



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc.

775 Bloomfield Avenue • Windsor, CT 06095-2322
(860) 298-4400 • Fax (860) 298-4408 • www.cfba.org

February 18, 2009

Testimony in regard to:

Proposed Bill No. 5272 AN ACT CREATING A RELIEF FUND FOR CONNECTICUT DAIRY FARMERS

Proposed Bill No. 5483 AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR THE DAIRY INDUSTRY

Proposed H. B. No. 5504 AN ACT INCREASING THE DAIRY RETAIL LICENSE FEE

Submitted by: Steven K. Reviczky, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of nearly 5,000 families dedicated to farmers and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Connecticut Farm Bureau strongly supports Proposed Bill No. 5272 An Act Creating A Relief Fund For Connecticut Dairy Farmers, Proposed Bill No. 5483 An Act Concerning Financial Relief For The Dairy Industry And modification of Proposed H. B. No. 5504 An Act Increasing The Dairy Retail License Fee.

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Members of the Environment Committee:

Connecticut dairy farmers are up against it. The collapse of the price they are paid for their milk and the high cost of inputs have combined to create the perfect storm. Now, more than ever, Connecticut dairy farmers need a program to ensure a sustainable dairy industry.

Why is dairy farming important to Connecticut?

Dairy farms and dairy farmers are important to Connecticut because they represent:

- Over 100,000 acres of working open space lands that provide scenic vistas, recreational opportunities and wildlife habitats
- \$3 billion of annual economic activity
- Over a 1,000 jobs on dairy farms and over 4,000 jobs in related businesses
- A reliable, secure supply of fresh local milk for Connecticut's citizens

Why is dairy farming different from other Connecticut industries?

- Connecticut dairy farmers suffer from a federal pricing system that fails to recognize the real challenges of farming in the northeast and rewards the type of large-scale farming found in other regions of our country
- The federal milk pricing system is currently paying Connecticut dairy farmers about half of what it costs to produce milk
- Connecticut dairy farmers face sky-rocketing costs of production including feed, seed, fuel and fertilizer
- Dairy farmers have invested significantly in infrastructure uniquely required to dairy

The good news is that Connecticut has experienced an explosion in the interest and demand for locally grown foods. Connecticut citizens want access to healthy, safe, Connecticut Grown food and products. Milk is no exception.

Other states in our region have established programs that support the sustainability of their dairy industries. As recently as last year Massachusetts enacted a program that will provide assistance to its dairy farmers when the cost of production exceeds the federal pay price for milk. Connecticut should do no less.

Farm Bureau respectfully asks that the committee support the establishment of a dairy sustainability fund contained in Proposed Bill No. 5272 An Act Creating A Relief Fund For Connecticut Dairy Farmers and Proposed Bill No. 5483 An Act Concerning Financial Relief For The Dairy Industry and to favorably consider funding mechanisms such as those contemplated in Proposed H. B. No. 5504 An Act Increasing The Dairy Retail License Fee, provided the fee structure is made more progressive.