

Environmental

Advocates

NY

EANY SUPPORTS Climate Friendly Farming



Memo #53

A.5386-A (Lupardo et al.)

S.4722-A (Hinchey et al.)

Explanation:

This legislation helps build and maintain the health of agricultural soils to improve farm productivity, protect natural resources, and support climate friendly farming practices. Healthy soils can help mitigate carbon emissions while also making crops more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

In New York each year roughly 5.3 million metric tons of [carbon dioxide equivalent](#) comes from agriculture, and nationally agricultural practices account for 10% of total U.S. emissions. In addition, farmers are being impacted by a changing climate every day, such as extreme heat, flooding and intensified storm events, resulting in loss of productivity and economic stability. Maintaining healthy soils is critical for both improving crop yields and blunting the impacts of climate change because healthy soils retain more water making them more resistant to run-off and erosion, and they have the potential to retain carbon. They also support biodiversity through promotion of a living, thriving microbial community and ecosystem.

This legislation will encourage farmers to engage in soil health initiatives and practices to improve the health of their soils through minimizing soil erosion and maximizing water infiltration and stormwater management practices. This bill will also encourage farmers to manage and enhance the healthy cycling of nutrients in soil, and practice climate resilient farming approaches. Farmers will be supported in soil health research and training to examine carbon sequestration potential.

This legislation would be further strengthened if:

- Applying the soil health standards were mandatory rather than voluntary, or at a minimum, incentives were provided to encourage farmers to incorporate these voluntary climate friendly practices, while ensuring such initiatives are accessible for lower income farmers;
- Targets were established for both greenhouse gas reductions and adoption of specific practices such as cover crops, advanced grazing and improvement of degraded soils; and
- A soil health fund as incorporated to provide to a funding source to support soil health initiatives, including a requirement that no less than 40% of these funds be set aside for disadvantaged farmers.

Summary:

This bill amends the Agriculture and Markets Law by adding a new article 11-B, to establish the Soil Health and Climate Resiliency Act and promotes soil health research and practices. This bill also amends the soil and water conservation districts law to declare that it is the policy of the legislature to promote the health and resiliency of New York's agricultural soils which is necessary to produce a healthy and affordable food supply, protect natural resources and mitigate climate change.