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## **GOVERNOR SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY Council Will Coordinate Policies to Promote Agriculture, Health and Nutrition**

Governor Eliot Spitzer today announced that he has signed an executive order establishing a New York State Council on Food Policy. The Council will coordinate state agriculture policy and make recommendations on developing food policy that will help ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers, especially low income residents, senior citizens and children. The Council will look at ways to increase sales of New York agricultural products to New York consumers, with a special emphasis on expanding the consumer market for organic food.

"Ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe, fresh and nutritious food is a top priority that the Council on Food Policy will be addressing head-on," said Governor Spitzer. "The Council will bring the public, producers and government together to explore ways in which we can improve our existing food production and delivery systems, expand capacity, and in particular, address the critical needs of children and low-income New Yorkers. Additionally, by expanding the sale of locally grown products, we can help struggling farmers, and expand the local agriculture and state economy."

The New York State Council on Food Policy will include 21 representatives from all areas of the food system, including six agency heads. The State Agriculture Commissioner, Patrick Hooker, will serve as the Chairperson. He will be joined by the Commissioners of Health, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Aging, Economic Development and the Consumer Protection Board. The other members will be appointed by the Governor and will include the Dean of the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; 1 farm organization representative; 1 school food administrator; 1 consumer representative; 2 food assistance organization representatives; 1 nutritionist; 1 anti-hunger advocate; and 3 representatives from the food industry at large, which could include producers, distributors, processors or retailers with at least one involved in organic production. There will also be four appointed positions for members with experience and expertise related to agriculture, nutrition or food policy that will be recommended by the Temporary President of the Senate, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Minority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the Assembly.

In addition to coordinating food policy, the Council will develop a strategic plan to ensure access to affordable, fresh, healthy, nutritious food and expand agricultural production, especially locally-grown and organically-grown food. The sale of organic food is an emerging market, with more than \$13 billion spent on organic food in 2005

The Council will make recommendations to the Governor on state regulations, legislation and budget proposals in the area of food policy to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive inter-agency approach to state food policy issues. The Council will deliver a written annual report to the Governor.

Lieutenant Governor David A. Paterson said, "The overall health of our state will improve if we can make our eating habits healthier. The creation of the New York State Council on Food Policy demonstrates that government can work in partnership with communities and food producers to insure that all New Yorkers, particularly senior citizens, children, and those who struggle to afford healthy foods are aware of and have easy access to a nutritious, balanced diet."

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker said, "New York has 36,000 family farms that work day in and day out to produce an abundance of fresh, healthy and wholesome

food for our 19 million consumers. I am honored to chair the Council on Food Policy and believe it will serve as a valuable forum in discussing the State's complex, yet critical food system for the benefit of consumers, farmers, processors, distributors and retailers."

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Commissioner David A. Hansell said, "The ability to obtain nutritious and affordable food is of particular importance to low-income families, who are stretching limited resources to meet food and other vital needs. In forming this Council, Governor Spitzer is ensuring that the needs of these families are considered and acted upon in the development of food policy in New York State."

New York State Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D., said, "Government decisions about food policy have driven consumers' eating habits for decades, but not always to the benefit of personal health. I appreciate Governor Spitzer's attention to these important issues that affect the quality and longevity of people's lives, and look forward to working with the Council to help create better policies and healthier diets."

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