

October 6, 2023

Dana Coale, Deputy Administrator
USDA Dairy Program
Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

RE: National Federal Milk Marketing Order Pricing Formula Hearing

Dear Deputy Administrator Coale:

We are writing to provide our complimentary concerns and positions as they relate to the Maine Dairy Industry Association's testimony regarding the National Federal Milk Marketing Order Pricing Formula Hearing.

As directors, commissioners, and secretaries of the departments of agriculture in our respective Northeast states, we understand the great need for this hearing and for the USDA Dairy Program to revise and update the Federal Milk Market Order Program's (FMMOP) component valuations, product survey, and formulas. The hearing and the record being developed should enable a decision by the Secretary making the FMMOP more responsive to the industry's supply and marketing requirements, particularly for our world-leading manufactured dairy products industry.

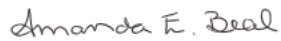
Paramount to this effort is the FMMOP's primary responsibility to ensure orderly marketing for fluid milk markets. Rational, regulated producer pricing is as essential a Market Order Program function as is price discovery. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly illustrated that we ignore threats to our regional food supply at our peril. The steady loss of our New England family-owned dairy farms is of grave concern. As the number of farms decreases, milk plants in the Northeast must travel ever-increasing distances to transport their raw milk supplies – a perishable product.

We believe that the widespread exit of Northeast dairy operations has brought our region's fluid milk supply to a tipping point. We assert that chronically inadequate and volatile producer pricing are the primary causes of this almost unimaginable loss of Northeast farms. While we recognize many pricing factors at work, the Dairy Program must be vigilant to ensure that FMMOP's producer pricing is part of the solution and not a cause of the problem.

Accordingly, when making the needed changes to price formula inputs, the Dairy Program and the Secretary must include as an equally fundamental consideration that this hearing does not result in a net reduction of producer pricing.

Thank you for considering our position.

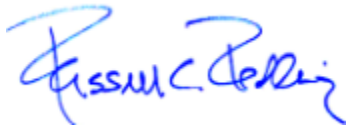
Sincerely,



Amanda E. Beal, Commissioner
Maine Department of Agriculture,
Conservation and Forestry



Ken Ayars, Chief
Rhode Island Division of Agriculture and Forestry



Russell Redding, Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture



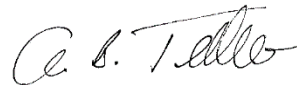
Shawn N. Jasper, Commissioner
New Hampshire
Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food



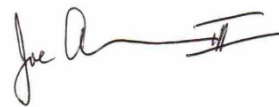
Ashley E. Randle, Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of
Agriculture



Brian P. Hurlburt, Commissioner
Connecticut Department of
Agriculture



Anson Tebbetts, Secretary
Vermont Department of
Agriculture, Food and Markets



Joe Atchison III, Assistant Secretary
New Jersey Department of
Agriculture