

Farm Organizations urge veto of NY bill

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania State Grange called an emergency meeting of farm and poultry organizations Monday to take action on a bill passed by the New York Legislature which would adversely impact on Pennsylvania poultry producers.

A bill awaiting New York Governor Mario Cuomo's signature would impose a tax of 4 cents per case of eggs (30 dozen), or 4 cents per hundred pounds of meat to be used for poultry research and extension programs in the State of New York. Programs would be aimed at improving quality, quantity, efficiency, and variety in the New York poultry industry and preventing the spread of avian influenza into that state.

The tax would be assessed on the first New York handler of any Pennsylvania produced products. State Grange Master Charles Wismer said, "Poultry farmers who produce for New York markets fear that the tax will necessarily fall back on them.

Since the research would be conducted out of state, they feel that they would not reap the benefits for the money they would pay into the New York program."

Pennsylvania has a surplus of 2.5 million laying hens while New York has a deficit of 12.6 million hens, according to United Egg Board statistics. John Hoffman, executive secretary for the Pennsylvania Poultry Federation, said the bill is a "self-serving piece of legislation." "They're placing taxes on products they have a deficit in," he said. The legislation is expected to affect producers in the northeastern and southeastern states that supply much of the demand in New York.

A telegram was directed to Cuomo by Pennsylvania's three major farm organizations — the Pennsylvania State Grange, Farmers Association and Farmers Union — urging him to veto the bill. The telegram states, "The adverse economic impact on the Pennsylvania poultry industry would jeopardize poultry production by threatening the survival of family producers recovering from avian influenza. ...we believe that the tax will actually revert to the producer of origin." Pennsylvania poultry producers who market in New York also are being urged to contact Cuomo.

Pennsylvania is second in the

nation in the total number of laying hens hatched and produces 4.3 billion eggs annually. Annual commercial broiler production

totals 114 million birds with a gross broiler income of \$127 million. Total gross value of poultry production in Pennsylvania totals \$400 million a year.



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