



**RAISED BILL NO. 1078
OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AN ACT INCREASING THE GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT OF VEHICLES
HAULING AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES**

Comments of Robert D. Wellington,
Sr. Vice President, Agri-Mark Dairy Cooperative

Agri-Mark Dairy Cooperative is in strong support of Bill No. 1078 which would increase gross vehicle weights of vehicles hauling agricultural products in Connecticut. Agri-Mark is a dairy farmer owned and controlled cooperative with more than 1200 members through Connecticut, New England and New York State. We sell our member milk to dairy business through the Northeast and operate four plants manufacturing cheese, butter and other products sold under the Cabot and McCadam brands.

Agri-Mark has more than seventy member farms that produce the majority of milk in Connecticut. We are also suppliers of milk to dairy businesses in the state. Milk is picked up at Connecticut farms each day or every other day and is delivered to customers both within and outside of Connecticut. Most trucks stop at several farms to maximize the volume of milk on the truck and lower the costs per hundredweight that is paid by the farmer. States adjacent to Connecticut allow milk trucks to carry 100,000 or more pounds of milk which saves their farmers significant money compared to Connecticut farmers who can only consolidate up to 80,000 pounds per load. This raises the operational costs of local Connecticut dairy farms by more than \$2,000 per year compared to their out-of-state neighbors. **Full milk trucks mean lower costs for Connecticut dairy farmers.**

The lower current Connecticut gross vehicle weight allowance also adds costs to Connecticut businesses that purchase milk and dairy ingredients. Those plants must unload more trucks to get their required volumes of milk and often may pay more for milk and milk products, such as bulk skim milk and cream from out of state. Liquid milk coming from outside the state must either travel long distances with only partial loads or else unload parts of their full load before ending Connecticut. Either situation adds costs to the product price that must be borne by Connecticut businesses and ultimately consumers. **Full milk trucks mean lower costs to Connecticut dairy businesses.**

The economic benefits of hauling larger loads are both great and clear; smaller loads raise hauling costs to the average family dairy farm by more than \$2,000 per year. However the public highway safety benefits are equally as great but often not as clear. Milk trucks today are built to haul at least 100,000 pounds of milk. Their trailers have milk containment units that typically hold 65,000 pounds of milk. Since the milk producing states such as New York, Massachusetts and Vermont that supply Connecticut allow that weight load, trucks follow those guidelines. However in order to meet Connecticut's restrictions, full trucks containing milk destined for Connecticut must unload part of their contents prior

to crossing into the state. This partial unloading creates health and food security issues, but more importantly, it results in far less stable loads of milk. Fluid milk tankers are very stable when full because there is no room for the milk to shift. However when only partially full, there is empty space created for fluid milk to move dramatically as trucks turn, stop and accelerate. This makes it far more difficult to control. Some people believe that lower weight trucks will do less injury when an accident occurs; however an accident with either size loaded truck will usually be equally as serious. However, since full trucks are easier to handle, there will likely be fewer accidents to begin with. **Full milk trucks mean safer milk trucks on the road.**

A full milk truck weighing 100,000 pounds contains about 30% more milk than one weighing 80,000 pounds (keep in mind that the basic weight of the truck and trailer are the same no matter what the load size). Connecticut milk plants need certain large volumes of milk to meet their needs. The lower weight limit requires that about 30% more 80,000 milk trucks must enter the state to provide the same quantity of milk as the larger loads. Currently, about 50 loads of milk per day come into Connecticut to meet the needs of its milk processing and dairy manufacturing plants. If the weight limit was raised to 100,000 pounds, there would be about 15 fewer trucks traveling on the roads each and every day. This amounts to more than 5000 fewer milk truck trips a year on Connecticut roads! **Full milk trucks mean far fewer milk trucks on the road.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on this important bill. If you need additional information, please contact me at rwellington@agrimark.net or 1-978-687-4934.