



KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

Agriculture and Markets

RICHARD A. BALL
Commissioner

December 29, 2025

Hon. Thomas P. DiNapoli
Office of the State Comptroller
110 State Street
Albany, NY 12236-0001

Re: Audit Report 2023-s-19

Dear Mr. DiNapoli,

As required by Executive Law §170, the Department of Agriculture and Markets (Department) respectfully submits this 180-day response to recommendations made in the audit report 2023-s-19 "Farmland Protection Program."

The Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) Program has helped protect over 130,000 acres of farmland from development. According to a [recent study](#), programs such as FPIG protect lands with at least three times higher quality, that are almost twice as valuable, and with at least 1.5 times greater development risk than other farmland protection programs studied. The Department is committed to ensuring the continuing success of our program in future rounds of funding.

The following actions have been taken by the Department to address the audit recommendations:

OSC Recommendation 1 – Evaluate the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant allocation and funding methodology and determine whether changes should be made in the distribution of funds and Program participation. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, considering:

- Revising the regional allocation methodology;
- Increasing the grant funding caps; and
- Incorporating relevant data, such as USDA Census and AGM historical data, into grant decisions.

Response to Recommendation 1 - The Department conducted a careful evaluation of recent FPIG grant opportunities prior to developing the requirements for Round 20 Farmland Protection Implementation Grants (FPIG) Request For Applications (RFA). As a result of the evaluation, Round 20 of the FPIG has incorporated the most recent 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture county data and also increased the cap on awards to \$3 million (from \$2 million). In addition, the allocation methodology has been changed to no longer allocate available funding to the New York City region.

OSC Recommendation 2 – Work with various stakeholders to tailor outreach and administrative support activities to best support their needs and promote participation in the program.

Response to Recommendation 2 – Given that the audit report reviewed all financial assistance programs authorized by Article 25-AAA of NYS Agriculture and Markets Law, the Department will endeavor to address this recommendation through its existing Land Trust Grants (LTG) program and a new Farmland Protection Staff Capacity Grants (FPSCG) program identified in Governor Hochul's 2025 State of the State agenda. The next LTG grant opportunity is currently under development and will, for the first time, offer a menu of eligible projects from which applicant land trusts may select. This change will enable awarded land trusts to better facilitate its supporting role with local partners to advance the activities contained in approved local agricultural and farmland protection plans (including those awarded through the Farmland Protection Planning Grants (FPPG) program). Further, with the Legislature's approval of \$1 million in increased farmland protection appropriations through the States Environmental Protection Fund to increase staff capacity we anticipate even greater interest for farmland protection implementation projects across the state.

Respectfully,



Richard A. Ball

Commissioner
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Cc: Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor
Honorable Antonio Delgado, Lieutenant Governor
Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, President Pro Tempore, NYS Senate
Honorable Robert G. Ortt, Minority Leader, NYS Senate
Honorable Carl E. Heastie, Speaker, NYS Assembly
Honorable Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, Majority Leader, NYS Assembly
Honorable William A. Barclay, Minority Leader, NYS Assembly
Honorable Liz Krueger, Chair, NYS Senate Finance Committee
Honorable Thomas O'Mara, Ranking Member, NYS Senate Finance Committee
Honorable J. Gary Pretlow, Chair, NYS Assembly Ways and Means Committee
Honorable Edward P. Ra, Ranking Member, NYS Assembly Ways and Means Committee