

Turfgrass Advocacy

2009



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Background

The New York Farm Viability Institute, Inc. (NYFVI) is an independent, non-profit organization that is led by farmers and dedicated to serving agricultural producers regardless of enterprise, size of business or location in New York. NYFVI fosters a vibrant agricultural/horticultural sector in New York by supporting applied research, education, information transfer, technology adoption and market analysis to reduce practical barriers to the success of farming enterprises.

NYFVI was established in 2004 with seed funding and in-kind support from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and Cornell University, along with a \$1 million USDA grant administered by Cornell. Direct State funding for NYFVI totaled \$3.38 million in 2005 and \$4.5 - \$5 million in each subsequent year. The Institute has a strong record of success. For example, the 2005 state appropriation of \$3.38 million, was used to fund 33 projects that had a farm-level impact of more that \$35 million: \$13 million in new farm sales, \$9.5 million in decreased costs, and \$12 million in farmer capital investment. Additionally, 59 full-time jobs and 19 part-time jobs were created.

NYSTA Perspective

The NYFVI is important to the future of New York agriculture/horticulture. Institute-funded projects help farm businesses in areas that are critical for remaining competitive and viable: controlling production costs, making quality products, adopting new technology, embracing business management, market development, continuing education, applied research, and more. The unique structure and method of operation of the NYFVI makes it the perfect vehicle to increase the viability of New York's important agriculture sector. The board is comprised of active farmers from a broad range of commodity groups. All project proposals are screened by farmer panels that identify those projects most likely to improve the success and profitability of farming in New York. Requests must demonstrate measurable farm level impacts, provide a mechanism to be shared by the rest of the industry, and include direct farmer involvement. Project impacts are measured at the enterprise level, both to assure that the research the Institute sponsors produces tangible results, and to provide the kind of real-world data on costs and returns that farmers need before they will consider adopting new production techniques and business strategies.

The Institute funds projects in four grant areas: Applied Research Partnership Grants, Agricultural Innovation Grants, Education Innovation Grants and Focus Opportunity Grants. In 2005, Dr. Marty Petrovic received \$80,000 for the project Developing Accelerated Sod Production Methods and in 2006 he received \$40,000 for Reducing Sod Losses from Annual Bluegrass. In 2007, Dr. Daniel Peck received \$198,948 for Curbing the Economic and Environmental Impacts of Invasive Crane Fly Pests on Production Sod Farms. This project will develop best management practices guidelines for monitoring and the selection and timing of pesticides to control an invasive pest that is detrimental to production sod. NYFVI projects help strengthen and grow NY horticulture and agriculture, keep farmland in production, and stimulate rural economic development based on ag innovation.

All agricultural production sectors in New York have specific challenges that limit growth. These challenges make production less economically viable and over time discourage production or make it unprofitable. Through applied research, adoption of new approaches and technology, and in some cases market analysis and development, we believe that these barriers to agricultural growth can be addressed and overcome. NYFVI provides support to all commodity sectors – dairy and livestock, our diverse nursery, turf, and greenhouse industries, and field crops, vegetables, and fruit sectors.

Recommendation

We recommend a state appropriation of \$3.3 million in the 2010 fiscal year budget to support the New York Farm Viability Institute.