NOVEMBER 10, 2020 | ALBANY, NY

State Agriculture Commissioner Announces New Efforts to Bring Fresh New York Food to Veterans in Need Through Nourish New York

New Veterans' Food Box Program Supported by Nourish New York Will Help Feed Veterans This Holiday Season With Food Grown by New York State Farmers

Builds on Successful State Food Programs and Partnerships Assisting Veterans During the COVID-19 Pandemic

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball today announced new efforts to help New York's food insecure veterans access healthy New York State foods through the Nourish New York program. Building on the State's outreach to veterans during round 1 of Nourish New York, the Department of Agriculture and Markets and Division of Veterans' Services are working to expand their work to all regions of the state. Through the veterans' food box program, regional food banks across New York will partner with regional veterans' groups to distribute food purchased with the second round of Nourish New York funding.

“Our veterans are committed to protecting our country and keeping us safe, and we must return the favor by making sure they have the resources, skills, and security they need and deserve,” **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul.** “With the upcoming holiday season and as we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to make sure all New Yorkers, and particularly our veterans, have access to fresh, healthy food options. This new effort, as part of our Nourish New York program, will provide veterans with local food and help to ensure they are given the resources and opportunities to succeed and live healthy and safe lives."

Commissioner Ball said, “The new initiative to feed veterans through our Nourish New York program is a win-win, helping to get healthy, delicious food on the table for a critical part of the New York State community, while supporting our farmers at the same time. During such a challenging year, and during the holiday season, it is important to give back as much as we can to our veterans who are too often overlooked, and who have given so much to us. I’m proud that this program will help to fill in some of those gaps for veterans in all corners of our state.”

Joel Evans, Executive Deputy Director of the New York State Division of Veterans’ Services, said, “COVID-19 has created medical and financial strains. This pandemic has prevented our veterans and their families from having regular access to fresh and healthy foods. I applaud Governor Cuomo’s Nourish New York initiative and our partners who have stepped up to ensure veterans across New York facing food insecurity will have the ability to access nutritious food.”

Dan Egan, Executive Director of Feeding New York State, said, “Feeding New York is honored to partner with the State, with our farmers, and with veterans' organizations in the Nourish New York program. We applaud Commissioner Ball for this initiative, which will provide high quality, New York-grown food to veterans. No one who has served our country should ever go hungry; it is only because of our veterans that the rest of us are able to enjoy the lives we have. This is a step in repaying the debt New York owes our veterans.”

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State has stepped up in many ways to support food insecure veterans. In addition to this new

effort, a team comprised of New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and New York City Department of Veterans Services staff members has worked hard over the past several months to identify local partners who can coordinate and distribute food to New York's veteran communities, helping hundreds of thousands of meals to be distributed to veterans across New York State in Brooklyn, Buffalo, and the Bronx.

The Hello Fresh company signed up for Governor Cuomo's COVID Philanthropic Fund, ultimately pledging to donate a total of 200,000 healthy meals to New York's veterans. In partnership with New York State, the Bed Stuy Campaign Against Hunger, and the Black Veterans for Social Justice group, 8-10,000 meals have been packed and distributed each week since June to food insecure veterans throughout New York City. To date, Hello Fresh has served 125,000 meals to veterans in the metro New York City area. For Thanksgiving, Hello Fresh is also donating 1,000 turkey meals for veterans.

Additionally, the State has helped to connect the Western NY Heroes organization and area food bank FeedMore WNY in Buffalo, partnering together to provide over 27,600 Nourish New York food boxes and USDA food boxes to veterans in the area.

In the Bronx, partnerships were built with the State, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., BronxWorks, the Heights Senior Center, and Commissioner James Hendon of New York City Veterans Services. Food donations were launched six weeks ago with pallets of food from Baldor's Foods, one of the largest food distributors in Hunts Point, and Evangel Church in Astoria. To date, over 8,000 meals have been provided. The Food Bank for New York City has also provided 1,200 USDA food boxes each week to veterans in the Bronx.

According to the NYS Health Foundation (https://nyshealthfoundation.org/resource/veterans-and-health-in-new-york-state/), New York State is home to the fifth-largest veteran population in the United States, with 838,000 veterans, most over the age of 65. Unfortunately, across the United States, veterans have almost twice the rate of food insecurity as non-veterans, and 22% have probable diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or major depression.

Nourish New York was first announced by the Governor in April 2020 in response to the financial hardships New York's dairy farmers were facing with the loss of key markets and the significant, increased demand New York's food banks were seeing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This critical program helps people who are food insecure to access the nourishment that they need, while providing a market for farmers to sell their products. As of this week, more than 17.1 million pounds of New York State dairy, fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, and more have been purchased and provided to 835,908 households. Learn more at https://agriculture.ny.gov/NourishNY (https://agriculture.ny.gov/NourishNY) .

Veterans can to go https://feedingnys.org/our-member-food-banks/ (https://feedingnys.org/our-member-food-banks/) to get connected with their local food bank and learn how to get Nourish New York food on their table.

Contact the Press Office

Contact us by phone:

Albany Press Office (518) 457-0752 (tel:(518) 457-0752)
State Fair Press Office (315) 487-7711 (tel:(315) 487-7711)

Contact us by email:

Jola.Szubielski@agriculture.ny.gov (mailto:Jola.Szubielski@agriculture.ny.
Hanna.Birkhead@agriculture.ny.gc (mailto:Hanna.Birkhead@agriculture.n
Dave.Bullard@agriculture.ny.gov (mailto:Dave.Bullard@agriculture.ny.g

Mailing Address:

The New York State
Department of Agriculture
and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, New York 12235

The Great New York State
Fair
581 State Fair Boulevard
Syracuse, New York 13209

Department of Agriculture and Markets

CONNECT WITH US