



NIAGARA COUNTY
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
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CONTACT: CHRISTIAN W. PECK
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
TEL: (716) 439-7241
FAX: (716) 439-7058

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**LEGISLATORS MEET SCHUMER ON APPLE FARMER CONCERNS
SEE POSITIVES FOR APPLE INDUSTRY IN PROPOSED FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

LOCKPORT—A pair of Niagara County legislators met with U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-New York, Monday as he visited the Hall Apple Farm on Ruhlmann Road in Lockport to detail a new piece of legislation designed to protect U.S. apple-growers' market share, and came away with a favorable view of aspects of the bill.

Legislators Gerald K. Farnham, R-Pendleton, and David E. Godfrey, R-Wilson, who acted as a delegation from the County Legislature, had generally favorable impressions of several provisions of a bill proposed by Schumer that would put new marketplace protections in place to protect apple-growers while increasing federal agriculture subsidies to help apple orchards convert to new, higher-profit varieties.

"For generations, the apple industry has been part of the lives of New Yorkers from our whole state," Schumer told an audience in a prepared after briefly speaking with several local farmers and elected leaders. "We have to do everything to help this economic resource expand, provide needed jobs, and pump local cash into our economies."

Schumer said he is introducing new legislation modeled on a Canadian program that has seen some positive results for Nova Scotia's apple farmers. Schumer's bill, the "APPLE Act," which stands for Apple Profit Protection for Local Economies Act, would include \$20 million a year in new agriculture grants and low-interest loans for apple farmers.

"The program forms a partnership between the government and apple-growers," Schumer said. "It helps orchard owners replace their old apple trees with new ones that produce the types of apples commonly sold in the fresh apple market."

Schumer called the bill a "simple concept" that helps the apple industry cope with capital requirements for needed upgrades.

Following Schumer's remarks, Godfrey thanked Schumer for meeting with the local delegation, which also included Lockport Supervisor Marc R. Smith and representatives of Sen. George D. Maziarz, R-Newfane.

"The issue that he is dealing with, we've dealt with in all of New York state for quite a long time," Godfrey said. "The farmers are just not making ends meet. There are so many restrictions on the farmers here, from pesticide controls to labor requirements, that by the time they get their produce to market, there just isn't enough profit there to even continue their operations."

Godfrey said he was highly receptive to the new agriculture grants proposed by Schumer noting that new varieties fetched much higher prices at market than the older standbys produced in many New York orchards.

"One of the things I like about the bill is that it gives these farmers the opportunity to upscale their apples," Godfrey said. "Their older varieties, the McIntosh and the Cortland, which have been good cash crops over the years, they only draw maybe \$100 per tote. The newer varieties, such as the famous Empire apple that was created here in New York state, they're getting up to \$500 per tote. The same volume of apples is getting a much higher price, and that truly would give our farmers some positive cash flow to compete with all the imports that are coming in."

Godfrey also warned of the dangers of foreign produce, including Chinese apples, which are often grown under laxer rules that lower production costs even further.

"They don't have to adhere to some of the same strict standards, as far as the growing requirements and applications of different pesticides, as we do in the U.S. And that just hampers the farmers terribly," Godfrey said.

Godfrey offered Schumer praise for taking the initiative on several issues that have long plagued the apple industry, noting Niagara County's position as the state's fourth-largest apple producer.

"I'm glad to see the Senator step up to the plate on this," Godfrey said. "Apples are a big market. And we have the best apples. To upscale our orchards into these new varieties is a fabulous opportunity that will ensure our growers' long-term survival."

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