



Agriculture
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AGRICULTURE NEWS

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STATE AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER RECOGNIZED FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Commissioner Ball Receives Anne B. Gennings Award from NY School Nutrition Association

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard Ball was recognized this week by the New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) for his continued support of child nutrition programs across the State. He was honored during NYSNA's 67th annual Legislative Action Conference with the 2018 Anne B. Gennings award for his role in launching and promoting the State's Farm-to-School program, which funds projects that increase the use of fresh, local foods in schools throughout New York. Since the program began in 2015, the State has funded projects in 108 school districts, benefitting more than 300,000 students.

"I am proud and honored to receive this award; making sure our young people have high-quality, nutritious foods has been a passion of mine since my own children were in school," **Commissioner Ball said.** "I am fortunate to be supported by our Governor and so many people at the Department who share my desire to do more. With their support and partnerships with advocates like the School Nutrition Association, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of our students and our farmers."

Jennifer Martin, Executive Director, New York School Nutrition Association, said, "When the committee met this year to discuss the awards, everyone immediately thought of Commissioner Ball. He's played an integral part in the farm-to-school movement and the growth of these programs in the past few years is largely because of his support. We are honored to be able to work together."

The Anne B. Gennings award is named for the former NYSNA President who devoted her career to supporting school nutrition professionals and improving access to local, healthy foods for children throughout the State. The award is given to a person or

group dedicated to advancing Anne's legacy by actively supporting, promoting, or enhancing child nutrition programs in New York.

The New York Farm-to-School Program is a major component of the State's ongoing efforts to increase the amount of fresh, local foods served in Kindergarten through Grade 12 schools and to link New York's farmers to new markets. The program is also aimed at improving student health and educating young people about agriculture. In his 2018-19 Executive Budget, Governor Cuomo proposed doubling the State's investment in the program to \$1.5 million as part of his No Student Goes Hungry initiative. If passed, the program would serve an estimated 328,000 additional students. In addition, the Governor has also proposed a significant increase in reimbursements for school lunches with at least 30 percent of the ingredients from New York farms.

Under Commissioner Ball's direction, the Department of Agriculture and Markets has implemented additional strategies to increase awareness of the State's regional food systems and strengthen connections between schools, farms and distributors. The Department works in partnership with NYSNA to train and educate school procurement officials and food service directors on local purchasing options. To date, more than 700 food service staff have attended in-person training sessions. The Department is also working closely with the NYS Education Department to incorporate farm tours and future local purchasing training seminars.

In addition, the Department hosted its first-ever Farm-to-School Summit in October 2017 to bring together more than 100 educators, nutrition program managers, and state and federal agencies. The Department also established a procurement workgroup and has created and distributed a local procurement tool kit to schools statewide.

Since 2015, the Department has also been a partner in the NY Thursdays program that brings locally grown or produced foods directly to students in New York City schools on Thursdays. In September 2017, NY Thursdays was expanded to five school districts in Broome and Tioga Counties with support from the Farm-to-School program.

About New York State Farm-to-School

The Farm-to-School Program is funded through the New York State Budget. It was first announced in 2015 as a result of Governor Cuomo's Capital for a Day event in Rochester where State officials met with local partners to examine the needs of school districts and how to make it easier to buy local foods.

The program connects schools with local farms and food producers to strengthen local agriculture, improve student health, and promote regional food systems awareness. Through technical assistance, financial and promotional support, the Department assists schools, distributors and other supporting organizations provide students with nutritious, delicious, seasonally varied meals from local farms and food processors.

For more information on the Farm-to-School program, visit <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/>.

About New York School Nutrition Association

The New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) is a non-profit professional organization representing over 4,400 school nutrition professionals across the state. NYSNA and its members are dedicated to making healthy school meals and nutrition education available to all students. For more information on NYSNA, visit <http://www.nyschoolnutrition.org/>.



