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# the Potato Newsletter

Empire State Potato Growers, Inc.

## National Leaders to Visit NY



EST. 1948



On Thursday, Oct. 6th national leaders of the potato industry will visit with New York potato growers in an effort to gain a better understanding of the NY industry and their role in supporting it. John Keeling, Executive Vice President/ CEO of the National Potato Council, and Blair Richardson, President/ CEO of Potatoes USA will be traveling through New York as part of their joint outreach efforts with our industry members.

While the two organizations have very different missions, both the National Potato Council and Potatoes USA are involved in efforts and activities designed to build a more stable environment for the potato industry.

Both organizations are involved in activities within the United States and around the world. Unfortunately, it is not always simple for the organizations to communicate these efforts or the many successes achieved each year beyond the relatively small percentage of growers directly involved in the leadership of the organizations.

According to Richardson, "It is important that we visit with NY members in their communities on occasion to better understand evolving challenges they are facing and also convey the efforts we are making on their behalf. This tour will allow us the opportunity

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## WE NEED YOUR EMAIL!

In an effort to get information to you effectively, efficiently and economically, we are considering switching from a paper version to an online version of the newsletter in 2017.

In order to ensure you are still receiving the Potato Newsletter, please send your email address to [mwickham@nypotoates.org](mailto:mwickham@nypotoates.org)

We look forward to getting you the important information contained in the Potato Newsletter in the most efficient way possible!

Thanks for your help and understanding.



Agriculture  
and Markets

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## Governor Cuomo Announces Disaster Declaration for 24 Counties Across NY State to Assist Farmers Impacted by Drought

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced that 24 counties across Upstate New York have been designated as a natural disaster area by the federal government as a result of this summer's drought. These designations mean that farmers in those areas may be eligible for assistance, including emergency loans, from the United State Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency.

Additionally, State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball, state lawmakers and other farm leaders have been conducting on-site assessments of farms affected by the drought, while the state works closely with Cornell University expert hydrologists and climate professors to help understand and study the outlook for recovery. "Strong agriculture is critical to the vibrancy of Upstate New York and this year's hot, dry summer have created significant challenges to this crucial industry," **Governor Cuomo said.** "From Western New York to the North Country, New York's growers and producers are major drivers of our economy and the benefits they provide to the community are immeasurable. In these difficult times, we must ensure that they have full access to all the resources necessary for making a full recovery."

"Our hearts go out to the farmers and ranchers affected by the drought in New York," **said United States Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.** "President Obama and I are committed to ensuring that agriculture remains a bright spot in our nation's economy by sustaining the successes of America's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities through these difficult times. We're also telling New York producers that USDA stands with you and your communities when severe weather and natural disasters threaten to disrupt your livelihood."

Disaster declaration is based on reporting of crop loss to the federal Farm Service Agency and a D3

designation by the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#). The federal government declared 15 counties as primary natural disaster areas and an additional nine counties as contiguous disaster counties due to a recent drought.

In addition, several other counties in the North Country, the Finger Lakes, Central New York, and the Southern Tier regions are also requesting primary disaster declarations. The primary counties included under this designation are in Western New York, Finger Lakes, Central New York, and Southern Tier and they include: Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Seneca, Wyoming, Yates, Cayuga, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins.

The federal government also named nine counties in the Finger Lakes, Western New York, Southern Tier, and Central New York as contiguous disaster counties. They include: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Broome, Cortland, Onondaga, Oswego, Orleans, and Wayne.

In addition, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets will continue to work with its partners in monitoring the drought situation and its effect on New York farms in these and other counties across the State, including in the North Country, Capital Region and on Long Island. The Department also toured affected farms in Western New York, the North Country and the Southern Tier.

A disaster designation makes farm operators in primary counties and those counties contiguous eligible to be considered for certain assistance from the Farm Service Agency, provided eligibility requirements are met. This assistance includes emergency loans. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the disaster declaration to apply for emergency loans. The Farm Service Agency considers each emergency loan application based on the extent of production losses on the farm,



and the security and repayment ability of the operator. Local FSA offices can provide affected farmers with further information. Contact information for the offices can be found online: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=ny&agency=fsa>

**State Commissioner Richard A. Ball said,** "The lack of rain we have been seeing this summer has been presenting serious challenges for farms in areas of the state. While it's too early to tell what the overall impact will be, forage, hay, corn, and grain crops to feed animals over the winter will likely be affected, so it's critical that these counties be declared as disaster areas so they can apply for the assistance they may need. We will continue to survey farms across the State and encourage our farmers to reach out to us or to FSA if they have any questions."

**Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Patty Ritchie said,** "This summer's unusually hot, dry weather has meant severely damaged crops and lost profits for hardworking farmers across our state, including many in region I represent," said. "In light of these recent, arid conditions, our farmers need help—and I would like to thank Governor Cuomo for recognizing that. This disaster declaration is a start toward getting farmers the assistance they need to rebound from the devastating drought, and I look forward to the designation being expanded to other impacted counties—including Jefferson County—so our farmers can continue to contribute to the growth of New York's leading industry."

**Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Assemblyman Bill Magee said,** "I thank Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Ball for their concern during this difficult and unpredictable time for farmers across the State. They have been working in partnership with our agricultural industry partners to help farmers stay informed and report their losses, ensuring they could take advantage of the federal assistance available in extreme circumstances like this."

**New York Farm Bureau President Dean Norton said,** "New York Farm Bureau is pleased that USDA Secretary Vilsack acted quickly and recognized the impact that this summer's drought has had on our farmers in New York. Many of our farmers in these affected areas are in need of assistance with feed, water and other resources. The declaration is the first step in working to get assistance to those farmers in their time of need."

**The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, along with its Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Cornell Eden program, recommend that farmers affected by the drought should continue to document their conditions (pictures and video), and any losses. Farmers can also file a CCC- 576 (Notice of Loss) with their local USDA Farm Service Agency.**

### **STATE AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER CONTINUES HIS TOURS OF DROUGHT-DAMAGED FARMS IN THE SOUTHERN TIER & ANNOUNCES RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FARMERS**

*Steuben and Yates County Farms Seeing Potential Crop Loss of Up to 50-60 Percent, Higher Production Costs Associated with Hauling Water and Irrigation, Commissioner Joins Senator O'Mara for Roundtable Discussion on Extent of Drought Damage and Plan for Recovery*

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball recently joined state leaders, representatives from the New York Farm Bureau, members of the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (USDA FSA), and Cornell Cooperative Extension of

Steuben and Yates Counties to tour several farms in the Southern Tier and Finger

Lakes regions affected by this summer's drought. In addition, Commissioner Ball announced a new drought guide to help impacted farmers navigate the various resources available. The Commissioner provided the resource guide to participants during a roundtable gathering hosted by Senator Thomas O'Mara to discuss the extent of the drought and plan to help farmers with recovery.

**State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball said,** "Our farmers haven't seen drought conditions this severe in decades, particularly in Steuben and Yates Counties. The extremely dry, hot summer has created extraordinary obstacles for farmers and it is imperative that we do everything we can to help them secure the assistance they need to overcome this challenging time. In addition to providing a new resource guide, we will continue to work closely with our partners to help alleviate the current burden and any long-term effects of the drought."

**State Senator Thomas O'Mara, member of the Senate Agriculture Committee said,** "I commend New York State and the federal government for recently declaring 26 counties in Upstate New York as natural disaster

areas due to drought conditions. The declaration includes all of the counties within the 58th Senate District I represent. As I drive across this district, it's clear how this year's drought has negatively impacted many farms. Although we've welcomed some rain recently, the majority of the growing season has passed and a number of farmers are left with low-performing crops. This disaster declaration is the first step in getting farmers the help they need and deserve. This informational forum will provide an opportunity to discuss the potential short- and long-term impacts of the season's drought on local farmers, as well as the local, state and federal assistance that will be available to farmers impacted by the drought. I also appreciate Commissioner Ball and Senator Ritchie for joining us to personally tour several farms in Steuben and Yates Counties to see and hear firsthand what farmers are facing."



### **Farm Tours**

During the tour, the group visited Clearview Farm, a Yates County vineyard, John R. Wallace Farms, a potato growing operation, and Damin Farms, a dairy operation, both in Steuben County. These areas have seen a severe lack of rainfall. According to Cornell Cooperative Extension, a percentage of Steuben and Yates County farmers could face a 50 to 60 percent yield loss of various crops. Corn production is down 30 to 60 percent, depending on the location in the county. As of the last reporting of the Ag Census Crop Progress report for New York, the average corn height is 71 inches, compared to an average of 95 inches last year.

Both dry beans and potato yields are expected to be about 50 percent less than normal. Many local producers irrigated their crops, adding to production costs. Small-scale beef producers and dairy farms are also facing difficulties. Many dairy farmers, who are already challenged with the low cost of milk, will see increased production costs as a result of the lack of forage for this winter's feeding season and the need to bring in an outside water supply.

### **Resource Guide**

In addition to the farm tour, Commissioner Ball joined State Senators Thomas O'Mara and Pattie Ritchie, along with other state elected officials, members of the USDA FSA, Farm Credit East, Steuben County Industrial Development Agency, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts for a roundtable discussion on the drought conditions in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes and the immediate and long-term needs of the affected farmers. During the roundtable, Commissioner Ball presented a new resource guide created by the State Department of Agriculture and Markets to connect farmers with much-needed assistance programs from federal, state and local agencies. The guide provides information on the USDA Disaster Declaration and FSA emergency loans. It also links farmers to weekly crop progress and condition reports and resources from Cornell Cooperative Extension, NY FarmNet, and others related to preventing, preparing for and recovering from emergencies and disasters, increasing the productivity and financial stability of a farming operation, and crop insurance.

**The resource guide will be updated as new information becomes available and can be found at [www.agriculture.ny.gov/drought\\_resource\\_guide.pdf](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/drought_resource_guide.pdf)**

There are also other numerous resources available for farmers affected by the drought through Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Cornell EDEN program, and NY FarmNet to assist with forage management and programs and projects to better prepare the state for future drought.

**Jamie Earl, Steuben County Executive Director, USDA FSA, said,** "USDA has designated all of Southern Tier and Finger Lakes as either a primary or secondary disaster area because of the drought, which makes emergency loans available to producers who can show a 30 percent loss on a crop and cannot get credit elsewhere. Additionally, there are other disaster programs available producers might qualify for. I recommend farmers contact their local Farm Service Agency office to find out what assistance is available to them."

**Dr. Chris Watkins, Director of CCE, said,** "New York agriculture is normally blessed with a tremendous resource that we often take for granted – water. In a year like this one, Cornell's land grant resources are available to provide the highest level of outreach, education, and communication to New York's farm community. Cornell has activated the county-based Extension Disaster Education Network, EDEN, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Markets. Each Extension Association in the hardest hit drought areas are assisting farmers in navigating damage assessments, coordinating with county emergency management personnel, and distributing technical information for on-farm management in water scarce areas. Farmers can access drought resources on the EDEN website."

The Department will continue to work with its partners at FSA, Cornell and the Cornell EDEN program in monitoring the drought situation and its effect on New York farms. The Department has also requested Cornell's Disaster and All-hazards Response Team (DART) to open so first hand reports can be provided from the field.



## Tedd Wallace (1949-2016)

Tedd R. Wallace, 66, passed away unexpectedly Saturday (Aug. 6, 2016) at his home.

Tedd was born Aug. 12, 1949 in Canadaigua, a son of Robert and Elsie (Warner) Wallace. He was a veteran of the United States Air Force, serving during Vietnam. He married Lynette Garippa on May 12, 1986; she survives. Tedd has always been a dedicated farmer, husband and father. He was predeceased by his father, Robert Wallace.

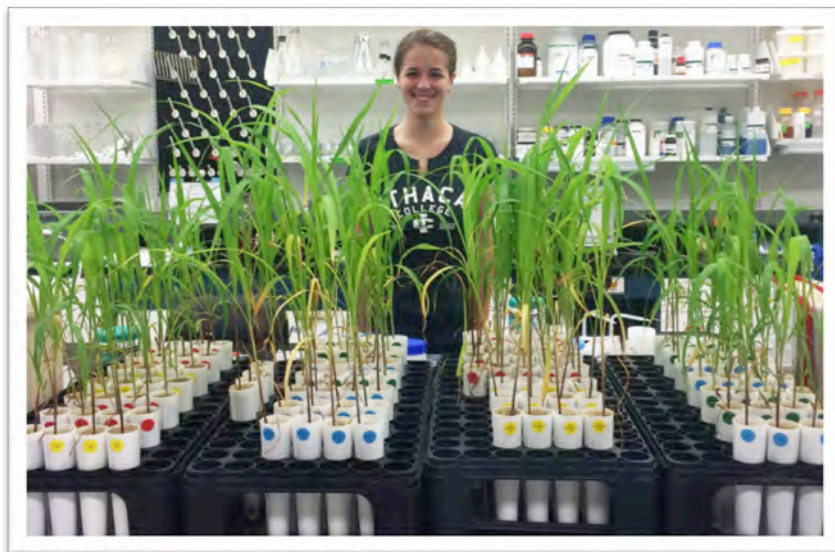
He was a member of the Farm Bureau and loved to farm. He enjoyed reading farm magazines, vacation trips to Daytona, Florida, the farmer gossip chain, water skiing (in his younger days), swimming, playing cards and warm weather, but most of all he loved working the farm with his family.

Tedd is survived by his wife, Lynette; his sons, John Wallace (Stephania Brown) and Joe Wallace; one granddaughter, Ainsley Wallace; his mother, Elsie Wallace; his siblings, Jim (Linda) Wallace, Ronald Wallace, David (Marsha) Wallace and Susan (John) Murphy; his aunts and uncles, Ardeen and Virgie Warner, Marion Walker, Laura Mae Wallace, Joan Wallace and Ken Howie; his mother-in-law and father-in-law, Mose and Sally Garippa; his sisters-in-law and brother-in-law, Teresa Hoyt, Christine Mark, Nancy Standish and John and Lynne Garippa; several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Contributions may be made to a charity of the donor's choice in Tedd's memory. Condolences may be sent to the family at [www.bairdfuneralhomes.com](http://www.bairdfuneralhomes.com)

**Published in Hornell Evening Tribune on Aug. 8, 2016**

## Tompkins Co. Student Earns 2016 Empire State Potato Growers Scholarship



Cassandra Proctor of Trumansburg, NY, has been named the 2016 Empire State Potato Growers Association Scholarship winner and will receive a \$500 scholarship per academic year for up to four consecutive years of agricultural education at a college in New York State.

Cassandra will graduate from Charles O. Dickerson High School in Trumansburg in June. She plans to begin her pursuit of a degree in plant sciences at Cornell University in the fall. Her career goal is to earn a PhD in plant genetics and to research ways to improve plant yield and suitability for impoverished areas.

As a high school senior, she served as an FFA Co-Treasurer, and participated in the Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga New Visions in Life Sciences Program that

allowed her to intern in the Boyce Thompson Institute plant genetics research lab at Cornell University.

Cassandra was selected to attend the Global Youth Institute hosted by the World Food Prize Foundation in Iowa in 2015. This summer Cassie will travel to the Philippines on an eight-week Borlaug Ruan International Internship at the International Rice Research Institute.

"The Empire State Potato Growers Association is pleased to recognize Cassandra Proctor for outstanding achievement and vision related to plant science and global food production needs," said Empire State Potato Growers Association Scholarship Committee Chairman Andrew Pryputniewicz.

The Empire State Potato Growers recognized Cassandra Proctor as their 2016 scholarship winner at the Ag Leadership Luncheon at Empire Farm Days on Wednesday, August 10 at Rodman Lott & Son Farms in Seneca Falls, NY.

## Bob Martens awarded Empire State Potato Growers Industry Leadership Award

We are pleased and honored to recognize Bob Martens as the 2016 recipient of the Empire State Potato Growers Industry Leadership Award.

Bob's influence in the potato industry runs deep and its impact reaches beyond potatoes and New York. His leadership has left a lasting legacy especially as it relates to Empire Farm Days and the strength of the association.

Martens Farms, Port Byron, NY was established in 1915 by Bob's grandparents, who were Belgium immigrants. Lucien, Bob's father, took over the reins of the operation and Bob and his siblings worked with their father on the vegetable farm. Upon graduation from high school Bob returned to what he knew and what he loved -- farming. A year later he married Maxine, his high school sweetheart and together they have four children: Jeff, Tim, Tom and Janet.

Bob and Maxine worked together to run Marten's Farms and their

children worked side by side with them. According to Maxine, "the boys loved the farm and worked long and hard on it." When asked about their daughter Janet, Maxine said, "Janet helped, she hoed and graded as needed but that Janet often said she had a lot of time to think about what she wanted to do while she was working on the farm and it wasn't that."

Bob loved farming and he loved working with his children but he also encouraged them to follow their own dreams. And although Martens Farms has changed and evolved, it is still a family business with both Tim and Tom involved in the current operation.

All the Martens children learned first hand how hard work, determination and integrity can create success. Time spent with their father, was always full of lessons and new ideas. Bob was committed to working with Cornell University on continuing research and field tests on new varieties and controls. Sometimes more than 25-30 different

varieties were planted on the farm. He worked first with Joe Scieczka and Bob Plaisted and later with Don Halseth and Walter DeJong.

Bob loved visiting and learning from researchers, specialists and other growers in New York and across the nation. Bob is a believer in building relationships and surrounding himself with people who are prominent in their fields whether it be financial consultants, crop specialists, extension agents, plant breeders. He respects others' opinions and expertise. Much of the time, those experts learn as much, if not more, from Bob and many of his professional relationships develop into personal ones.

As a member of the Empire State Potato Growers association Bob brought his knowledge of the industry and keen business sense on the Board as a director and President of the association for many years. He helped create the board's Empire Farm Days advisory committee and continues (even in retirement) to be a vital part of this group.

Bob knew that better varieties and improved cultural practices were vital to the success of the NY potato industry. Early on he encouraged the association to financially support Cornell University's breeding program and the Uhlien Farm in Lake Placid.

His leadership and influence is still felt today in the Empire State Potato Growers association and its 83-year old show Empire Farm Days. In 1986 the association and event was at a cross-roads. Their executive secretary and show manager was retiring. There had only been 1 other, Red Evans, who had served in this capacity since 1931. The board appointed a search committee and Bob Martens was the clear choice to head it up.

As chance would have it, Bob ran into Drew Wickham at the NYS Vegetable Conference right after Melanie, Drew's wife, and he had become first-time parents.

They both agreed that, as Bob described it, "a part time job that would take 2 weeks in the summer and a few Saturday's throughout the year,"





## Martens cont.



would be a great opportunity for Melanie. Four months later she began working with Dick and Rita Amidon and in January of 1987 she officially became the Executive Secretary and Show Manager.

The cross roads the association faced in 1986 was the quest to find a long-term home for Empire Farm Days. Up until that point Empire Farm Days moved from farm to farm, staying 2- maybe 3-years at a site. Increasing costs to move and pressure from exhibitors made it clear the Empire State Potato Growers association needed to find an alternative to this constant relocating.

Bob knew all this and he became fully engaged in the hunt to find a farm that would fit the criteria and be willing to consider a long-term lease.

The Lott family farm was suggested by an extension agent and Bob, who knew the family well, enthusiastically endorsed them as hard working, highly respected and incredible farm family. He immediately helped set up the first meeting. And in a normal situation you could say..."the rest is history."

But when Bob Martens commits to something, he goes in with his whole heart and being. Although enthusiastic, it was obvious that Melanie had a lot to learn and Bob had a lot to impart. For the next 30 years Bob served as Melanie's cherished mentor and trusted advisor.

True to his all or nothing attitude about life and business, Bob began to show up at critical moments: when rain threatened to cancel the show he was onsite providing assurances that the board of directors supported the investment to bring in tons of stone to guarantee a show; when it was obvious that the Lott family were more than just 300 acres of prime show land he was in the room crafting a win:win contract; when weather caused the need to park vehicles off site he helped coordinate local

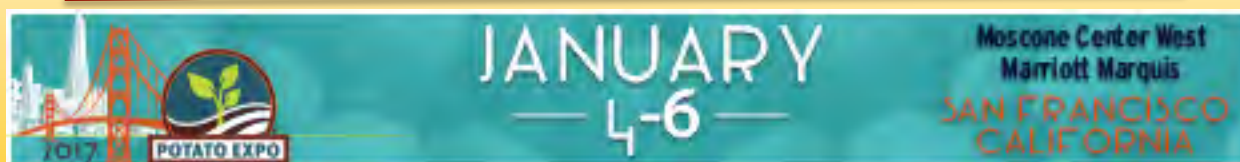
resources to make it happen; when the board of directors questioned - Bob attended meetings and pledged his support and confidence in the direction of the show. And when the show had outgrown the construction trailer office, and warranted a new home that reflected the current show image Bob advocated for a permanent office.

As a result of his willingness to share his business acumen, savvy knowledge of the agriculture industry, keen understanding of the value of relationships Empire Farm Days has grown and prospered.

Although the senior member on the Empire Farm Days Committee, Bob is a steadfast, patient leader. He listens more than he speaks, but when he offers ideas and opinions they are often adopted readily and eagerly. Bob's experience and signature-positive attitude is contagious "No," "Can't," "Impossible" are not words in his vocabulary. He makes those around him better for knowing him and he is a true believer in the win: win philosophy.

Bob's pursuits may be different now, but he is unwavering in his love of family, friends, agriculture and giving more than he takes. He has been making a difference in the NY potato industry since he started farming with his father. His handprint on the industry is indelible as a result of his time spent farming, leadership on the board and involvement in Empire Farm Days.

For these and many other reasons we are proud and privileged to honor Robert Martens with the Empire State Potato Growers Industry Leadership Award.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR THESE MEETINGS VISIT:**  
**[www.potato-expo.com](http://www.potato-expo.com)**

## National visit...

to meet with potato farmers and associated parties who may not be involved in our boards and committees or have an opportunity to visit with us during POTATO EXPO or other industry events each year.” Richardson continues, “We hope to develop even stronger relations with New York potato farms as we visit this production region and meet with people interested in learning more about the issues we are focused upon and learn more about regional issues faced in New York.”

Because of the limited time, this year’s tour will focus on Western NY potato growers with the hope to get them back out again to see other regions of the state. All NY growers are invited to join the tour along the way but especially for a group dinner with Keeling and Richardson. Growers are encouraged to come, meet and visit with these national leaders and share their insight and input on state and national issues.

Thursday Oct. 6th farm tour is slated to begin at 8 am in Springville, a stop for lunch in Arkport area, and a NY potato grower group dinner at 7 pm at the Glen Iris Inn, Letchworth State Park. If you are interested in attending any portion of this please contact Melanie Wickham, [mwickham@nypotatoes.org](mailto:mwickham@nypotatoes.org) or 585.526.5356.



## Potato Industry Leadership Institute

Feb. 8-16, 2017

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Potato Council (NPC) and the United States Potato Board (USPB) are accepting applications for the Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI) class of 2016. The annual eight-day program, held Feb. 8-16, 2017, is designed to identify, develop, and cultivate new leaders within the U.S. potato industry.

During the program, 20 potato growers and industry representatives from across the country focus on leadership development, public policy, marketing, team building and public communication. The 2016 class will begin in Bangor Maine, where participants will receive an overview of the U.S. potato industry and tour local production areas, storages, fresh pack facilities, and processing plants. The group will then travel to Washington, D.C., where the focus will move to national legislative and regulatory policy priorities for the U.S. potato industry.

Participants are selected through state organization nominations and a committee facilitated by NPC and the USPB, who jointly coordinate the program. The Institute is made possible each year through a major sponsorship from Syngenta, which has a long history of commitment to leadership development in agriculture.

The Institute is also accepting applications for two scholarships targeting growers who lack a state or local potato organization. The scholarships cover the \$2,000 PILI registration fee, air transportation, lodging, and meals. Scholarships will be given based upon an application form reviewed by the selection committee.

Registration forms and scholarship applications are available by contacting Hillary Hutchins at [hillaryh@nationalpotatocouncil.org](mailto:hillaryh@nationalpotatocouncil.org) or online at:

<http://nationalpotatocouncil.org/events-and-programs/potato-industry-leadership-institute/>

**Application deadline is Oct. 14, 2016**

