



News Release

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

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NMPF Urges Senate to Spend \$350 Million Buying, Donating Cheese

Analysis Indicates USDA Purchases, Donations Would Be Most Effective Use of Money

ARLINGTON, VA – In an effort to help both dairy farmers and needy Americans, the National Milk Producers Federation is urging congressional leaders to direct \$350 million dollars toward the purchase of cheese, which would then be donated through food banks and other charities to help feed the hungry.

In a letter sent Wednesday to Senate and House appropriators, NMPF said that a \$350 million amendment offered last month by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) to an agricultural spending bill would be most effective if used to purchase consumer cheese products, such as American cheese and mozzarella. According to an analysis done by NMPF, appropriating that money to USDA for purchasing products commercially would enhance dairy farmer income by \$1.3 billion over a period of several months.

"It is dramatically clear from our results that the purchase of cheese for use in domestic feeding programs would provide the biggest benefit to the producer milk price at this time," said Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of NMPF, in reference to NMPF's analysis of how to maximize the value of any additional appropriations directed toward the dairy producer sector. NMPF estimates that the typical dairy producer would see an increase of \$0.65/cwt. as a result of such an approach.

In contrast, using the \$350 million to increase direct payments to farmers, or to supplement the Dairy Product Price Support Program, would only increase farmer income by \$335 million and \$185 million, respectively. The wording of the Sanders amendment does not specify how USDA must use the one-time appropriation, so NMPF sent the letter to members of the Senate-House conference committee that will finalize the Fiscal Year 2010 spending bill.

In addition to boosting dairy farmers' income in a year when they are faced with a \$12 billion loss in sales, the proposed cheese purchases "would provide a huge and targeted nutritional benefit to millions of food-insecure American families during this time of national economic hardship," NMPF wrote.

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Because government food stamps often run out prior to the end of each month, “food banks are another means for feeding these individuals. Unfortunately, commodities available for food bank distribution are limited by funds and availability. USDA purchasing of surplus cheese is an excellent opportunity to provide another source of a nutrient rich protein to the food banks,” NMPF wrote.

A full copy of NMPF’s letter to congressional appropriators, along with its analysis of the impact of various spending proposals, [can be found here](#).

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. Visit www.nmpf.org for more information.