

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted today for legislation to reauthorize federal agricultural spending programs over the next five years (the Farm Bill), including increased investments in specialty crop assistance for apple and grape growers, an extension of the MILC program for dairy farmers, and enhancements to the Food Stamp program for those in need.

“Since taking office, my staff and I have met with over 70 agricultural groups from across Upstate New York – listening carefully to their unique needs. This Farm Bill truly stands up to the test of helping our local family dairy farms and specialty crop growers,” **said Arcuri.**

“Agriculture remains the number one industry in New York State – employing twelve percent of the workforce and generating over \$3.6 billion in economic activity each year. This Farm Bill makes substantial commitments to conservation, nutrition, and renewable energy – and for the first time provides substantial support for the fruit and vegetable industry. This bill will help family farms from Herkimer to Cayuga counties by giving them the support they need to compete successfully and grow the local economy.”

Earlier this year, Arcuri hosted Agricultural Roundtables in Herkimer and Cayuga counties where he brought together local dairy farmers, organic and vegetable farmers, with representatives from diverse governmental, business, and educational agriculture organizations to hear directly from the local agricultural community what they needed in the Farm Bill.

### **Arcuri offered three amendments to the Farm Bill on behalf of local dairy farmers and to provide an increase in funding for biomass energy programs:**

Arcuri was joined by Reps. Peter Welch (D-VT) and fellow Upstate New Yorker Kirsten Gillibrand (D-Hudson) in offering an amendment to urge the U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) to consider increased costs of production, like energy and feed, when determining the price of Class I milk. From 2001 to 2006, costs of gasoline and fuel have increased over 100%; the cost of feed has increased nearly 20%; and the cost of fertilizer has increased over 40%. While all of the costs of production are based on market prices – the price a dairy farmer can charge for a hundred weight of fluid milk is not. The amendment was offered and withdrawn, and the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee agreed to work with Arcuri on the issue during conference negotiations.

Arcuri joined Welch to add a provision to the review process for the Federal Milk Marketing Order Review Commission to include an evaluation of cost of production variables, including cost of feed and cost of fuel as well as encourage the Commission to be regionally diverse. This amendment was also offered and withdrawn, and the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee agreed to work with Arcuri on the issue during conference negotiations.

“With approximately 6,800 dairy farmers, New York ranks third in milk production nationwide. Family farms in the 24th district need a safety net when prices fall and costs increase,” **Arcuri said**. “I strongly supported extending the MILC program in this Farm Bill and offered these amendments to ask that rising input prices are into account when determining milk support prices to help local farms struggling with rising fuel and feed costs.”

Arcuri also joined Rep. Paul Hodes (D-NH) to offer an amendment that creates a federal-state partnership to provide matching-fund grants and technical assistance to help communities purchase and install community wood energy systems in public buildings – helping the local economy and reducing our dependence on foreign oil. The Amendment passed the House by voice-vote.

### **The Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) would help farmers in New York by maintaining or expanding critical programs.**

**The Farm Bill includes a five year extension of the MILC program**, which will benefit New York’s 6,200 dairy farms. Without control over the price of their product, local dairy farmers rely on the MILC safety net if the market takes a turn downward.

**The Farm Bill invests more than \$1.5 billion in programs to strengthen and support the fruit and vegetable industry** – providing \$365 million in mandatory funding to expand the specialty crop block grant program, which allows states to support projects in research, marketing education, pest and disease management, production and food safety. The value of New York’s tree fruit and grape production totaled \$329 million in 2006.

**The Farm bill adds \$4.3 billion for conservation programs** that take environmentally-sensitive land out of farming and encourage environmentally-friendly practices on working farmland – improving funding and access to preserve farm and ranchland, improve water quality and quantity, and enhance soil conservation, air quality, and wildlife habitat on working lands.

**The Farm Bill increases funding for Food Stamps and nutrition programs by \$4.2 billion over five years.** In addition, the bill strengthens and enhances the food stamp program by reforming benefit rules to improve coverage of food costs, expand access to the program with additional funding support, and prevents states from privatizing food stamp programs. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, 1.8 million New Yorkers (26 million Americans) rely on food stamps to help them purchase a nutritionally adequate diet.

**The Farm Bill reduces bureaucracy and government waste.** Arcuri supported Representative Rahm Emanuel’s (D-IL) amendment that directs the USDA to investigate which estates have been fraudulently receiving farm subsidiaries payments from the federal government and recoup the funds paid in the name of deceased farmers. Emanuel introduced this amendment in response to a GAO study which found the U.S. Department of Agriculture distributed \$1.1 billion to the estates of deceased farmers in the last seven years. The amendment passed on a voice vote.

“I am proud to support this important amendment to the Farm Bill to reduce bureaucracy and eliminate government waste” **said Arcuri.** “While providing a safety net for local farmers, we are taking steps to end the waste and abuse of hard-earned tax-payer dollars that has gone on for too long.”

The Farm Bill also imposes the first-ever limit that prevents affluent farmers who don’t need assistance from receiving farm subsidy benefits, and offers complete transparency so the public knows taxpayer dollars are getting to the family farmers who need them. There are roughly 35,600 farms in New York – ninety-nine percent of which are family owned.

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