

Herkimer, N.Y. - Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) brought together farmers and concerned community members to discuss specific needs of the local agricultural community as Congress prepares to reauthorize funding for the Farm Bill.

“Upstate New York is home to many small family dairy farms and specialty crop growers - like vineyards and orchards - that are too often overlooked in federal agricultural legislation,” said Arcuri. “Today, I listened and asked questions to make sure I understand the best possible ways to help farmers stay in business and grow our economy. I gathered as much information as possible to make the best decisions for our farmers as Congress begins to reauthorize the Farm Bill.”

Panelists included local dairy farmers, organic and vegetable farmers, and representatives from governmental, business, and educational agriculture organizations. Arcuri touched on topics ranging from renewable energy sources to immigration, as well as dairy and crop insurance programs that are key components of the Farm Bill.

Last week Arcuri voted to extend the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program to ensure that small dairy farmers throughout the country are protected from severe price fluctuations. With approximately 6,800 dairy farmers, New York ranks third in milk production nationwide.

“I strongly support extending the MILC program – farmers in my area depend on it and it should be included in the upcoming Farm Bill budget,” said Arcuri. “From meeting with and listening to local dairy farmers I know they depend on federal support when prices are volatile.”

Arcuri also announced last week that he is an original cosponsor of the bipartisan Equitable Agriculture Today for a Healthy America (EAT Healthy) Act which would ensure New York agricultural interests – especially specialty crops such as apples and grapes - are protected in the Farm Bill. The value of New York’s tree fruit and grape production totaled \$329 million in 2006. New York ranks third in the nation for wine and grape production.

There are roughly 35,600 farms in New York – ninety-nine percent of which are family owned. New York’s top five individual commodities are: Dairy Products; greenhouse/nursery; apples;

cattle/calves; and hay. Compared to other states, New York ranks: second in apple, maple and cabbage production; third in grape, milk, corn silage, and cauliflower production; fourth in fresh snap peas, sweet corn and pear production; and fifth in floriculture, cucumber and squash production. The farm economy in New York generates over \$3.6 billion annually, and twelve percent of the State's workforce is employed in farm, food processing and retailing related jobs.

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