

October 23, 2026

The Honorable G.T. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Angie Craig
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Craig,

As we anticipate continued Farm Bill action before the end of the 119th Congress, we, the undersigned organizations, urge you to take immediate action to pass the Milk from Family Dairies Act of 2026 (S.4906).

For decades, milk prices paid to U.S. dairy farmers have regularly been below their production costs. Prices dipped so low in 2018 that dairy farmer suicides became national news. Low prices mean that family-scale dairy farmers cannot pay their bills, contribute to their local economies, invest in sustainable practices, pay workers a fair wage, or transition their farms to the next generation. In turn, many dairy farms are forced to close—in 2025 alone, the U.S. lost 1,036 dairy farms, or 4 percent of all dairy farms, and Chapter 12 bankruptcies have hit dairy-producing states particularly hard in recent years.

While the dairy insurance programs developed in the previous two farm bills were crafted to respond to the challenges of dairy farmers, they have not fundamentally addressed chronically low prices, market volatility, and continued consolidation, nor have they prevented the loss of small- and mid-sized dairies. Federal dairy insurance and other payments have made little difference for most farmers, and consolidation of the dairy sector has increased since the emergence of margin protection programs, with 47 percent fewer dairies producing 12 percent more milk and average dairy herd size increasing from 207 cows to 402 cows in that time.¹ This

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/animal-products/dairy/background>;
<https://www.progressivepublish.com/downloads/2026/general/2025-pd-stats-lowres.pdf>

consolidation trend largely benefits highly capitalized, large-scale, industrial operations rather than a more decentralized, diversified, and pasture-based sector led by family farmers. The U.S. dairy sector needs systemic reform to support fair prices for family-scale producers, address corporate consolidation, and reduce export market dependence.

Low prices and production beyond domestic demand have led to an overreliance on export markets to dispose of excess milk volume. Even as the number of licensed dairy herds decreased by almost two-thirds in the past two decades, national milk production increased by over 30 percent.² Small- and mid-size farmers are particularly at risk in an export-focused industry, which is vulnerable to global political uncertainties. The fragility of the “get-big-or-get-out” approach has decreased the sector’s resilience in the face of shocks, as was illustrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when farmers were forced to dump tens of millions of pounds of milk, despite high rates of food insecurity made even higher by the emergency.

We need a new U.S. dairy policy oriented towards small and mid-size dairy farms, and the Milk from Family Dairies Act provides a path forward. For all its novelty, the MFDA is rooted in real-world examples of creative policymaking: dairy policies in place in the U.S. from the earliest farm bills in the ’30s through the ’90s managed milk production and ensured farmers a fair price historically, while the U.S. sugar and cranberry industries and the Canadian dairy industry today use similar elements that have stabilized those sectors in ways U.S. producers would greatly benefit from.

The Milk from Family Dairies Act would:

- Establish a Dairy Market Stabilization Program to ensure dairy farmers get a fair price for their milk based on their costs of production and achieve a better balance between U.S. dairy supply and demand that would downsize industrial-scale mega-dairies;
- Reform import controls to monitor and generate demand for domestic dairy through trade policy, to prevent undercutting farmer incomes and workers’ rights in the U.S. and limit dependence on foreign markets;
- Initiate measures to restore competition to the sector, including annual reviews of and publications on the economic impacts of horizontal and vertical integration in the dairy sector on farm-gate prices for dairy producers and grocery prices for dairy consumers;

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<https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2026/february/fewer-farms-more-milk-the-changing-structure-and-costs-of-us-dairy-farming>

- Invest in and incentivize regional dairy infrastructure, including through new training and apprenticeship programs, expanding access to the Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives, new cost-share grants for small-scale dairy infrastructure, and more mandatory and discretionary funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program; and
- Save taxpayers ~\$1.5 billion, even after new investments, from suspending insurance and other programs that farmers would no longer need with a stabilized dairy market.

The benefits of a new way forward for the dairy industry are numerous. Dairy farmers would get paid a fair price and the transparency, competition, and agency in the sector that they deserve. Consumers, workers, and dairy processors will be guaranteed a consistent, resilient, and affordable milk supply. And a thriving dairy industry will revitalize rural communities, supporting workers' livelihoods while creating good jobs in processing and transportation.

It is time for a change in the dairy industry. We call on your political leadership to support farmer-centered structural reform of U.S. dairy policy. We urge you to pass the Milk from Family Dairies Act of 2026.

Sincerely,

National Family Farm Coalition
 ActionAid USA
 Addison County Relocalization Network
 Agrarian Trust
 American Agriculture Movement
 American Economic Liberties Project
 American Sustainable Business Network
 Armagh Dairy
 Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake Counties Farmers
 Union (Ohio)
 Campaign for Family Farms and the
 Environment
 Center for Food Safety
 Center for Good Food Purchasing
 Citizens Trade Campaign
 Community Alliance for Global Justice
 Community Alliance with Family Farmers
 Cornucopia Institute
 Dakota Resource Council
 Dakota Rural Action

Ecological Consultants for the Public
 Interest
 Family Farm Defenders
 Farm Action Fund
 Farm Aid
 Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
 Farm to Institution New England
 FarmSTAND
 Food & Water Watch
 Food Animal Concerns Trust
 Food Chain Workers Alliance
 Food for Maine's Future
 Friends of the Earth
 Friends of the MST
 God's Country Creamery
 Green America
 Grison Dairy & Creamery
 Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
 Illinois Stewardship Alliance
 Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Jackson-Trempealeau County Farmers
Union (Wisconsin)
Kansas Farmers Union
Kansas Rural Center
Kentucky Black Farmers Association
Land Loss Prevention Project
Land Stewardship Project
Maine Farm & Sea to Institution
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners
Association
Marbleseed
Massachusetts Avenue Project, Inc.
Michigan Farmers Union
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance
Migrant Justice
Mill-King Market and Creamery, LLC
Minnesota Farmers Union
Missouri Farmers Union
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Montana Cattlemen's Association
New Jersey Dairy and Cheese Guild
New Jersey Food Policy Council
North American Marine Alliance
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association –
Connecticut
Northeast Organic Farming Association –
Interstate Council

Northeast Organic Farming Association –
Massachusetts
Northeast Organic Farming Association –
New Hampshire
Northeast Organic Farming Association –
New Jersey
Northeast Organic Farming Association –
New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association –
Vermont
Northern Plains Resource Council
Ohio Farmers Union
One Fish Foundation
OrganicEye
Organization for Competitive Markets
Partners for Dignity and Rights
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture
Pennsylvania Farmers Union
Powder River Basin Resource Council
Presbyterian Church USA Hunger Program
R-CALF USA
Round Mountain Creamery
Rural Coalition
Rural Vermont
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project
United Church of Christ
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Women Food and Agriculture Network