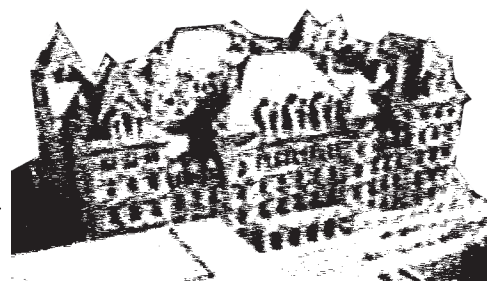


Turfgrass Advocacy

2003



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New York State agriculture is a very diverse and dynamic industry. Agriculture/horticulture provides employment to thousands of New Yorkers throughout the state and generates millions of dollars in tax base to support hundreds of local communities and school districts. It is a complex industry involving not only producers, but input providers, processors and those involved in the marketing of farm and food products in the US and to foreign markets.

New York agriculture faces many challenges in an increasingly global marketplace. The ability of New York agricultural-related businesses to be viable requires a commitment to keep costs of production at low levels, while maintaining high levels of productivity and adopting new technologies and management systems.

It is important that the public and private sectors work together in a partnership to foster growth of agriculture and the related industries. Assistance from the state is necessary in the areas of market development, farm product promotion, technology transfer, applied research and other initiatives. Furthermore, state government must continue to take actions to keep public sector related costs, such as taxes and fees, at minimum levels to avoid additional costs on agricultural businesses that reduce competitiveness.

Over the past five years, the Council of Agricultural Organizations through the Agricultural Initiative Proposal has highlighted critical areas in which additional resources have been needed. The CAO appreciates support provided by the Governor and the Legislature. In order to facilitate such support, public and private sector legislative efforts must be enhanced in 2003.

WE RECOMMEND:

1. Establishment of a New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI) to serve as a focal point for efforts to grow New York's agriculture, horticulture, and food industries. The NYFVI authorizing legislation shall:
 - Provide a broad mission to support programs and projects to enhance farm viability and competitiveness and seek to strengthen the state's agriculture/horticulture industry.
 - Allow for a Board of Directors made up of representatives of the general farm organizations, commodity organizations, agricultural cooperatives, agricultural business organizations and representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Markets and Cornell University College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.
 - Allow new funding from the state for on-going operations and program development.
 - Enable NYFVI to seek and receive funds from other government and private sources.
 - Allow the NYFVI to provide funding of programs and projects on an annual and multi-year basis.
 - Authorize the NYFVI to recommend new program development and seek new funding in areas of need.
 - Provide for the authorization to staff the NYFVI in an effective manner.
2. Support for the continuation of regional cooperative specialists that are providing essential services to farmers/horticulturists to enhance economic viability. Regional cooperative extension programs should be supported by state funding.