NEW YORK STATE | Department of Agriculture and Markets

# AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION: DISCUSSION SESSION

MILK MARKETING ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 28, 2025

MAY 29, 2025

# AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

# AGRICULTURE & FOOD IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

**Food is universally relevant – everyone eats!**

Learning about agriculture and food production allows students to explore naturally occurring phenomena among living things and Earth's systems

2.4 million students attend K-12 public schools in NY. 32% of them will become adults in the next four years.

Unfortunately, **few of them will be exposed to agriculture** along the way.

What if...

We taught all students about food and agriculture **within the general education curriculum**?

# WHAT IMPACTS YOUTH MOTIVATIONS TO PURSUE CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE?

## Factors precluding youth from joining the industry:

- Perceived poor outlook of agriculture
- High cost of production with low return
- Inadequate social protection
- Lack of startup capital
- Manual work with less economic rewards

## Motivation for youth to pursue agriculture studies:

- Family influence (family participation in the industry, value for sustainability, connections with educational institutions)
- School influence (mentorship, financial support, ag clubs)
- Related work experiences in high school

# AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# DAIRY EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

| | |
|---|---|
| Wrap-around services | • Employers struggle to **create a family environment** to retain employees, including **support for navigating their lives** (schools, health care, transportation)<br>• **Housing is the leading impediment** to hiring and retaining both permanent and temporary employees |
| Training | • Employers are often **reluctant to invest in training new employees when retention rates are low**<br>• Employers are **chronically short-staffed**, making it difficult to train new staff, create intentional career pathways and up-skill current staff |
| Job Experience and Pre-apprenticeship | • There is a pool of young adults interested in the dairy industry, and many want **longer, more immersive on-farm experiences than what a time-limited internship** typically offers<br>• Many farms are also interested in providing a working opportunity for young adults, but expressed **a desire for funds to subsidize the cost** |

*Source: Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center*

# WHAT CAN WE DO WITH THESE WORKFORCE FINDINGS?

Following research and industry feedback, it was determined that the best use of NE-DBIC funds is to **build on what works – invest and strengthen current programs and efforts that are "moving the needle" on workforce needs**

- **Strengthen the Pipeline**: Expand pipelines to support new entrants
- **Build Skills and Career Opportunities**: Elevate training that increase current workers' career opportunities
- **Increase Worker Retention**: Invest in workplace culture and management to improve worker experience
- **Decrease Barriers**: Decrease barriers to participation in dairy industry for both current employees and new entrants

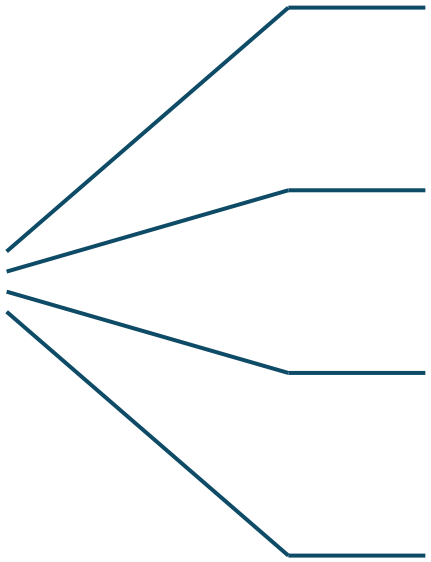
# WHAT'S NEXT?

# BLUE RIBBON PANEL ON AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

# BLUE RIBBON PANEL ON AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

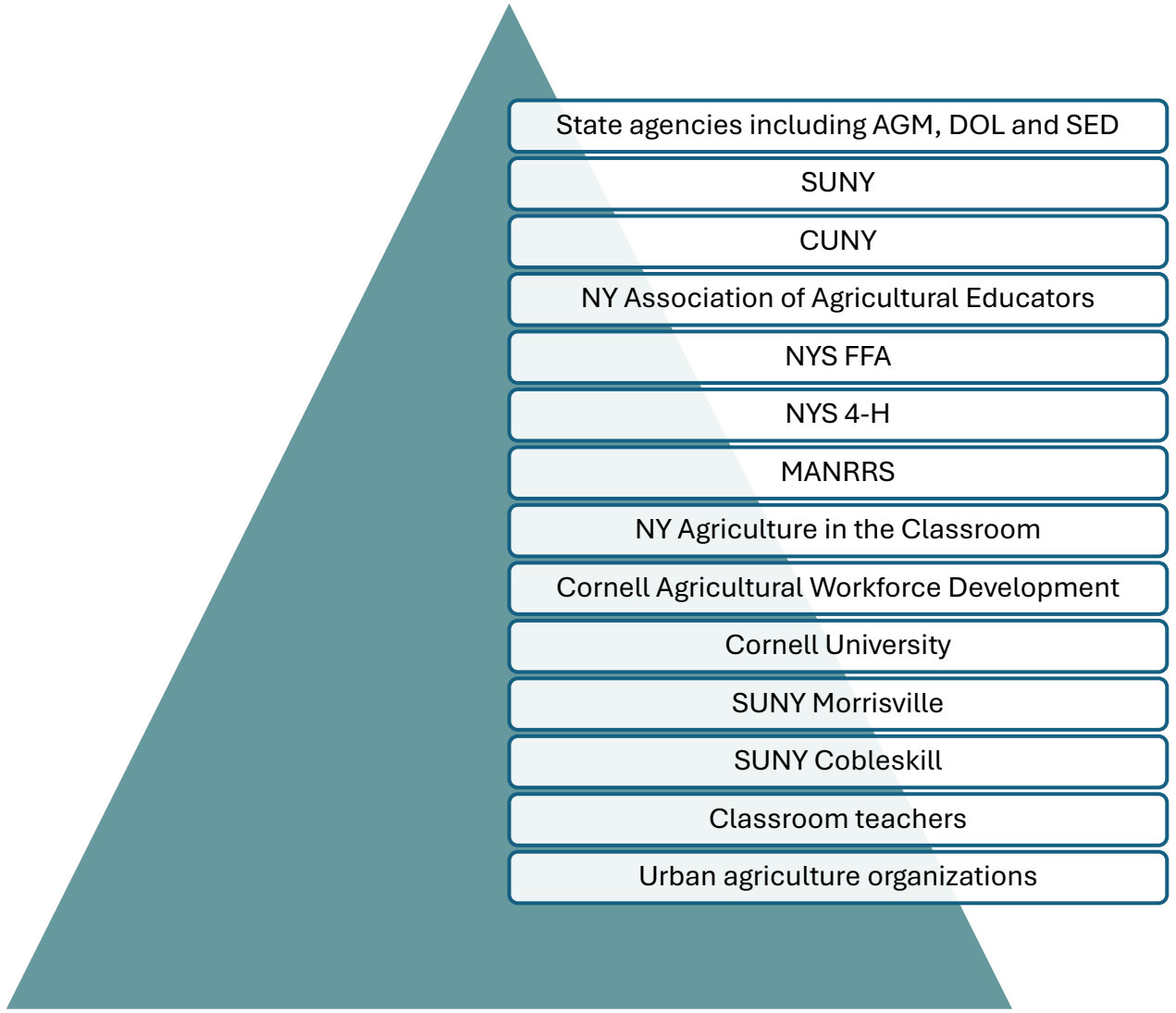
At the November 2024 Youth Agriculture Conference, Governor Hochul announced the establishment of a Blue Ribbon Panel to Advance Agriculture Education

The Panel will work collaboratively to identify and assess opportunities to:



- educate today's youth about the food and agriculture system
- examine the barriers and opportunities to increase agriculture education in schools
- review agricultural teaching certification
- support agriculture and food workforce opportunities and career awareness

# MEMBERS OF THE BLUE RIBBON PANEL



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are your **highest priority concerns** related to **workforce**?

What **skills or knowledge** do you believe are **most important for success** in the dairy industry?

What **gaps do you see in workforce development** support? What **resources could help** address those gaps?

What **existing workforce programs** have made a **positive impact**? What areas can **be improved**?

What impact has your **youth/community outreach had on agricultural literacy and career awareness**?

# Department of Agriculture and Markets