



ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: Oversight of the SFY 2016-2017 State Budget for the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

PURPOSE: To review the impact and implementation of the State Budget for agriculture.

Albany, New York
Tuesday
September 27th, 2016
11:00 AM
Hearing Room C
Legislative Office Building, 2nd Floor
Albany, New York

The Assembly Standing Committee on Agriculture oversees New York State's agriculture, food, animal protection, and other regulatory programs administered by the State Department of Agriculture and Markets. In the SFY 2016-2017 Department of Agriculture and Markets budget, the Legislature included an estimated \$51 million for local assistance, \$108 million for State operations, and \$10.5 million for capital projects at the New York State Fair and for Local Fairs. The purpose of this hearing is to examine the overall impact and implementation of the 2016-2017 budget, and assess the impact and effectiveness of New York's agricultural programs. This hearing will also examine the agricultural industry's economic significance to New York State and challenges that agricultural producers are facing in bringing their products to market.

Ten copies of any prepared testimony should be submitted at the hearing registration desk. The Committee would appreciate advance receipt of prepared statements.

In order to further publicize these hearings, please inform interested parties and organizations of the Committee's interest in hearing testimony from all relevant sources.

To meet the needs of those who may have a disability, the Assembly, in accordance with its policy of non-discrimination on the basis of disability, and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), has made its facilities and services available to all individuals with disabilities. For individuals with disabilities, upon reasonable request, accommodations will be provided to afford such individuals access and admission to Assembly facilities and activities.

William Magee
Member of Assembly
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture

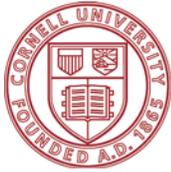


ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Public Hearing on Oversight of the SFY 2016-2017 State Budget for the
New York State Department of Agriculture
Tuesday, September 27, 2016

Witness List

1. Richard A. Ball, Commissioner
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
2. Libby Post
NYS Animal Protection Federation
3. Steve Griffin
Board Member
NYS Farm Viability Institute
4. Allissa Eiser, RD
Food Service Director –Bethlehem Central School District
New York State School Nutrition Association
5. James Allen, President
NYS Apple Association
6. Claudia Kenny, Statewide Director and Christine Tausel, Program Director
New York State Agricultural Mediation Program
7. Keith Tidball, Senior Extension Associate
Cornell University College of Agriculture & Life Sciences
8. Laura Ten Eyck
Senior New York Project and Outreach Manager
American Farmland Trust
9. Sue McDonough, Legislation Committee Member
NYS Humane Association



Cornell University
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

September 27, 2016

Testimony for the Assembly Agriculture Committee
Submitted by Keith Tidball, Senior Extension Associate
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Cornell Cooperative Extension

On behalf of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) and the Cornell Cooperative Extension System, I'd like to thank Chairman Magee and the members of the Assembly Standing Committee on Agriculture for the opportunity to testify here today.

As part of the annual budgetary oversight hearing, CALs simply wanted to share an update on a program that is, unfortunately, being called upon more often to respond to farmers facing natural disaster situations, the Cornell Cooperative Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN). In the wake of natural disasters such as Hurricanes Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene, it became increasingly clear to the Cornell Cooperative Extension system and its leadership, the Department of Agriculture and Markets, State Emergency Management personnel, and the farm community that while the farm community comes together quickly to assist other farmers in need, a centralized and systemic approach to handling disaster communications would significantly increase efficiency and decrease delays in deploying assistance to farmers facing severe weather related disasters.

As farmers by the nature of their business tend to be located in more isolated areas and not by population centers, it has been difficult for emergency service providers facing an immediate threat to focus on disaster management assistance to farmer. 911 call centers are poorly equipped to deal with the many farm emergencies that can arise in disasters. Various flooding events in the Southern Tier, as well as Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, exposed the difficulties in coordinating assistance to farmers who are frequently more impacted by power delays and road closures as livestock must still be cared for, milk must still be cooled, even in a natural disaster.

In the aftermath of those storms and to address the specific needs of the farm and rural community, NY EDEN, a federal and state partnership program, was created to serve as a education and coordination entity between county cooperative extension associations, the statewide extension system, state and local agencies and emergency management officials, and private sector partner organizations. I'm here today as the Director of NY EDEN to provide you with an update on the program, and to share the EDEN system's Disaster All-Hazards Response Team activation to provide emergency coordination and information to farmers faced with the severe drought in much of the state this year.

The NY EDEN program is part of the national Extension Disaster Education Network, a network of land grant universities engaging in education, outreach, and coordination in disaster and emergency situations, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, USDA. NY

EDEN received key startup funding from the Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop standard operating procedures for the state-wide cooperative extensions system during disaster, an integrated information collection system and associated dashboard data display called NY Ag Sentinel, and a comprehensive website that displays real-time information coming from cooperative extension agents in every county, all so NY Ag & Markets staff assigned to the Emergency Operations Center have the most up to date and accurate information available dealing with the agriculture and rural sectors. This capacity for Cornell Cooperative Extension's Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and CALS to adopt a disaster education and response posture before, during, and after a disaster is called the Disaster All-Hazards Response Team, or DART, and is activated upon the request of the Department of Agriculture and Markets. NY EDEN, and its Disaster All-Hazards Response Team continues to play its operational role through support from federal dollars into the extension system. As this is a budget oversight hearing, I wanted to share how very pleased CALS is with the ability to better serve the farm and rural community at times of greatest challenge. The state funding, provided in 2013, enabled our program to truly get off the ground by funding the creation of the NY Ag Sentinel Platform and DART within NY EDEN.

By way of example and elaboration, the Ag Sentinel platform is a web based dashboard that enables NY EDEN DART team members including county cooperative extension personnel, private organizations serving the farm community and other rural stakeholders, to communicate directly with state emergency management officials during natural disasters requiring efficient tracking systems. In the middle of a large disaster, such as the "Snowpocalypse" that hit Buffalo two years ago, this system was utilized to identify farmers facing imminent threat of greenhouse or barn roof collapse, and helping to deploy emergency management personnel and in this case, a brigade of volunteers, to assist those farmers most in need. Importantly, this system also identified the need for best management practices regarding snow load and snow removal, and we were able to reach into CALS, the wider Cornell community beyond to quickly find the expertise needed to develop engineering specifications to assist farmers with how to recognize dangerous snow load, and how to mitigate the possibility of greenhouse or barn collapse, preventing untold numbers of additional collapses. Unfortunately, many roofs did collapse, and NY EDEN's DART was able to assist the Department of Agriculture and Markets with identifying the more than 80 greenhouse collapses and more than 50 barn roof collapses.

Farmers facing natural disasters are not always capable of immediately reaching out, which is where the partnership between local municipalities and emergency services and county based cooperative extension systems as well as the local county agricultural groups such as county farm bureau's come into play. When NY EDEN Disaster All-Hazards Response Team (DART) is activated, county cooperative extension personnel immediately have specific tasks to contact farmers and rural landowners in their networks to assess their ability to weather the current disaster, or the extent of damages incurred from the disaster, and then to report this information via the Ag Sentinel Dashboard.

NY EDEN's role does not only exist in times of severe natural disasters. In fact, right now, EDEN is heavily engaged in assisting farmers dealing with the drought by providing projections of ground water recharge from the Cornell CALS hosted Northeast Regional Climate Center, to provide technical fact sheets and extension advice to farmers facing challenging issues such as ensuring appropriate nutrition management for dairy cattle in a time

of decreased field crop yields, as well as information compiled by the Department of Agriculture and Markets regarding different drought related financial assistance and crop insurance options.

As we all know, the state is undergoing one of the more severe droughts faced since the inception of the US Drought Monitoring Network in the year 2000. According to the September 1 Monitor, over 50% of the state is experiencing either severe or moderate drought and dryness conditions, with August temperatures recorded as the warmest in New York's history. Cornell's Water Resources Institute has been closely monitoring ground water recharge and stream flows and notes that without a sustained period of rainfall to allow soil to become saturated, it is unlikely that ground water recharge will occur as quickly as normal during the fall.

This has implications for farmers throughout the state, and is why NY EDEN, at the request of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, activated DART on August 31 2016. Since that time, NY EDEN has been actively engaged with Department of Agriculture and Markets staff to support the farm visits by the Commissioner with assistance in identifying farms, providing logistical support via cooperative extension county staff, and by producing and disseminating evidence-based best management practices for water scarcity and agriculture.

Though NY EDEN shines in the days right before, during, and after disaster strikes, our ability to do so is a result of a commitment to disaster education in all phases of a disaster, and a concerted effort to understand and then educate about preparedness for the agriculture and natural resources sectors. We work at this every day, and in evidence of this commitment, our Director of Extension Chris Watkins recently announced a new Assistant Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension for Disaster Education, who will begin October 1, 2016.

In closing, I want to again thank the committee for your strong interest in the Land Grant mission of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Cooperative Extension System. CALS is very pleased to have the opportunity to serve the state's farm and rural community, and that would not be possible without the strong support of the State of New York. I thank you for your partnership.