Farmers Score at the General Assembly

Lobbyist’s will tell you that it’s more important to stop bills that hurt their constituents rather than passing bills that help them. Farmers scored on both counts this year. First and foremost because of the lobbying efforts of farmers (more than 50 showed up at the Statehouse during hearings) the Governor’s tax proposal to expand and lower the sales tax did not pass. The sales tax was expanded slightly to include non-prescription drugs, limited liability partnerships and tours. The Governor had proposed taxing farm animals, animal feed, seeds, Farm Bureau membership, FFA membership and other items.

On the positive side, the General Assembly passed the bill that will allow plant agriculture in all zones. The bill was introduced by Rep. Naughton in the House and the sister bill was introduced by Senator Sosnowski in the Senate. This bill will allow by right plant agriculture in all zones provided the raising of such crops does not jeopardize public health and/or safety and wildlife habitat.

Another bill that would streamline the relationship between the Health Dept and RI Division of Agriculture also passed both houses.

Finally a resolution proposed by Rep. Naughton endorsed the new Five Year Strategic Plan for agriculture and recommended that farmers should meet and come up with comprehensive legislation by 2012 that would address issues such as regulations and other laws that affect farming in RI.

For other legislation we tracked see the Legislative Update.
Spend More Time Farming and Less Time Playing Mother Hen to Your Payroll

“We were doing our own payroll and reporting, but keeping track of all the rules, regulations and filing deadlines became much more time consuming than we could afford. It was a relief to get payroll off our shoulders and turn it over to someone who knows all the intricacies of Ag payroll requirements.”

Jeff True, True Farms, Inc., Perry, N.Y.

Take the stress out of paydays with full payroll services from Farm Credit East. You’ll have no missed deadlines. No worry about when or how to file federal and state payroll taxes. No more weekly processing or quarterly payroll forms to prepare in your “spare time.” With Farm Credit East, you’ll work directly with a payroll expert who knows your account and can answer your questions. Call your local office today.

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AGRIFAX ACCOUNTING SERVICES
**AgriPlanNOW**

RI Farm Bureau is currently working with Tasc to develop the following plan for RI Farm Bureau Members.

**AgriPlanNOW**

AgriPlanNOW is a medical reimbursement program that enables qualified small business owners to deduct 100% of federal, state, and FICA taxes for family medical costs. Each year, Clients average $4,000 or more in savings. Key to these savings is the ability to declare medical expenses as a business expense rather than a personal deduction.

Based on Section 105 of the Internal Revenue Code, a small business owner who can demonstrate employable interest in the business can become eligible for an employee benefits program. All business filing types are eligible, including sole proprietors, partnerships, C- and S-corporations.

With AgriPlanNOW, a family farmer or any other small business owner can legally deduct 100% of family medical expenses. This includes all health and qualified long-term care insurance premiums, as well as out-of-pocket medical, dental, and vision costs.

Recent health care regulations imposed by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) can jeopardize your tax savings if you fail to comply. This Act dramatically affects the management of your medical reimbursement Plan, and will require that you adhere to new regulations and meet strict deadlines. For example, you must now report the cost of health care coverage on your employees’ W-2 Forms. You may allow adult children up to age 27 to remain on their parents’ health plan. You must provide appropriate paperwork if you hope to deduct expenses for over-the-counter medicines. These mandates already pose significant challenges to small business owners, and more challenges are on the way!

Don’t worry. AgriPlanNOW will protect your tax savings, ensure your compliance with ever-changing regulations, and reduce your workload. Section 105 Plan Administration – 100% deduction of all health insurance premiums, including long-term care and spouse’s disability policies, and 100% deduction of all uninsured medical, dental, and vision expenses. Significant reduction of federal, state, and self-employment taxes. Every feature of the program is designed to protect your tax savings. In addition, included in the price are any modifications that may be required to address upcoming regulations.

**Wage Payment & Tax Reporting** – Reduce your workload and stay compliant with new and upcoming regulations. Let AgriPlanNOW manage your wage payment and tax reporting.

**Health Care Cost Reduction & Records Retention Services** – Preserve your tax savings with additional education, money-saving opportunities, and other Plan-enhancing tools.

**Health Care Reform Tools** – Capitalize on new and future Plan-related regulation changes with our unique tools designed to help you comply.

**Health Care Reform Education** – Stay on top of the topics that affect your Plan with our continuous updates and education about Healthcare Reform.

**Tax Deduction Guarantee** – Receive a 100% refund of your enrollment fee if you do not deduct at least $2,000 in a Plan year.

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**Don’t Forget Your Benefits**

**Dodge Program Ends**

We are no longer offering $500 rebate on Dodge vehicles. We will have a new incentive program with another major motor vehicle company in May.

**Discounts**

Farm Family
- Suburban Propane
- Sears
- T-Mobile
- Grainger
- Choice Hotels
- Hertz Rental Cars
- Over 100,000 companies nationwide
  - Subway
  - Jiffy Lube
  - Hotels
  - Spas
  - Entertainment

(Cont. from P. 1)

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HARVEST
to HAND
A New Way to Promote Locally Grown Goods

Farmers Markets
Local Festivals
Pick-Your-Own
Locally Made Products
Family-Friendly Farms
Wineries, Breweries and
Local Food Eateries
Seasonal Agritourism Venues

This new iPhone® app will connect consumers to locally harvested food, agritourism, food festivals and more across America.

Harvest to Hand will be available on the App Store for download in July!

Have a farm, local venue, farmers market or event you’d like to promote?

Go to www.HarvestToHand.com today
and follow the easy instructions to “Enter your Information.”

Don’t wait to get listed!

The app is open to everyone*: the main criteria are that your venue, event or farm must be accessible to the general public and feature locally grown or produced products.

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Farm Family group of insurance companies
www.farmfamily.com
American National Property And Casualty Company
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The Farm Family group of insurance companies operates in 13 states in the Northeast and Mid Atlantic regions and includes Farm Family Casualty Insurance Company, United Farm Family Insurance Company and Farm Family Life Insurance Company, all headquartered in Glenmont, NY. Affiliate American National Property And Casualty Company, operates in 34 states across the USA and is headquartered in Springfield, MO. All are subsidiaries of American National Insurance Company headquartered in Galveston, TX.

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* Subject to terms of use at www.harvesttohand.com.
Free Harvest to Hand iPhone® App supports local agriculture

New app offers new way to find – and promote – locally grown goods

GLENMONT, N.Y. – Farm Family and American National are bringing rural America’s bounty to consumers’ tables, one farm stand at a time, through a unique, new free iPhone app, now available on the App Store.

Through this easy-to-use app for the iPhone or iPod Touch®, consumers can locate farmers markets, local festivals, locally made products, family-friendly farms, local wineries, breweries and local eateries, and agritourism venues in their town or wherever the road takes them. The venues may be categorized several different ways, and users can map out directions directly from the app wherever they may be located. Harvest to Hand app users can also add venues to their favorites, and share finds with friends and family a number of ways.

“Farm Family and American National are excited about this new technology and what it can do to help promote buying local. Agriculture and successful farm families are so very vital to our rural way of life and to our economy,” said Timothy Walsh, President & CEO of the Farm Family group of insurance companies. “More than 100 million consumers own iPhones, and that number is growing every day as other telecommunications companies offer the iPhone to their subscribers. This is an incredible opportunity to help promote farmers and the agricultural community that we are dedicated to serve.”

Participants do not have to be clients of Farm Family or American National to participate. The main criteria are that the venue, event or farm must be accessible to the general public and feature locally produced or grown and harvested products. If you would like to get your event, agritourism venue or farmers market listed, simply go to www.harvesttohand.com and complete the online form. And if you have an iPhone you can also find a link to the app store to download this free app on this website.

The Farm Family group of insurance companies operates in 13 states in the Northeast and Mid Atlantic regions and includes Farm Family Casualty Insurance Company, United Farm Family Insurance Company and Farm Family Life Insurance Company, all headquartered in Glenmont, NY. Affiliate American National Property And Casualty Company, operates in 34 states across the USA and is headquartered in Springfield, MO. All are subsidiaries of American National Insurance Company headquartered in Galveston, TX.

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As stated on the first page, RI farmers did fairly well at the General Assembly this year. Two bills that favored farmers passed into law. A resolution that supports the Five Year Strategic Plan for Agriculture passed the House. A bill to exempt animal feed from the sales tax passed the Senate for the second year in a row but again failed in the House. There is currently a regulation that exempts animal feed from the sales tax but does not include animals that are just used for fiber and not meat (such as Alpacas). But there is no law that exempts animal feed.

Other bills of interest to farmers: The bill to prohibit tail docking on cattle passed the Senate but died in the House. Farm Bureau did not take a position on this bill. Bills to prohibit or limit outdoor furnaces did not have enough traction to pass committee. The legislature was in no mood this year to cut taxes so all the inheritance tax bills we supported did not get out of their respective Finance committees. Proposals to decrease the Minimum Corporate Tax on smaller businesses and raise it for larger businesses did not get out of committee. Bills supporting URI getting more funds to match USDA funds did not make it.

Fortunately, an education bill that would have hurt all of us failed to be voted out of committee in the House. The bill would have mandated binding arbitration last best offer. Under this proposal, teachers would have to give their final offer to management and management would give their final offer to the teachers. An arbitrator (who would be a retired judge) would then have to choose one proposal over the other.

This method takes control over contracts out of the hands of elected officials. In other states where this has been adopted, the teachers almost always win and taxes always go up.

This year 1,318 bills were introduced in the House and 1,102 were introduced in the Senate. RI Farm Bureau sifted through these bills and tracked 37 bills. None of the bills we opposed passed into law. Two of our bills became law and one passed the Senate but not the House.

**Legislative Update Final Report**

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**Dairy Farmers, Greenhouse Growers Have to Comply with New EPA Rule**

If you store more than 1,320 gallons of “oil” at your facility, you may have to comply with a new EPA Rule: Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure rule (SPCC), by November 10 of this year. Oil, for this rule, is defined as petroleum and non-petroleum based products, crude oil, refined products (gasoline, diesel etc), animal fats (including fat in milk) and vegetable oils.

If you store more than 1,320 gallons of these items and there is a reasonable expectation of an “oil” discharge to a waterway or adjoining shoreline, you must implement a site specific SPCC plan to address containment issues to prevent spillage, proactive control to make sure the spill does not enter a waterway and effective countermeasures should a discharge reach a waterway. The most likely farmers in RI to have to comply with this rule are dairy farmers and greenhouse growers (and any other farmer who stores more than 1,300 gallons of “oil”).

**Choice HOTELS Summer Promotion**

Stay 2 Times, Earn A Separate Night at Choice Hotels this summer! How?

Book at www.choicehotels.com or dial 1-800-258-2847 and a second stay between May 19th and August 11th, you’ll receive enough Choice Privileges® points to redeem a free night at over 1,500 hotels.

Maximum of 2 FREE nights per member. Register at www.choicehotels.com to be eligible for more free nights.

Remember to enter your association’s Special Rate ID and your personal Choice Privileges Member ID (00704050) to take advantage of your benefit while earning points.

Terms and conditions apply. Go to www.choicehotels.com for more details.
NEW EPA RULE

Some of the things you will need to do is have a written plan to show how you are trying to prevent a spill and what you will do if you get a spill and what you would do if the spill entered a waterway. The EPA has templates online that you can use to provide you store less than 10,000 gallons. If you store more than 10,000 gallons or have the potential to store more than 10,000 gallons, you must have a certified professional engineer approve the plan. Facilities between 1,320 gallons and 10,000 can “self certify” their plans using the online templates. One of the things you have to do in order to prevent a spill is to have a containment system that will hold the volume of the largest tank at the facility plus two inches of rain.

A “facility” is not necessarily your entire farm. It is possible to have more than one facility on a farm. So if you have a 1,000 tank in one part of the farm and a 1,000 gallon tank at another location on the farm even though you have stored or the potential to store over 1,320 gallons, you may not have to comply with the rule. You could say the Back Forty is one facility and the Home Lot is another facility and would not have to comply with the rule.

For more information go to the EPA website www.epa.gov/oilspill or call 1-800-424-9346.

RADIO COMMERCIALS

RI Farm Bureau has several radio commercials on the air and we could use your help. The ads are funded by a grant from the USDA. We need to do a report that addresses the effectiveness of the ads. We would appreciate it if after you hear the ad, you drop us a line and let us know how the ad affected you. We hope it is positive but we will take negative comments too. If you are a farmer, please let us know if you think the ad improved your business. We targeted an increase of business of 10%. Let us know if you think your business increased by as much as 10% because of the ads. If you are a consumer, please let us know if the ads stimulated you to “Get Fresh and Buy Local”. You can email us at albertjr@aol.com or rifarm@aol.com.

FOODIE NEWS

The preferences of foodies, who generally are more discriminating than other consumers, continue to influence the food grown by America’s farmers and ranchers. With this trend in mind, we hope you enjoy the Foodie News blog.

Comments are moderated and will not be posted to this blog until approved by the editors.


Foodie News Blog

Foodie noun. an aficionado of food and drink

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We're on TV
Cox Channel 13
Wednesdays 3:30

Check us out on Facebook too!

Thank a farmer three times a day.

FINAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE INSIDE