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New York Legislature Approves Working Farm Protection Act—Broad Coalition Calls on Governor to Enact the Bill and Help Protect #FARMLANDFORFARMERS
Bill A.10301-B, S.8362-A would strengthen New York's farmland protection program by funding conservation easements that protect the affordability of land for farmers.

Albany, NY (June 25, 2018) – The National Young Farmers Coalition, together with its five New York chapters, New York Farm Bureau, American Farmland Trust, and land trusts from around the state, celebrate Assemblymember Didi Barrett (D-106), Senator Patty Ritchie (R-48), and all the co-sponsors of the Working Farm Protection Act for standing with New York farmers and passing this important legislation. If signed into law by the Governor, bill A.10301-B, S.8362-A would establish New York as a leader in farmland protection policy by making working farm easements permanently eligible for state funding. Working farm easements include farmer ownership and affordability provisions such as preemptive purchase rights, that help keep protected farmland affordable and in the hands of farmers.

This bill builds on the recent step forward taken by Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard Ball in making preemptive purchase rights an eligible cost in the State's current round of funding for the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program. The Working Farm Protection Act would make this progress permanent while providing additional clarity and leaving room for land trusts to develop other tools that protect farmland affordability and farmer ownership.

“Traditional farmland conservation practices simply aren't enough to keep New York's farmer communities and its farm economy intact,” says Lindsey Lusher Shute, Executive Director of the National Young Farmers Coalition and co-owner of Hearty Roots Community Farm in Clermont. “If we don't address the affordability of conserved farmland for farmers, the taxpayers aren't getting what they asked for—vibrant, working farms providing for New York's consumers and rural economies. Affordable farmland remains the number one challenge that young farmers face as they build farm businesses, and it's too often the reason that they quit. Last week, the New York Legislature took an important step for these young farmers and the future of the state's agricultural economy by requiring that New York's farmland conservation program protect prime soils and the farmers needed to steward them. We call on Governor Cuomo to now do the same by signing the Working Farm Protection Act into law.”

“The inclusion of a preemptive purchase right in the easement protecting our farm made farm ownership a reality for us. Without that added layer of affordability protection, our farm dream would have remained out of reach. Thanks to farmland conservation and preemptive purchase rights, our farm business is a healthy, growing reality. The Working Farm Protection Act makes this successful model more widely available to farmers across New York.” —**Annie & Zack Metzger, Laughing Earth Farm, Cropseyville, New York**

“The Working Farm Protection Act gives us hope that we as well as our peers have a viable future farming here in New York. Right now, we're all struggling to secure land in order to build our farming businesses, and this bill goes a long way toward addressing fundamental problems in accessing good farmland in New York.” —**Bryn Roshong & Wes Hannah, Solid Ground Farm, Kingston, New York**

“Passage of the Working Farm Protection Act is important for farmers young and old. Farms in some areas of the state, like the Hudson Valley and Long Island, are facing major development pressure, which is driving up land prices. In turn, this makes it more difficult for new farmers to purchase affordable farmland. With the legislature’s support, farmers have an additional tool to keep farmland in production for the next generation of farmers while also providing fair compensation to farmers who are taking advantage of the voluntary easements. We appreciate the bill’s sponsors, Senator Patty Ritchie and Assemblymember Didi Barrett for their support and leadership on this issue.” —**David Fisher, New York Farm Bureau President**

“Senator Patty Ritchie, Assemblymember Didi Barrett, and the New York State Legislature have taken an important step forward in helping farmers access land by passing the Working Farm Protection Act. New York’s Farmland Protection Program has been instrumental in helping nearly 250 farm families protect their land and transfer farms to a new generation. This legislation expands this program’s options to ensure that farms protected by New York State are kept affordable for farmers to purchase. Further, we applaud Governor Cuomo and the Department of Agriculture and Markets for recently announcing the availability of new funding to protect farmland, including new farmland affordability options, and hope that Governor Cuomo will sign this bill into law to ensure that protected farmland stays in the hands of farmers forever. After all, No Farms No Food!” —**Samantha Levy, New York Policy Manager, American Farmland Trust**

“Scenic Hudson has been working with farm families for 20 years to help create a stronger future for agriculture in the Hudson Valley. But there's no future for farming if farmers can't afford farmland. We applaud this bill’s sponsors and legislative leaders for advancing this proposal.” —**Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy for Scenic Hudson**

“The Columbia Land Conservancy is committed to helping ensure that farmers can secure long-term access to affordable farmland. The Working Farm Protection Act is a significant step forward for New York in achieving this goal, and we are very pleased to join our partners in supporting the effort.” —**Peter Paden, Executive Director of Columbia Land Conservancy**

“On Long Island, we have witnessed firsthand the need to have multiple tools available to communities to protect their important agricultural resources for the next generation. This legislation is an important addition to New York State’s impactful farmland protection programs. It helps both existing and future generations of farmers to have affordable access to prime agricultural soils that provide a wide-variety of agricultural products to New York families, including fresh, locally grown food.” —**John v.H. Halsey, President, Peconic Land Trust**

“Protecting affordable farms is critical for ensuring farmers have access to land and ensuring that protected farms remain in active agriculture. For a number of farm protection projects in the Hudson Valley, Equity Trust has provided private funding to pay for preemptive purchase rights and other protections designed to keep farms in the hands of farmers. These projects demonstrate the value of tools that keep farms affordable and the enthusiasm they have generated within the farming community. Private resources can and should continue to be brought to the table, but they need to be supplemented by public dollars if we are to bring the protection of affordable working farms to scale.” —**Jim Oldham, Executive Director, Equity Trust, Inc.**

The National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC) is a national advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture. Visit NYFC on the web at www.youngfarmers.org, and on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

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