

MY name is Richard Handfield and I am the owner of the only DeLaval dairy equipment business in CT. Handfield Dairy Equipment, located in Franklin CT. We sell service and install milking equipment on CT dairy farms and also serve all of RI and about half of Mass.

My business was started in 1970 by my father Francis. At that time he had four employees and served the dairyman in New London County only. Today we have ONE employee and me and we serve all of the above named areas. We have about 110 customers. In 2000 I had 5 full time employees.

It's time for CT elected officials to decide if we want the dairy farmer to survive in CT. One year ago the dairy farmer was getting record high prices for the milk they produced. They also paid record prices for feed, fuel and other consumables. In six short months the milk prices have dropped from over \$20 a cwt to around \$12 a cwt. They still have high feed bills and fuel bills but no relief for the price of the food they produce.

When I was there Saturday, the price in the store for whole milk was between 3.89 and 4.25. They raised the prices when milk went up, but have yet to lower them now that they are paying HALF to the farmer. The dairy farmer is getting about .90 cents a gallon for the milk we pay \$4/gallon at the store. This doesn't seem right to me.

You need to look at what the State of Maine has done for their dairy farmers and do it fast. They have a floor price set at \$18/cwt to make sure the dairy farmer survives.

It's pretty simple. We all love open spaces and looking at the wonderful pastures and hay and corn fields, but if our dairy farmers don't survive it will all be gone.

I would suggest taking whatever money you spend each year on Farm Land Preservation and spend it on a milk support pricing structure for the dairy farmers. What good will all this land we have preserved do if we have no dairy farmers to use it?

We have lost over half of our customers since I purchased this business in 1992. We lost 22 in 2006 and 12 in 2007. These are super low prices, lower than the dairy farmer got in 1980! How much longer can we expect them to invest millions of dollars in an industry that no one in the state seems to care about? Build houses and the land is gone forever. How much longer can I watch my business dwindle to a point where it's no longer viable to stay in business here in CT? Call it what you like, taxes or fees, it's much more expensive to do business here in CT than any state in the Union. And we are still broke.

An industry is on the edge and it's time someone in Hartford showed the fortitude that we need and save the dairy farmers of CT.

Please support Bills 5272 & 5483 and future generations will thank you for your foresight.

Thank you,

Richard Handfield, Owner
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