



2023 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing: Environmental Conservation

February 14, 2023

Dear Chairwoman Krueger, Chairwoman Weinstein, Members of the Senate Finance Committee and Members of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York's (NOFA-NY) priorities for the proposed budget. I am Katie Baildon, Policy Manager with NOFA-NY.

Founded in 1983, NOFA-NY is the premier organization growing a strong organic regenerative agriculture movement in New York State. We provide educational programming and assistance to NYS farmers, connect consumers with local and organic products, and advocate for a sustainable and fair food and farm system. NOFA-NY provides USDA accredited certification services to nearly 1,100 of NY's organic farms and businesses.

The newly released USDA Organic Census shows that NY continues to be a leader in organic agriculture, ranking 3rd in the nation for the number of organic farms and leading the nation in acres of organic field crops (hay, corn and soy). NY is also home to more organic livestock and poultry farms and organic dairies than any other state in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

Organic agriculture systems, like those utilized by NY's over 1,900 certified organic operations, contribute to healthy ecosystems and resilient local food systems - both fundamental to our fight against the climate crisis. The organic agriculture community is already a leader in both adopting and demonstrating climate friendly practices - a report last year from the Organic Farming Research Foundation found that organic farmers lead the nation in adoption of resource and climate stewardship practices and also demonstrate enhanced resilience, carbon sequestration, and GHG mitigation (Snyder et al., 2022).



With prior support from the state budget, NOFA-NY has developed interactive technology for both organic farmers and consumers looking to purchase local, NYS organic products. The NOFA-NY organic certification portal (Clover Portal) launched this winter and farmers are trailing it now with enthusiastic support. An organic crop farmer who is new to production this year shared, “The portal seems really user friendly.” Another shared, "Stoked to see this come together. Hoping it helps streamline everything!"

State budget funding has also aided in the development of an Organic Price Index¹ and Organic Food and Farm Guide² tools that assist farmers in marketing their products and consumers in accessing local organic options. To build on these successes, NOFA-NY is requesting \$200 thousand from the fiscal year 2024 budget to launch a project that will improve the accessibility of NOFA-NY’s certification materials. We urge committee members to include this funding in the final budget.

NOFA-NY applauds Governor Hochul’s commitment to combating climate change, reducing food scarcity, and supporting the state’s agriculture industry in the FY24 Executive Budget. We are especially encouraged to see \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund. As the state's ambitious and much needed Climate Scoping Plan identifies, NYS agriculture can reduce emissions through improved livestock and nutrient management and improved soil health while also sequestering carbon and providing numerous ecosystem services. Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Climate Resilient Farming program are foundational to the Scoping Plan’s strategies for agriculture and are essential to supporting farmers in planning and executing more climate friendly systems of farming and building on-farm resilience. NOFA-NY encourages committee members to maintain the \$16 million for Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Executive Budget and maintain last year's final budget level of \$16.75 million for the Climate Resilient Farming Program as part of the \$400 million EPF.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ The NOFA-NY Price Index database is a business-to-business tool that allows organic farmers and third-party data collectors to input current pricing and compare with other producers in their region.

² The NOFA-NY Farm and Food Guide is a consumer buying tool that provides farm product details and locations. This online tool promotes organic producers and their products to consumers across the state allowing users to search by location and product. NOFA-NY has upgraded the platform to improve the user experience..



Additional budget measures that NOFA-NY Supports and urges the Committee to support include:

- As members of the Alliance for New York's Farmland, we support the coalition's budget proposals including \$25 million in funding for Farmland Protection as part of a \$400 million EPF to keep land in farming and \$1 million in funding for Farmland for a New Generation-New York (FNG-NY) in Aid to Localities in the FY 24 Executive Budget to bring a diverse new generation of farmers onto the land.
- As members of the NY Grown Food for NY Kids Coalition we support the coalition's budget proposals including:
 - \$10 million for the Farm to School Incentive and
 - \$3 million for the Farm to School Grants
 - Expanding the Farm to School Incentive to include all school meals
 - \$3 million for the Farm to School Grants program
- As members of the NY Renews Coalition, we support the Climate and Community Protection Fund spending plan outlined within NY Renews' Climate, Jobs, and Justice Package

We also urge members of the committee to support the following funding requested by the following organizations that provide essential support to NY's agricultural community:

- \$2.5 Million for NY Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI)
- \$16.2 Million for NYS Rural Health Programs
- Increased funding for New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) to ensure that their on-farm services can continue to keep our workers and families safe.

Sources

Snyder, L., Schonbeck, M., Vélez, T., & Tencer, B. (2022). *2022 National Organic Research Agenda*. Organic Farming Research Foundation. Retrieved from https://ofrf.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/03/OFRF_National-Organic-Research-Agenda-NORA_2022.pdf



U.S. Census Bureau (2022). *Certified Organic Survey 2021 Summary*. Retrieved from <https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/zg64tk92g/2z10z137s/bn99bh97r/cenorg22.pdf>

New York State Climate Action Council (2022). *Scoping Plan Full Report*. Retrieved from: <https://climate.ny.gov/-/media/project/climate/files/NYS-Climate-Action-Council-Final-Scoping-Plan-2022.pdf>