

We support all of the recommended amendments listed to the PMMB. They are a good start in the changes that are necessary to ensure the future of dairy farms in Pennsylvania. The situation that Pennsylvania dairy farms have found themselves has been catastrophic over the past few months. A fellow dairy farmer stated in the first hearing that we are all relying on each other. The processors and the retailers rely on the farmers, and the farmers rely on them. This statement is only half true. Processors and retailers have unlimited options of who they use to supply milk, producers have very limited options due to the cost of hauling, contracts, and who is willing to accept our milk. When an over order premium is allowed to give advantages to processors and retailers to bring out of state milk into Pennsylvania, our milk became an undesirable commodity.

Our farm was one of the 26 farms in the Lancaster/ Lebanon area that received termination notices from Deans Foods. Whether this situation was caused by out of state milk coming into Pennsylvania or not, the reality of who has been able to receive the over order premium is a topic that should be priority. The transparency of what milk is on the shelves and how much is being sold is monumental as well in the evaluation of the future of Pennsylvania dairy farming.

Our recommendation for changes to the over order premium is to have the only possibility of this premium going to only Pennsylvania dairy farms, with no exceptions. If a Pennsylvania farm is not involved with the premium earned, that premium should be divided between all Pennsylvania dairy farms. The premium as well, should be earned on all dairy products sold in Pennsylvania. We question the integrity of those parties allowing this premium meant for the actual farms producing milk going to another party.

We strongly support, as well, a transparent reporting of loads of milk allowed to enter the state and how much is being sold as stated by the proposed amendment. This is crucial to truly understand where our state's supply and demand is. What we have learned through our public request of an extension, consumers want a connection to what they eat and drink. They want to see who is making the milk they are purchasing. This is evident in the recent increase in milk labelled PA Preferred. If anything will add security to Pennsylvania milk, the demand for this is a good and honest step in what consumers truly want. The planning of a processing plant to add processing in Pennsylvania is a great step in support of our industry. We encourage it to be a PA Preferred plant.

We would like to thank all the effort and energy put forth from everyone contributing to the recommended amendments by Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding. The situation we faced with our termination notice was unthinkable with the atmosphere at that time within the industry. These beginning steps to change milk marketing in Pennsylvania are a great testimony to the concern of the PDA. We do not ask for a hand out or guarantee of our farms success. We are all independent farms in this industry with different challenges and situations. We simply are asking for a level playing field free from policy that makes our milk a target for termination.

Sincerely,

John and Alisha Risser