

### **Budget Funding and Legislation:**

Funding for agricultural research is essential to the long-term viability of farms. Research drives practical innovations that improve soil health, crop yields, and water management while reducing input costs and environmental risks. Continued investment ensures farmers have access to science-based tools and data needed to adapt to climate change, emerging pests, and market pressures, strengthening both farm profitability and food security. Along with funding agricultural research, the final state budget must also include extending the refundable investment tax credit (ITC). Extending the ITC provides New York farmers with the financial certainty needed to invest in modern equipment and infrastructure. In addition, commodity promotion and education are also essential and outlined further on the attached budget list.

- Funding for Cornell CALS Research Farms
  - \$5 million in operational funding
  - \$5 million in capital funding (executive budget proposed \$2.5 million)
- Funding for NY Farm Viability Institute
  - \$5 million- *See page 7 in CAO Policy Book for more information*
- Extending the refundable investment tax credit
  - Support proposed executive budget item TEDE Part K which would extend the refundable investment tax credit to 2033.

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### **Agricultural Workforce**

New York farmers depend on a skilled, stable workforce to provide a reliable food supply for New York families. Workforce recruitment, retention, and compliance with labor regulations remain among agriculture's greatest challenges, particularly as higher labor costs place NY farmers at a competitive disadvantage. The following recommendations aim to strengthen workforce stability, protect employee health and safety, and ensure labor policies are practical and economically sustainable.

#### **Workforce Training and Safety**

Support continued funding for Cornell Farm Labor Specialist Program and the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) to deliver bilingual safety, leadership, and human resources training. Add funding for a joint NYCAMH–Cornell initiative to develop online safety training and onboarding tools. Prioritize investment in NYCAMH for heat-related training rather than prescriptive regulation and remove agriculture from the Temperature Extreme Mitigation Plan (TEMP) Act.

#### **Labor Regulations**

Amend the Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act (FLFLPA) to allow employees who voluntarily work during the weekly 24-hour rest period to do so without triggering overtime pay, provided total weekly hours remain below the overtime threshold.

#### **Immigration and Workforce Stability**

We have advocated for federal immigration reform that provides a stable, authorized agricultural workforce. At the state level, we recommend protecting immigrant agricultural workers' due process rights, ensuring access to emergency services, and opposing warrantless intrusion onto non-public areas and private property.

## **Farmworker Housing**

Farm-provided employee housing is critical for recruitment and retention and is required for H-2A workers. We recommend allowing investment in worker housing to be eligible for the refundable Investment Tax Credit. Additionally, we support increased funding and loan maximum for the Farm Worker Housing Loan Program.

*See pages 41-43 of the CAO Policy Book for more information.*

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## **Agricultural Education**

Agricultural education is essential to developing New York's future agricultural workforce and strengthening the state's food and fiber systems. These programs connect core academic concepts to real-world applications while preparing students for high-demand, high-wage careers and post-secondary opportunities in agriculture and related industries. Continued state investment is critical to expanding access to agricultural education and meeting workforce needs.

We recommend:

1. Continued funding in the state budget for the Agricultural Education Outreach Program housed at Cornell University, which coordinates pre-k through grade 12 agricultural education through Agriculture in the Classroom, FFA, professional support to the New York Association of Agricultural Educators, and Urban Agricultural Education.
2. Sustained funding to support school districts in establishing new agricultural education programs and expanding existing programs to meet student demand and workforce needs.
3. Legislation encouraging support for agricultural education at all grade levels, pre-K–12, including the use of relevant, STEM-based curriculum aligned with New York State learning standards.
4. Strengthening agricultural education teacher certification pathways in New York, with a focus on recruitment, preparation, and retention to address the critical shortage of certified agricultural educators.

*See pages 13 and 32-33 of the CAO Policy Book for more information.*

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## **Renewable Energy and Solar Development on Agricultural Lands**

Agriculture is an essential partner in New York State's climate goals and strategies. Farmers across the state have adopted practices that reduce emissions, improve soil health, manage water, and protect long-term land productivity. As New York advances renewable energy policies and infrastructure, it is important that these efforts do not unintentionally reduce the availability of prime farmland or weaken the economic viability of farm operations. Energy development should be pursued in a way that supports agricultural production, food security, and the long-term use of land for farming.

1. Solar siting policies should clearly prioritize the protection of high-quality agricultural soils, including Classes I through IV and soils classified as "prime farmland if drained". The siting process should require the use of soil classification data and coordination with local municipalities to ensure the project will not remove productive farmland from agriculture or disrupt active farming operations within agricultural districts.
2. Renewable fuels continue to play an important role in reducing emissions from transportation and home heating and should remain part of New York's broader clean energy strategy. Continued research and investment in a mixture of low and zero-emission energy sources, including nuclear energy, will be important as the state works to meet its long-term climate goals.
3. Incentive and research fund allocations are needed to further research into Agrivoltaics, including land use for solar energy generation and agricultural crops and livestock. These systems have the potential to allow renewable energy development and maintain agricultural use of land when properly designed and implemented.

*See pages 23-25 of the CAO Policy Book for more information.*

  
**Empire State**  
**Council of Agricultural Organizations, Inc.**

	FY 25-26 Final Budget	FY 26-27 Executive Proposal	FY 26-27 Organizational Requests
<b>AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS</b>			
AFT Farmland for a New Generation	\$700,000	\$0	\$1,000,000
Ag in the Classroom	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Agribusiness Child Development Program	\$10,410,000	\$11,300,000	\$10,410,000
Apple Research	\$505,000	\$505,000	\$600,000
Association of Ag Educators	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Barley Evaluation and Inspection	\$353,000	\$303,000	\$353,000
Berry Growers Association (FVI)	\$61,000	\$61,000	\$61,000
Berry Research	\$263,000	\$263,000	\$263,000
Black Farmers United of NYS	\$200,000	\$100,000	\$200,000
Christmas Tree Promotion	\$126,000	\$126,000	\$126,000
Corn and Soybean Growers	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Cornell Agricultural Workforce & NYCAMH	\$75,000	\$0	\$75,000
Cornell Agricultural IPM	\$4,250,000	\$4,250,000	\$4,250,000
Cornell AgriVoltaics	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
Cornell CALS Operational Funds for Satellite Farms	\$0	\$0	\$5,000,000
Cornell Concord Grape Research	\$252,000	\$202,000	\$252,000
Cornell Farm Labor Specialist	\$702,000	\$702,000	\$702,000
Cornell Industrial Hemp Research and Workforce Development	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Cornell Pro Dairy	\$1,463,000	\$1,338,000	\$2,463,000
Cornell Pro Livestock Program	\$250,000	\$0	\$250,000
Cornell Small Farms Equitable Farm Futures	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Cornell University 4-H	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Cornell University Ruminant Center (CURC)	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$500,000
Cornell University Small Farms Program	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Cornell Urban Ag Education and Outreach	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Dairy Excellence and Dairy Profit Teams	\$374,000	\$374,000	\$374,000
Diagnostic Lab Programs at Cornell Animal Health Surveillance & Control Programs including Avian Disease, Cattle Health Assurance, Johnes Disease and Quality Milk Production	\$8,970,000	\$8,270,000	\$8,270,000
Double Up Food Bucks (Office of Temporary Disability Budget)	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$6,000,000
Empire Sheep Producers Association	\$75,000	\$0	\$75,000
Farm Net (Farm Family Assistance)	\$1,000,000	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000
Farm to School Initiative	\$1,508,000	\$1,508,000	\$1,508,000
Farm Viability Institute	\$2,150,000	\$1,000,000	\$5,000,000
Funding to AGM for Promotion of Fairs	\$2,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000
Funds for Farmers Impacted by Tariffs		\$30,000,000	\$30,000,000
Golden Nematode	\$63,000	\$63,000	\$63,000
Hard Cider Research	\$202,000	\$202,000	\$202,000
Harvest NY	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Honeybee Research	\$152,000	\$152,000	\$152,000
Hop Growers of NY-Promotion/Grower Pilot Program	\$100,000	\$0	\$200,000
Hops Breeding and Research	\$300,000	\$0	\$300,000
Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program HPNAP (Health Budget)	\$57,797,000	\$34,547,000	\$75,000,000
John May Farm Safety Fund	\$300,000	\$450,000	\$500,000
MANRRS Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (new)	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Maple Producers Association	\$251,000	\$152,000	\$275,000
Maple Research	\$151,000	\$76,000	\$350,000
Natural Fiber Production, Processing and Distribution	\$0	\$0	\$300,000
New York Apple Association	\$1,500,000	\$483,000	\$1,500,000
New York Brewers Promotion	\$100,000	\$76,000	\$100,000
New York FFA	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000

		FY 26-27 Executive Proposal	FY 26-27 Organizational Request
<b>AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS</b>	<b>FY 25-26 Final Budget</b>		
New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) (Mary Imogene Basset hospital)	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000
New York Cider Association	\$108,750	\$326,000	\$32,600
New York Distillers' Guild	\$100,000	\$76,000	\$100,000
New York State Horse Council	\$0	\$0	\$100,000
NOFA-NY	\$200,000	\$0	\$250,000
North Country Ag Development	\$300,000	\$0	\$300,000
NOURISH NY	\$55,000,000	\$50,000,000	\$75,000,000
NYS Vegetable Growers Association	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Onion Research	\$71,000	\$51,000	\$75,000
Premium funds for Fairs	\$550,000	\$500,000	\$750,000
30% Farm to School Program (Education Budget)	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund	\$250,000	\$0	\$350,000
Vegetable Research	\$126,000	\$51,000	\$250,000
Wine & Grape Foundation	\$1,225,000	\$1,075,000	\$1,625,000
<b>Capital Funding</b>			
Cornell CALS Equipment & Infrastructure Repairs on Satalite Farms	\$0	\$2,500,000	\$5,000,000
Dairy Farm Modernization Grant, Farm and Food Growth Fund	\$10,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$24,000,000
Industrial Hemp Initiative	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Infrastructure Grants for Fairs	\$0	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
New York Focused Meals Regional School Infrastructure	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
<b>EPF</b>			
Agricultural Non-point	\$18,500,000	\$18,700,000	\$18,700,000
Cornell pesticide management education program	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Agricultural Waste Management	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000
CALS Pollinator BMP's	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
CleanSweep NY Program	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Climate & Applied Forestry Research Institute	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Climate Resilient Farming	\$19,500,000	\$19,100,000	\$19,500,000
Cornell Dairy Acceleration Program	\$700,000	\$700,000	\$700,000
Cornell Soil Health Program	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$700,000
Farmland Protection	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000
Capacity Grants	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Forest Preservation on Ag. Land for Carbon Sequestration	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
Invasive Species	\$18,550,000	\$18,550,000	\$18,550,000
Long Island Pesticide Prevention	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Pollinator Diversity Research	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Regenerate NY Grant Program	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Soil and Water Conservation Districts	\$18,000,000	\$18,650,000	\$18,650,000
Wood Products Development Council	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$200,000

## **Agricultural Education, FFA, Agriculture in the Classroom: Creating an Agriculturally Literate Generation & Developing Agriculture Leaders of Tomorrow in All New York Communities**

The Agricultural Education Outreach programs at Cornell University play a critical role in educating youth about food and fiber production, processing, marketing, and distribution across New York State, while highlighting career opportunities in the state's growing agriculture, food, and natural resources industries. Agriculture, food, and natural resources employ more New Yorkers than any other industry, yet as the average age of farmers rises, fewer residents remain connected to the state's food system.

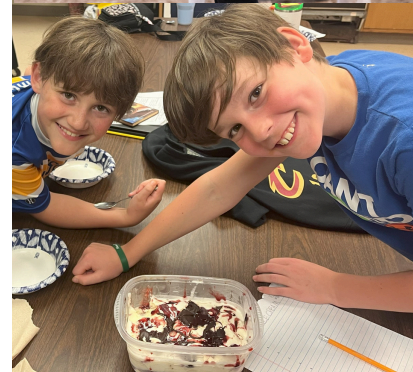
A growing population with diverse needs and emerging challenges requires a skilled, engaged workforce. Agricultural Education and FFA leadership development respond by promoting sustainability, food access, and stronger local food systems. Investments in PreK–12 programs attract youth to high-demand agricultural careers and build agricultural literacy, positively shaping consumer and citizen choices across New York.

### **2026-2027 Funding Priorities:**

**New York FFA- \$1,000,000**  
**New York Association of Ag. Educators - \$500,000**  
**New York Agriculture in the Classroom - \$500,000**  
**New York Urban Agriculture Education- \$250,000**

### **Plans and Key Accomplishments**

- Strengthen the agricultural sector by preparing diverse skilled workers and increasing agricultural literacy, reaching 500,000+ school aged youth annually.
- Facilitate virtual and in-person programs to use food and agriculture as authentic PreK–12 learning experiences in all 62 NY counties.
- Expand urban agricultural education, literacy, and FFA chapters in underserved, densely populated areas.
- Provide resources for schools to start or upgrade agricultural education and FFA programs; 137 schools received funds in FY24–25 to grow programs.
- Offer virtual and hybrid professional development with activity-based workshops to retain teachers and strengthen agriscience programs.
- Address the shortage of certified educators with recruitment and retention services; 64 new teachers joined induction and mentoring programs in 2024–25.
- Teach youth the value of healthy foods by providing indoor grow systems, curriculum, and training to extend school gardening.
- In FY23–24, New York FFA chartered 22 new chapters (including urban programs); membership grew to 13,500+ students. In 2025, 3,500+ students, educators, and guests attended the 100th state convention.





# Cornell CALS

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Cornell CALS helps support New York's \$85.8B food system. We work together, encouraging local farm and food production and rebuilding communities by focusing on economic and environmental resiliency, health, youth and workforce education. The impact of Cornell CALS research is a total of \$5.98B of economic worth to NY. As the state's Land Grant partner for over 150 years, CALS is privileged to provide science-based solutions to NY's communities.

**Cornell CALS** is pleased to provide additional detailed information on any of these programs.

**Contact:**

**Julie Suarez**  
[jcs433@cornell.edu](mailto:jcs433@cornell.edu)  
**(518) 728-6061**

## Cornell CALS 2026-27 Budget Priorities

Cornell CALS supports the Governor's proposal to fully fund many Cornell programs, including NYS IPM, Cornell Small Farms, FarmNet, and youth agricultural education programs in rural to urban areas.

### Program restorations needed:

#### Agriculture & Markets ATL: Total (restorations)

Cornell Barley R&D: \$353,000 (\$50,000 restore)  
Cornell Concord Grape R&D: \$252,000 (\$50,000 restore)  
Cornell Hops R&D: \$300,000 (\$300,000 restore)  
Cornell Onion R&D: \$70,000 (\$20,000 restore)  
Cornell PRO-LIVESTOCK \$250,000 (\$250,000 restore)  
Cornell Vegetable R&D: \$126,000 (\$75,000 restore)

#### Agriculture & Markets ATL: Total (Increased funding)

Cornell Maple Program: \$350,000 (\$274,000 add)  
Cornell PRO-DAIRY Program: \$2.463M (\$1,125,000 add)  
Cornell Ruminant Center: \$500k (\$125,000 add)

#### Empire State Development Corp. ATL:

Cornell AgriTech Center of Excellence in Food & Agriculture Innovation + Eastern NY Satellite Hub: \$1,250,000 (\$354,545 restore)

#### Center for AgriVoltaics Restoration AGM:

CALS respectfully requests \$500k in funding restoration for the Center for AgriVoltaics research, facilitating smarter solar siting that is compatible with energy and food production. Recent advances include studying vegetable and fruit crop performance under solar; and exploring biodiversity issues including grassland birds and pollinators.



**Partner Support:** Cornell CALS relies on many partners in improving food system sustainability. Cornell CALS supports the NY Farm Viability Institute, AFT's Farmland for the Next Generation Program, NY Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, and various commodity research programs like the Apple Research Development Program, North Country Agriculture Program, Wine and Grape Foundation, Hops, Cider, Brewery & Distillery promotion funds.

### Dairy Specific programming: Cornell PRO DAIRY and Research and Teaching Dairy

NY's dairy community is poised for transformational growth, with over \$3B in private investment making NYS the TOP state in the nation for dairy production. This growth will necessitate increased milk supply. CALS goal is to help farm families meet the need for additional protein and milk components by providing science-based solutions for continually improving per-cow efficiencies, making sure that farmers can meet demand without being limited by land, economics, while continually improving environmental stewardship.



## Cornell CALS Core Capital Support \$5M (support Governor Hochul's \$2.5M)

With NY's resources of people, land, and water, NY agriculture is well-positioned to help meet local food needs for decades to come. Cornell CALS satellite research farms and forests need capital support to ensure that scientific capacity is localized to regional communities, sustainably intensifying food production for a food secure future.

## Cornell CALS Core Operating Funds Support \$5M

Investing in core support for CALS satellite research farms and forests from Long Island to Western NY is critically important to ensure the future success of research and education within all of NY's communities. Funding will be utilized to support plant and crop breeding for new climate, health, and culturally appropriate foods, adding a suite of agricultural intelligence and robotics capacity in our satellite farms, developing controlled environment agriculture and providing farm families with a competitive innovation advantage.

**EPF:** Cornell CALS participates in Adirondack's SCALE consortium, a long-term data collection and analysis effort with multiple partners surveying ADK lakes to determine impacts of atmospheric pollutants and a warming climate on fisheries and ecosystem health. Cornell CALS requests a funding restoration & expansion to \$2M. CALS supports Executive Budget recommendations for various Cornell environmental stewardship programs such as Soil Health, Community IPM, Hemlock Initiative, and the Climate & Applied Forestry Research Institute with SUNY ESF.

### SUNY: Cornell Cooperative Extension - \$7.4M

\$7.4M (\$3M total additional funding)  
Cornell County Cooperative Extension staff reached over 1.4M NYS residents this past year with education and outreach. 250,000 4-H youth across the state have been part of leadership, STEM, and food and environmental sciences activities designed to build life-long skills. This funding includes New York City CCE.



## Industry vision of \$2.963M annually for economically and environmentally sustainable dairy

### Demand for milk is increasing as new processing plants open

New York dairy farms generate more than \$4 billion dollars annually in farm gate sales. Overall the dairy industry contributes \$12 billion to our rural and urban economies. Dairy companies are investing billions of dollars to build new processing capacity in NY, which is driving demand for billions of pounds more milk in the next few years. To maximize benefit to the NY dairy industry, NY dairy farmers should produce much of this milk, while also supporting NYS greenhouse gas reduction goals and maintaining clean water. To help the NY dairy industry meet this unprecedented opportunity, based on a recommendation by the PRO-DAIRY Plus Advisory Committee, a group of dairy farmers, industry and agency personnel, we request additional investment in the PRO-DAIRY Program and the Cornell University Ruminant Center.

### Support PRO-DAIRY total budget of \$2.463M (Increase of \$1M annually)

PRO-DAIRY is a nationally recognized extension and applied research program that has provided business, environmental, and production management-related educational programs to New York dairy farms of all sizes for more than 35 years.



The additional \$1M requested includes:

- \$500K for five new positions: two Farm Business Management specialists, and one specialist each in Dairy Nutrition, in Youth/Emerging Farmer, and in Animal Well-Being.
- \$500K for applied research and extension support.

### \$500K to Cornell University Ruminant Center (CURC)

CURC is the only university research dairy in the US equipped to conduct research at scale to identify strategies that improve production of milk and milk components, decrease the intensity of GHG emissions, and safely test the true capabilities of what our cows and dairy farmers can accomplish. Therefore, we also request \$500K to support research and continued operations at CURC to improve milk production efficiency and mitigate climate-related challenges.

### 2025 Advisory Meetings

In January and June, PRO-DAIRY staff and CALS faculty sought priorities from the PRO-DAIRY Plus Advisory Committee, consisting of dairy farmers, industry organizations, and governmental agency staff.

Priorities included:

- Support of critical applied research.
- Meet state policy objectives with the new dairy processing capacity currently under construction.
- Additional staff to support farm business management and sound decision-making.
- Additional staff to accelerate dairy farm adoption of new dairy nutrition principles to maximize output of milk and milk components while decreasing greenhouse gas intensity.
- Support to implement dairy animal well-being practices.

### PRO-DAIRY Expertise and Programming

- Climate Leadership
- Environmental Systems
- Farm Business Management
- Forage Systems
- Herd Health and Management
- Nutrient Management
- Production Education
- Strategic Farmstead Planning
- Student Internships
- Youth

The Dairy Advancement Program (DAP), in partnership with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, assists NY dairies to position their farms for long-term economic and environmental sustainability. DAP is coordinated through PRO-DAIRY and delivered to farms in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension and agriservice professionals. The average size farm awarded funds within the categories of business planning and environmental planning is 230 cows and ranged from 35 to 690 cows.

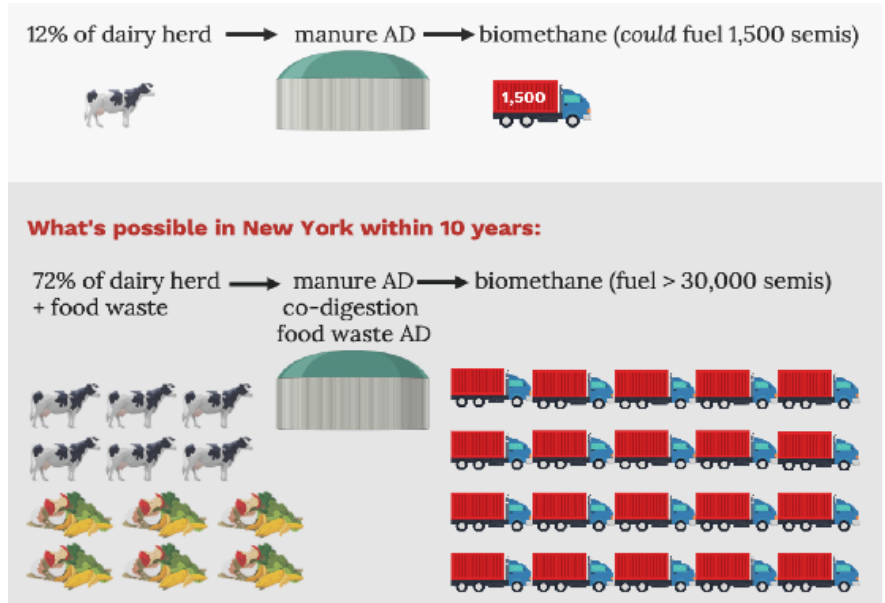
# Program Impact

## PRO-DAIRY estimates biomethane energy potential in New York State

**Biomethane from New York's dairy manure and food waste could fuel over 30,000 tractor trailers annually, displacing at least 300 million gallons of diesel.**

At least 12 percent of the NY dairy herd has implemented manure anaerobic digestion (AD) to biomethane. This energy (with its GHG reduction) has market value under California's Low Carbon Fuel Standard. It could be meeting NY's needs instead.

- Bioenergy is necessary to reach NY climate targets and is part of moving to a circular bioeconomy where organic resources are best utilized and recycled.
- Manure and food waste AD are complementary in that they produce energy and recover valuable nutrients to enhance NY's soil health and fertility.
- Current management practices of livestock manure and landfilling organics are responsible for over 25 percent of NY's anthropogenic methane emissions. Smartly designed and maintained AD systems capture this methane and put it to productive use as a flexible and non-fossil fuel energy resource.
- This industry requires distributed job creation in rural, populated, and disadvantaged communities, including local construction trades, operation and maintenance personnel, and engineers.
- Bioenergy technology is already commercially available at many scales, and enhanced energy recovery processes are being innovated that will expand the energy potential over time.



## Critical research at the Cornell University Ruminant Center (CURC)

### Environmentally sound methods to feed cows



Ananda B. P. Fontoura, MS, DVM, PhD, postdoctoral associate, Department of Animal Science, conducts research at CURC.

For more than a century, Cornell University has been a center of excellence in dairy nutrition research and extension. This tradition continues with locally and globally important work conducted at the Cornell University Ruminant Center.

A critical example is research to expand knowledge of dairy cow nutritional needs that allows farmers to most efficiently feed the nutrients cows need to maintain health and productivity. By learning how to adjust dairy diets to feed individual proteins (amino acids), the work by professor Mike Van Amburgh's research team helps farmers increase the value of milk produced from a given amount of feed. This is a win:win for farmers and the environment as farm economics improve while fewer nutrients and greenhouse gases are generated. This will allow NYS producers to meet new demand for milk with fewer cows.

Over time the team has also developed the Cornell Net Carbohydrate and Protein System (CNCPS) dairy nutrition model that is used by most of the NY dairy herd (and many others) to formulate a balanced diet for cows. A new version of CNCPS will be released in the fourth quarter of 2025 that allows farmers and nutritionists to quickly implement pioneering dairy research.

The team is seeking funding to support continuous improvement of this critical work that serves production and environmental goals of NY dairy. This kind of foundational work can only be done at a place like CURC, and it can only be delivered broadly and quickly to the industry through CNCPS and our nationally recognized dairy extension network.



**Empire Sheep Producers Association**  
Holly Wilson, President  
4585 Christian Rd., Dansville, NY 14437

**ABOUT THE SHEEP INDUSTRY IN NEW YORK STATE – 82,000 SHEEP AND GROWING!**

The sheep industry in NYS continues to grow despite a national declining trend. NYS is one of only 3-4 states in the US in which there is an increase in both the number of sheep and in the number of sheep farmers (in January 2025 there were over 2000 farms). NYS ranks 13th in the US in lamb, wool, and sheep dairy production combined. Wool production in NYS in 2025 was over 300,000 pounds according to the American Sheep Industry Association.

NYS’s sheep industry supports the production of hay, feed, and other agribusinesses; and is keeping farmland in production. **The sheep industry is climate beneficial – farming practices sequester carbon and products made from wool are fully biodegradable at the end of their life cycle.** With relatively low costs of entry and small acreage requirements, sheep farming attracts many young and beginning farmers.

In 2018, a new annual line item was established in the NYS Ag Budget to provide funding for the Empire Sheep Producers Association’s sheep and wool education and marketing initiatives. In each of 2021, 2022, and 2023, the Association received \$50,000 to help extend the NY Grown and Certified branding program to wool products and several other producer and consumer education and marketing projects. In 2024-25, the budget line was increased to \$60,000, and in 2025-2026, it went to \$75,000.

**2026-27 REQUEST FOR SUPPORT SHEEP AND WOOL EDUCATION AND MARKETING**

NY Grown & Certified program involvement; and support for new Textile Act Workgroup and NY Textile Innovation Center. Collaborate with NYS Dept of Ag and Markets, Empire State Development, and others in engaging with members of industry to encourage their adoption of wool products certification standards and continue to assist in brand promotional activities with wholesale and retail consumers. Support new farmer and agri-business recruitment. \$35,000

Wool marketing initiative. Support for collaborative marketing projects being undertaken through partnerships among the Association, fiber processing facilities, Cornell University, and others. Support for Make-it-Yourself-With-Wool Contest and for textile artist education at fiber festivals. Support for ASI wool classing certification program in NYS. \$15,000

Youth and beginning farmer education and training. Support for youth sheep shows and adult education on getting started or increasing profitability of raising sheep for meat, dairy, and wool. Includes support for 2026 NYS Sheep Symposium, beginning fiber farmer workshops, and the new NYS Ewe Show. \$15,000

State Fair Wool Center programs and others. Increase understanding of the value that the NYS sheep industry adds to the quality of people’s lives and to the state’s economy. Develop and coordinate year-round programming and additional exhibits in new Sheep Barn and Wool Center at Fair and duplicate exhibits for use at county fairs and NYS Sheep and Wool Festival. \$10,000

**TOTAL** **\$75,000**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Mary Jeanne Packer, ESPA Secretary  
mjpacker@battenkillfibers.com 518-692-2700 (mill) 802-236-0881 (mobile)

NYSHC  
PO Box 424  
Arkport, NY 14807  
607-765-8543



[www.nyshc.org](http://www.nyshc.org)

## ADVOCACY 2026

### EQUINE ADVOCACY, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT YOUTH LEADERSHIP BOARD, SAFETY AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

#### **REQUEST**

We respectfully request that a line item of \$100,000 be appropriated for the New York State Horse Council, Inc. (NYSHC) in the 2026-2027 budget for the expansion of education programs, workforce development, the establishment of a NYSHC Youth Leadership Board and marketing dedicated to advocating for all breeds and all disciplines of horses in New York State.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Founded in 1968, the New York State Horse Council, Inc., a volunteer organization, advocates for horses, open space preservation, and trails across the Empire State. The Mission of the NYSHC is "to create a strong unified voice for all interests toward the preservation of a future for horses in New York State." According to the 2023 New York State Equine Economic Impact Survey, the NYS Horse Industry and related businesses generate seven billion dollars in revenue each year. This income stream includes agricultural products, professionals (veterinarians, farriers, trainers, riding instructors) the racing industry, recreational rider, horse show participants, boarding and lesson stables, breeding operations, equestrian programs at universities, and more. With increased interest in outdoor recreation, there has been a surge in the purchase of pleasure horses and the need to educate their owners on proper care, safety, and training. The NYSHC has long promoted multi-use trails on public land, making New York a premier tourist destination for trail riders. Therefore, the New York State Horse Council, Inc. is requesting a \$100,000 allocation to support the following programs.

1. \$20,000 Equine Industry Workforce Development and Skills Training
2. \$10,000 Establish a NYSHC Youth Leadership Board with representatives from Equine University programs, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H, U.S. Pony Club, and others.
3. \$30,000 Equestrian and Multi-Use Trail Improvements on Public Lands
4. \$20,000 Emergency Preparedness – Large Animal Rescue Training and Safety Education for Barn Owners, Horse Handlers, and EMS personnel
5. \$20,000 Marketing and Education – includes collaboration with the American Horse Council, Coalition of State Horse Councils, Cornell University, and other Equine University and Education Programs in New York State

#### **GOALS**

The NYSHC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with significant achievements through its dedicated volunteers. The appropriation of \$100,000 would provide funding to advance the New York State Equine Industry with the following NYSHC initiatives: Workforce Development and Skills Training; establishment of a NYSHC Youth Leadership Board; funding for Equestrian and Multi-use trail improvements on public lands; Large Animal Rescue Training and Safety Education; Marketing and Equine Education. To accomplish these goals, the NYSHC plans to collaborate with other equine organizations, universities and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

# Turfgrass Advocacy 2026

New York State Turfgrass Association



## THE TURFGRASS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP FUND

### **REQUEST**

We respectfully request that a line item of \$350,000 be appropriated for the New York Greengrass Association in the 2026-2027 budget for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund.

### **BACKGROUND**

The turfgrass industry is an important industry in New York State. According to the New York State Turfgrass Survey, close to 3.5 million acres in the state are covered with turfgrass, consisting of lawns, parks, golf courses, sports fields, sod farms, industrial and institutional grounds, rights of way, etc. Five billion dollars of turf maintenance expenses contributed to the State's economy.

Turfgrass has a major impact on the quality of life, as was evident as citizens enjoyed outdoor activities during Covid. Healthy turfgrass provides countless environmental benefits such as storing carbon, holding rainfall for groundwater recharge, reducing erosion, filtering pollutants, absorbing sound, cooling the air temperature and providing plentiful, clean oxygen. Dense, healthy turfgrass provides a safe playing surface for our children and athletes of all ages as well as beautifies and softens our urban landscapes.

A \$350,000 appropriation for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund provides for education and outreach promoting environmentally sustainable and safe practices of turfgrass management and will also allow us to update the turfgrass industry environmental and economic impact survey that was last published in 2003. This survey is an important tool that has been outdated for far too long.

The 2025-2026 State Budget's Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund appropriation was to fund the following eleven projects:

1. Best Management Practices for NYS Golf Courses: *Continued Implementation of Golf Course Environmental Stewardship Efforts*
2. Green Industry Educational Webinars – Continued Implementation
3. Promote Professionalism Through Access to Online Education
4. Workforce Development - Apprenticeship Program Marketing and Outreach
5. Communicate Golf's Water Sustainability Efforts and Advocate for Science Based Water Allotment for Long Island Golf Courses
6. Environmental Stewardship Education for the Northeastern Golf Course Superintendents Association
7. Environmental Stewardship Education for the Hudson Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association
8. Environmental Stewardship Education for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New York
9. Environmental Stewardship Education for the Landscape Contractors Association of Long Island
10. Environmental Stewardship Education for the New York State Turf & Landscape Association
11. New York Greengrass Association Outreach

### **NYSTA PERSPECTIVE**

It is the mission of NYSTA to promote professionalism through education and research while advocating environmentally responsible management. Supporting the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund assists in providing education to turfgrass professionals who are constantly challenged to meet expectations for quality, safety, and environmental sustainability.