

February 2009

Dear Governor Rell and Members of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Connecticut dairy farming is at a crossroads.

As Connecticut dairy farmers who provide neighbors with safe, local, wholesome milk 365 days a year, we are looking to our great State of Connecticut to help stabilize the price we receive for our milk products. Dairy farming isn't just our vocation, we are dedicated to the lifestyle of high investment and long hours of manual labor. We are proud of how our farms help to preserve Connecticut's rural charm and the quality of our environment. Sadly, many Connecticut dairy farmers may no longer be able to continue in the dairy business if our farms are not profitable. Does Connecticut really want its food supplied from farms in far off states or other countries? The quality of our food supply and the rural charm of our state would never be the same. Our dairy farmers need assistance to remain sustainable and to send a message to our young farmers that Connecticut's citizens value local farms, dedicated to providing quality food.

Last year Senate Bill 632 was passed and signed into law, becoming Public Act 08-164. The Act required the state conduct an economic study of the dairy industry. This study was completed in January and found that Connecticut's dairy industry contributes \$1 billion annually to the state's economy and represents thousands of jobs. The legislature and Governor of Massachusetts have taken action that provides ongoing support to its dairy farmers and a number of other northeastern states have long-standing programs that keep their dairy farmers farming.

Now, more than ever, Connecticut dairy farmers need your help.

Sincerely, *Frank J. Hirst* *Twin Maple Farm*