

Chairman of the NY Senate Finance Committee Tours the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva

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by Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: Senator Ronald B. Stafford (R-45th District), Chairman of the New York Senate Finance Committee, toured the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, with longtime friend Roger Forrence on September 3. Forrence's family grows, packs, and ships apples in the Champlain Valley. The purpose of the tour was to show the Senator the wide range of Geneva programs from in-depth lab science to research trials in the field, as well as demonstrate Geneva's applied work with food processors at the Food Venture Center and the Fruit & Vegetable Processing Pilot Plant.

"Our presentations showed the Senator that State support for the Station is a good investment," said James E. Hunter, director of the Geneva Experiment Station. The legislature appropriated an additional \$350,000 for Geneva in 1999, and \$600,000 in each of the two previous years.

Hunter was optimistic that the visit would make it possible for him to meet with the Senator to discuss the Station's budget in the future. "Legislative support for Geneva is critical in this day and age," he said. "I hope this visit will result in continued support in the future."

After morning visits with several Station scientists and lunch with growers, processors, and extension agents, Senator Stafford said, "The Experiment Station has a high profile, and we have to keep it that way. I know there have been cutbacks, and we have got to get the funding back to where it was. "Agriculture is still the biggest industry in the state," he added. "Geneva is on the cutting edge of science, and you deserve our support."



Insect toxicologist David Soderlund [left] shows Senator Ronald B. Stafford (R-45th District) [center] a sample of a transgenic apple plant in tissue culture that resists attack by leafrollers, a serious pest of apples. The information was of particular interest to visiting fruit producer Roger Forrence [right]. The new tool for insect control is an example of collaborative research at Cornell between entomologist Roxanne Broadway and plant pathologist Herb Aldwinckle. CREDIT: R. Way/NYSAES/Cornell

[300-Dpi Jpg photo available](#)

Both he and Forrence commented on the "high caliber" people they had met and that they now had a more comprehensive understanding of the technologies involved in modern agricultural research.

"Senator Stafford had first-hand experience with agriculture during his youth," said Hunter, after the tour. "He understood the importance of research and extension programs the faculty described. He also seemed to enjoy hearing comments about the importance of the Station that were made by several growers, food processors, and the extension specialist who joined us for lunch."

Since taking office in 1965, Senator Stafford has played an important leadership role in the State Senate, as Deputy Majority Leader for Legislature Operations (1989-92); and Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee (1987-88), the Senate Committee on Codes (1979-86), and the Senate Higher Education Committee (1966-78). He has served as Finance Committee Chairman since 1993.

Labs, Fields, and Facilities on Tour

The tour provided the visitors with a comprehensive overview of current research and outreach efforts at the Station. Grape breeder Bruce Reisch explained the operation of the gene gun, and demonstrated how researchers are developing improved grapevines for the New York wine industry. The pair learned about vegetable diseases and extension work from Plant Pathology Chair Helene Dillard and received an update on long-term fungicide research from Pathologist Wolfram Koeller.

Entomologist Jan Nyrop described the mite biological control program underway in grapes and apples. He emphasized that: (1) this program is now providing significant monetary dividends to those who make use of the technology, and, (2) this work can only be accomplished in an institution like the Station, where relatively long-term undertakings are possible because of the type of support and resources that it has.

The group met with insect toxicologist Dave Soderlund, who described the Station's 35-year track record of research on insect control strategies. He also talked about the economic impact of research, and the patenting, licensing, and eventual practical use of Cornell technology.

At the USDA/ARS Plant Genetics Resources Unit, Bill Srmack explained the technology for cryopreservation of apple. PGRU had also set up a display of apple and grape germplasm from their collection.

Susan Brown, Steve Reiners, Terence Robinson and Alan Lakso, professors in horticultural sciences, accompanied the visitors on a driving tour of selected fruit and vegetable field trials.

Lunch provided the opportunity for growers, processors, and extension agents to articulate how their relationship with the Station translates to economic success.

Jan Vanderheide, from Oswego County Cooperative Extension, Dave Peterson, from Swedish Hill and Goosewatch Wineries, Mike Gardinier, with the growers' cooperative Agrilink Foods, Joe Nicholson of Red Jacket Orchards, and local farmer Laura Pedersen (formerly with Cornell Cooperative Extension) reiterated the important role that the Station plays in supporting upstate growers.

"We look to the Station for help with cooperative research projects and count on their help with marketing," Peterson told the visitors. He and the others extolled the Pilot Plant facilities and Food Venture Center (FVC) services.

After lunch, the group visited the Pilot Plant, where food microbiologist Randy Worobo demonstrated how pathogens could be tracked to monitor their survival/death rate in manure and manure-amended soil. FVC director Olga Padilla-Zakour showed samples of New York products manufactured by entrepreneurs and gave a brief tour of the Pilot Plant. She emphasized how the FVC supports the New York food industry and farmers through technology transfer, value added and food safety expertise.

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