



New York Wine
Policy Institute

March 8, 2023

Hon. Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
NYS Senate Majority Leader
State Capitol, Room 330
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl Heastie
Speaker of the NYS Assembly
932 Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Minimum Wage Increase Proposals

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

New York State’s agriculture and forests community would like to express its strong concerns regarding current proposals to increase New York State’s minimum wage. As you are aware, the state’s minimum wage is set to increase to \$15 an hour upstate at the end of 2023, and is already fully implemented in New York City and the surrounding metro counties.

Labor is one of the largest expenses for farmers and forest product manufacturers. Farmers have had a particularly challenging year where they suffered extreme financial hardship due to inflationary increases in needed farm inputs and the weather, along with increased labor costs from the farm labor law that is now in effect. The cost of doing business on farms has become too high, and New York’s farms have a very hard time competing with neighboring states.

Farms in upstate New York are still seeing the original minimum wage increase being implemented for their workforce, and farms in the lower Hudson Valley and Long Island have additional cost pressures including extremely high property taxes. As we have said many times before, farmers are price takers and cannot set their prices in the marketplace. Any increase in mandated farm wages simply takes more money out of family farmers’ pockets at a time when farm economic viability is suspect at best. This jeopardizes the production of and access to fresh local food that the people of New York want.

Forest and wood product manufacturers operate in both the national and international marketplace, and are extremely trade exposed in the competitive marketplace. Labor costs are one of the leading factors affecting their operating bottom line. Many wood manufacturing companies already pay more than minimum wage, but raising the minimum wage means all wages above have to rise correspondingly.

The ongoing narrative by legislators that support a minimum wage increase is that large corporations are making exorbitant profits and the playing field needs to be equalized. The fact remains that an increased minimum wage disproportionately impacts small business, including family farms and smaller wood manufacturers, and the supply chain.

We believe that New York State should pause any plans for a minimum wage increase to allow farms and small businesses to catch their financial breath, assess economic impacts and plan for the future. While farmers understand that fair employee compensation is critical to workers and the success of our businesses, we are asking for equal consideration of our businesses' true ability to afford mandated wage increases, without widespread staff count reductions or exiting the industry in general.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

New York Farm Bureau
Agri-Mark
Empire State Forest Products Association
New York Apple Association
New York State Turfgrass Association, Inc.
New York State Vegetable Growers Association
New York Wine Policy Institute
Northeast Dairy Producers Association