Empire State

Council of Agricultural Organizations, Inc.

Workforce Development:

The Council of Agricultural Organizations (CAO) stresses the importance of agriculture to New York State's well-being and economic stability. Unfortunately, the availability of labor for farming and the agriculture industry poses a serious threat to family farms and related businesses. The CAO strongly recommends investment in workforce development and creative solutions to securing the future of this vitally important industry in the state.

A pipeline of skilled and talented individuals interested in working in agriculture begins with robust agricultural education programs in public schools and youth leadership development organizations in schools and communities. Colleges, universities, technical schools, and apprenticeships are also essential to filling our future workforce needs. It is vital that we creatively market agriculture as a rewarding and promising career path. Plus, we need to incentivize agricultural employers and support their efforts to recruit and retain skilled team members while minimizing regulatory burdens placed on these employers.

We recommend:

- 1. Investment in and support for agricultural education in public schools and community programs.
- Investment in workforce development programs that specifically support careers in farming and related sectors, including agricultural educators, veterinarians, licensed veterinary technicians (LVTs), and commercial truck drivers.
- 3. Increasing and making permanent the workforce retention tax credit for farmers.
- 4. Investment in farm-provided employee housing through the Farmworker Housing Program and allowing housing investments to be part of the Investment Tax Credit.

See pages 30 and 38-40 of the CAO Policy Book for more information.

Renewable Energy and Solar Development on Agricultural Lands

Agriculture plays a vital role in combatting climate change with many farmers having already implemented climate smart practices on their farms across the state. It is important that as the legislature discusses new policies regarding the use of renewable energy and transitioning to non-carbon energy sources, the impact on agriculture is taken into consideration.

- 1. There needs to be incentives for siting solar away from actively farmed lands and high-quality agricultural soils while prioritizing siting on rooftops and previously disturbed lands such as brownfields and landfills.
- 2. Research and incentives are needed to provide proof of concept for agrivoltaics in New York or dual use of the same parcel for solar and bona fide agriculture, including crops and livestock.
- 3. Renewable fuels, such as natural gas, ethanol and biodiesel, are important options to reduce emissions related to transportation and home heating. Establishing a low carbon fuel standard would help meet the ambitious emissions reductions goals of the state.

Research Funding:

Farmers in New York have a long history of supporting and leading research, then disseminating the information through extension and finally applying the results of that research to their farms. Farmers prioritize the challenges to be addressed to keep their farms innovative, profitable and environmentally sustainable. Specific programs to support include:

•	NY Farm Viability Institute	See page 7 - CAO Policy Book for more information
•	Apple research	See page 14 - CAO Policy Book for more information
•	Berry research	See page 14 - CAO Policy Book for more information
•	Concord grape research	. See page 18 - CAO Policy Book for more information
•	Maple research	See page 19 - CAO Policy Book for more information
•	Vegetable research	See page 21 - CAO Policy Book for more information

It should be noted that in many cases, farmers are also putting their own money and time into these research projects, leveraging the state investment. Having the state invest in this research is critical for keeping New York farmers innovative and viable to produce the food and other agricultural products needed by the residents of our state. New York State, once a leader in the nation in agriculture research investment has fallen behind a number of states in recent years, and as such, our farmers' competitiveness has been impacted.

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