

From: "gmdfi@together.net%inter2" <gmdfi@together.net>
Subject: USDA comment Farm Bill
Date Sent: 10/26/2005 11:43:49 CDT
Date Received: 10/26/2005 11:45:51 CDT

GREEN MOUNTAIN DAIRY FARMERS
COOPERATIVE FEDERATION
194 Sawyer Rd New Haven VT 05472
802-453-2691 gmdfi@together.net

Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns
1400 Independence Ave.
Washington, DC

2007 Farm Bill Comments

Green Mountain represents the four major dairy cooperatives serving Vermont farmers. The federation seeks to make known the potential effects of proposed legislation and policies considered by the Vermont legislature and the administrative agencies and to work toward improved circumstances for dairy farmers..

You have requested comments in response to one or more of six questions as you consider the 2007 Farm Bill. Many of the issues the federation deals with at the state level are affected by federal policies and actions. Our comments will be confined to question one regarding unintended consequences and question four regarding conservation and environmental goals.

Failure to extend the MILC program would have the unintended consequence of intensifying the financial stresses particularly faced by our younger and smaller farmers. The program helps to level out the deeper drops in the milk price and has been of considerable help in giving farmers better predictability for their planning. Those steep price valleys are greatly troubling and are one of the major reasons why the next generation of farmers considers other options with perhaps more security.

We believe there are many positive stories to be told by those who have benefited from this program and others. USDA should seek out and encourage publicity based on successes if for no other reason than to counter the often negative information which tends to create headlines about farmers going out of business. What potential new farmer is helped by these negative images?

Many presently operating USDA water quality programs are aimed at uncertain goals with insufficient attention paid to what is being achieved. Certainly funding needs to be improved but that hurdle comes much easier if the benefits of the conservation and environmental efforts are better known. Again, many positive experiences are happening at the farm level. We are told of the problems much too frequently. A concerted effort to point out the successes and to gain public attention and interest in them will benefit the programs, the farmers who participate and especially the taxpaying public. Municipal clean water projects involved 90% federal funding while farmers are completing many successful projects and supporting them with considerable amounts of their own money..

We are pleased to see that your administration is seeking the input of the agriculture community in creating the 2007 Farm Bill. Thank you for your attention.

