



# News Release

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*"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**NMPF Endorses Legislation to Help Dairy Farmers with Workforce Needs**  
Senate Bill Would Give Dairy Operators Opportunity to Use H-2A Visa Program

ARLINGTON, VA – Dairy farmers across the country will be able to use a federal visa program to access immigrant workers under new legislation introduced this week in the Senate. The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) "supports this approach to helping farmers ensure that their workforce needs are met," said Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of NMPF.

Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Charles Schumer (D-NY) have introduced the H-2A Improvement Act, which will authorize foreign dairy workers, sheep herders, and goat herders to remain in the U.S. for an initial period of three years, and gives the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services the authority to approve a worker for an additional three-year period.

Kozak said that NMPF continues to support comprehensive efforts to reform the nation's immigration policies, including the AgJOBS bill being sponsored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). The new H-2A visa legislation "won't resolve all of the labor challenges facing our dairy sector, but it does close the existing loophole allowing other farm employers to use the H-2A program, while denying that opportunity to dairy owners."

The Senate legislation has been introduced in part because the U.S. Department of Labor announced last February that it has "no legal authority" to include the dairy industry in the H-2A visa program. The legislation will rectify that situation, according to NMPF. Under present law, farms that hire seasonal workers to harvest fruits and vegetables can utilize the H-2A visa program. Dairy farms are not included because milk production is not considered seasonal work.

A survey released in 2009 of the labor and hiring practices of U.S. dairy operations found that many farms are heavily dependent on foreign laborers, and that the dairy sector would be crippled if it had no access to immigrant workers. That survey is available on the NMPF website: [www.nmpf.org/files/file/NMPF%20Immigration%20Survey%20Web.pdf](http://www.nmpf.org/files/file/NMPF%20Immigration%20Survey%20Web.pdf).

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The National Milk Producers Federation, based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's 31 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 40,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at [www.nmpf.org](http://www.nmpf.org).