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February 18, 2009

Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairman Meyer and Chairman Roy,

As you are aware dairy farmers are facing an unprecedented crisis. Falling prices have contributed to increased strains on dairy farms across Connecticut and the country. During these difficult economic times I believe that an effort must be made to ensure that our dairy farmers are able to survive this crisis.

On the federal level, I have been a strong advocate for increased support for dairy farmers, particularly those in New England. In 2008, I helped to pass the Food, Conservation and Energy Act (P. L. 110-234) commonly known as the "Farm Bill." This comprehensive legislation provides increased support for dairy farms through the extension of the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) payments through 2012. This law also enacted a series of additional supports for dairy farmers including the reestablishment of the Dairy Forward Pricing Program which allows dairy farmers to voluntarily enter into forward contracts with milk handlers.

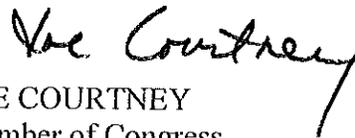
I also joined a number of my colleagues in the U. S. House of Representatives in urging Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to use his authority to make bulk purchases of dairy products on the market for use in school nutrition programs. These purchases will help to remove surplus dairy products from the market and ease the burden our farmers are currently experiencing.

Most recently, during the recent debate on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), I sent a letter to House Appropriations Chairman David Obey urging him to include a number of provisions in the bill that would assist dairy farmers during this difficult economic period. Included among these reforms, were a revised trigger price for MILC payments to reflect the current market price for dairy products as well as the increase costs that farmers have incurred over the past year for feed and fuel. I also urged Chairman Obey to provide farmers with additional tax credits and low interest loans to allow them to revitalize their infrastructure, purchase new equipment and modernize their

farms through the use of alternative energy technologies. While these provisions were not included in the final version of the ARRA, I remain committed to fighting for increased protections and support for dairy farmers.

Our dairy farms are at a crossroads. We must act to preserve this valuable industry which has been a central part of our states' agricultural industry for generations. I look forward to working with farmers, advocates and state officials to ensure the survival and success of the dairy industry in the state of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Courtney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress