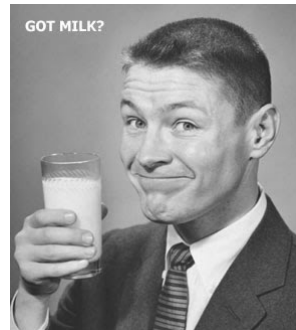


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A legislator's proposal to aid the declining U.S. dairy industry. (/full-blog/2011/10/legislators-proposal-to-aid-declining.html)



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By: Whitney Jones, Staff Member

On July 13, 2011, ranking House Agriculture Committee member Collin Peterson of Minnesota released a draft proposal for the 2012 dairy reform bill stating that “if we have another dairy crisis like we had in 2009, we could lose half our dairies.”[1] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn1) The Representative’s proposal came in response to what has been called the “Great Dairy Recession,” a period in 2009 where a weakened economy led to a collapse in milk prices, the export market went bad, and the cost of feed skyrocketed.[2] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn2)

This proposal, however, comes at a time when our country is focused on coming out of a recession of its own and cutting billions in federal programs.[3] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn3)

The discussion draft of the bill states its purpose as the following: “A bill to replace current dairy product price support and milk income contract programs with a program to protect dairy producer income when the difference between milk prices and feed costs is less than a specified amount, to establish a dairy market stabilization program, to amend Federal milk marketing orders, and for other purposes.”[4] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn4)

Like any other legislation, the proposal does not come without disagreements among affected parties. Since its release, many organizations have voiced their support and also their concerns. The National Milk Producers Federation President and CEO Jerry Kozak described this legislation as long-anticipated, while the International Dairy Foods Association CEO Connie Tipton feels that this program will negatively impact the ability of the U.S. dairy industry to compete globally.[5] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn5) One aspect of the proposal that has proven to be especially controversial is the program setting limits on milk production in an attempt to regulate oversupply and price fluctuations.[6] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn6)

Whether you agree or disagree with Representative Peterson’s proposal of the dairy reform bill, it is an unavoidable reality that thousands of farmers across the country are exiting the dairy industry and the amount of dairy farms is decreasing rapidly.[7] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn7) Representative Peterson has responded to this and hopes that others in Congress will find that “this proposal addresses these challenges. The proposal creates a strong safety net that will provide the support all sectors of the diverse industry need during tough times.”[8] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn8)

“Got milk?” may be a phrase of the past because without dairy farms, there may not be enough milk for consumers “to get.”

[1] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref1) Jerry Hagstrom, *Peterson releases dairy reform draft*, *Agweek*, July 18, 2011, <http://www.agweek.com/event/article/id/18780/> (<http://www.agweek.com/event/article/id/18780/>).

[2] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref2) Eric Brown, *Dairy experts: Leprino Foods plant won’t completely save regional industry, but it will help*, *The Tribune*, Aug. 27, 2011, <http://www.greeleytribune.com/article/20110827/BUSINESS/708279980> (<http://www.greeleytribune.com/article/20110827/BUSINESS/708279980>).

[3] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref3) *Id.*

[4] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref4) First discussion draft Dairy Reform Bill, dated July 13, 2011, *available at* http://democrats.agriculture.house.gov/inside/Legislation/PETEMN_001_xml_071111.pdf (http://democrats.agriculture.house.gov/inside/Legislation/PETEMN_001_xml_071111.pdf); Representative Collin Peterson (D-MI) drafted this legislation.

[5] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref5) Hagstrom, *supra* note 1.

[6] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref6) Curtis Tate & John Holland, *U.S. dairy farmers are in 'a pretty big hole'*, Merced Sun-Star, Aug. 20, 2011, <http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2011/08/20/2011268/us-dair-farmers-are-in-a-pretty.html> (<http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2011/08/20/2011268/us-dair-farmers-are-in-a-pretty.html>).

[7] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref7) Brown, *supra* note 2.

[8] (http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref8) Hagstrom, *supra* note 1.

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