Photo Contest Category is “Cultivating Curiosity: Ag Education in Action.” The role of an agricultural educator can mean so many things – from introducing young people to where their food comes from to getting them excited about the many possibilities for future jobs in agriculture, and more. This month, we want to get a glimpse inside the classroom to see inspiration at work!

To learn more about the contest and see the full requirements for submitting a photo, visit: 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 0367 - FreshConnect CSA for SNAP Program 2025](#)
 - Applications are due July 22, 2025.
- [RFP 0350 - Catering and Restaurant Services at the Empire Room and Somerset Room at the New York State Fairgrounds](#)
 - Proposals are due April 3, 2025.
- [RFA 0359 - Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant Program](#)
 - Proposals are due May 27, 2025
- [RFA 0360 - 2025 Agricultural Fairgrounds Advertising, Promotion, and Education Program](#)
 - Proposals are due July 2, 2025.
- [RFA 0331 – New York State Grown & Certified Cooperative Marketing Program](#)
 - Applications are taken on a rolling basis.
- [RFA 0324 - New York State Community Gardens Soil Testing Program](#)
 - Applications will be accepted until funding is exhausted.
- [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: New York State Celebrates Agricultural Education

In February, the Department helped celebrate National FFA Week, an opportunity to showcase the passionate, dedicated young people getting excited about agriculture and the future it holds for them. We're so fortunate to have such a strong network and partnership with our tremendous FFA chapters across the state who are putting in the work to equip these students with the knowledge, confidence, and resources to take the reins and feed our communities for generations to come.



From learning about where food comes from to discovering the many possibilities for future jobs in agriculture, ag education is essential for our youngest New Yorkers in all corners of the state. In a few weeks, the Department will join New York Agriculture in the Classroom (NYAITC) in celebrating Ag Literacy Week, a weeklong effort to educate students statewide about the importance of agriculture and opportunities for careers in the industry.

Held this year from March 18-22, 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. The selected book for 2025 is "The Pie that Molly Grew" by Sue Heavenrich and illustrated by Chamisa Kellogg, which tells the story of Molly and her journey of bringing a pumpkin to harvest. Last year, 2,300 books were donated to school or classroom libraries and books were read by volunteers to that record-breaking number of over 103,000 students across New York State!

Investing in agricultural education and teachers means investing in a generation in 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. To help support the work of organizations like NYAITC and FFA, Governor Hochul announced several proposals in her Executive Budget proposals to help bolster ag education across the state, including proposing universal school meals, integrating ag education into the public curriculum, and more. We hope you'll join us this month in celebrating the great work of ag educators across the state!

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