



KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

RICHARD A. BALL
Commissioner

**Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Joint Budget Hearing Testimony
Tuesday, February 14, 2023**

**Richard A. Ball, Commissioner
New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets**

Good morning Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, Senator Hinchey, Assemblymember Lupardo, members of the agriculture committees, and elected officials. I am honored to present my testimony on the Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget for the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

This year's Executive Budget recommends nearly \$297 million for the Department, allowing us to continue to work towards our core mission and build exciting new programs that will boost New York agriculture.

The proposed Budget makes significant investments in the industry by focusing on strengthening the food supply chain and securing food production here in New York. This includes Governor Hochul's bold proposals for a refundable investment tax credit to encourage modernization of New York's farms and initiatives to increase demand for New York State foods.

The Governor has proposed making the 20% Investment Tax Credit for farmers a reimbursable refund for five years. This will provide an incentive for additional on-farm production investment.

Building off the success of initiatives like Farm to School, the 30% NYS Initiative, and Nourish New York, the Governor will set a goal to expand institutional and agency buying of New York State food to 30% by 2028. We currently spend almost \$4 million on New York food. This effort would aim to procure and purchase nearly \$400 million worth of food from our farmers.

The Governor also announced a \$50 million investment over five years to support "scratch" cooking facilities—with \$10 million dedicated this budget year. This will help encourage the use of fresh New York State farm products in meal preparation for K-12 school children, reduce food insecurity, increase market opportunities for New York's producers, and strengthen the resiliency of our state's food system.

Understanding that labor is a critical component of the supply chain, the Governor has pledged to build a strong agricultural workforce and address the food supply workforce shortage. This year's Executive Budget includes \$1 million to support agricultural workforce development. The Department will work to identify internships and apprenticeships for young people and those interested in a second career in agriculture. It will also connect our workers, including migrant individuals and asylum seekers, directly with industry opportunities.

The Governor also proposed providing additional funding in this year's budget to the Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program and the Farmers' Market Resiliency Grant Program. Supporting community growing spaces such as community gardens, school gardens, and urban farms will help make local food accessible to more residents.

Building on last year's budget, the Governor has committed additional funding to bring more opportunities in agriculture to New Yorkers in historically marginalized groups. She has proposed funding for Black Farmers United and the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Grant Program to continue to address underrepresentation in the industry. In addition, the Executive Budget includes \$13.5 million for our Agribusiness Child Development Centers (ABCD), allowing ABCD to expand education, health, and nutrition services to the children of migrant farm families in 13 centers located across New York State.

Governor Hochul has proposed \$5 million again this year to continue to support the Companion Animal Capital Fund. The program provides animal shelters funding to make critical upgrades that enhance care for our dogs and cats.

The Great New York State Fair will receive a proposed \$14 million investment under the Executive Budget. This will support infrastructure projects on the Fairgrounds, such as reconstructing the Milk Bar, building out the Greenhouse Educational Center, and more. These improvements will help us to build on the Governor's goal to make the Fair a real showcase of New York agriculture. Additionally, the Executive Budget includes \$2 million in marketing funds for our county fairs.

Further supporting the agricultural industry, the Executive Budget proposes nearly \$48 million in local assistance for key programs focused on research, education, and marketing.

The Governor also has pledged her commitment to aggressively tackle climate change and protect the environment. With her proposal of a \$400 million investment in the Environmental Protection Fund, we will see the continued funding of several critical programs, including Farmland Protection, Cornell Soil Health, the Soil and Water Conservation Committee, and the Climate Resilient Farming program. Agriculture is most certainly part of the solution when it comes to combatting climate change. These programs will not only help us reach our goals but will also spur growth on our farms.

We have a lot to be proud of when it comes to New York agriculture, yet there is more work to be done. We look forward to hearing your priorities and working with you to strengthen the agricultural community.

Thank you.