

Written Testimony of Representative Sean Maloney (NY-18)
Make It in America: What's Next?
PANEL 4: "Making It" Across the Economy

Thank you for inviting me to speak today –

For those of you who haven't been to my district, the Hudson Valley is a beautiful region with hundreds of small family farms lining both sides of the river.

Farming has been a key part of life in the Hudson Valley for hundreds of years. In the Black Dirt Region, it's not uncommon to see a farmer who is the 5th or 6th generation of their family to be farming the region.

In addition to help preserving the incredible beauty of the region, these farms and the fresh food they grow ensure that millions of people have access to healthy and delicious food .

But the future of the industry is uncertain - young farmers face too many obstacles today.

The average age of a farmer in the Hudson Valley is 57. In order to ensure the future viability of farming in the region, we have to act now to support the next generation of farmers so that they can thrive.

Right now, we're failing at that task. You can see it when you talk to people like Leon from Dutchess County, who told me that he and his wife want to start a farm of their own – but they're not sure how they can get the money together to buy the land.

We need to do more for people like Maddie in Putnam County, who looked at me with tears in her eyes, and told me that all she wanted to do was farm and grow delicious, fresh foods – but given her student loan debt she wasn't sure how she could ever afford to set out on her own.

Leon and Maddie are not alone - according to the National Young Farmers Coalition, 78% of farmers ranked "lack of capital" as the biggest challenge for beginning farmers.

This is unacceptable, especially when you consider the impact that farmers have on the economy. The estimated gross economic impact of farming in the Hudson Valley is close to \$1 billion each year.

There are thousands of Maddies and Leons out there, and we need to help them. Here's how we can start:

- 1) Helping young farmers access good land at affordable prices
- 2) Partner with organizations to provide beginning farmers with the training they need
- 3) Invest in developing local food infrastructure

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House to help those like Maddie and Leon achieve their dream of owning and operating a family farm that will create a better way of life for them and their families, while growing the economy both locally and nationally.