

News Release

For Immediate Release

For More Information Contact:
Mark Winne - (860) 296-9325 (w)
(860) 246-9305 (h)

Hartford Food System Supports Milk Price Gouging Bill

The Hartford Food System announced its support today for Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's fair pricing of milk act. In his statement at the Attorney General's press conference, Hartford Food System's Executive Director Mark Winne said, "Everyday we see our city's consumers, 30% of whom live in poverty, spend too much of their hard-earned money for milk. And everyday we hear about dairy farmers receiving less than their cost of production for milk. Yet those in the middle, the dairy processors and food retailers, are making more money than ever before. This is unfair and must stop."

The Hartford Food System, in conjunction with the City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, conducts periodic food price surveys of supermarkets in the Greater Hartford area. Over the past seven months, these surveys, conducted at 12 different supermarkets, have found that the price of milk was generally \$2.99 per gallon (one store had milk on sale for \$2.50 and another store had milk at \$3.19). The price that Connecticut dairy farmers received for their milk during this time was about \$1.06 per gallon.

"How is it that our economic system entitles the middlemen to take in almost \$2.00 per gallon," asked Winne, "when the consumer is forced to pay too much and the dairy farmer teeters on the brink of bankruptcy?"

Winne went on to point out that it's not just consumers who are paying too much, it's also the taxpayer. In Hartford, over 30,000 people receive food stamps, 9,000 women, infant, and children are in the WIC Program, and over 20,000 children participate in the school breakfast and lunch programs. All of these people are receiving financial assistance from the federal government in one form or another to purchase milk. "When milk prices are higher than can be justified by costs, it also means that the taxpayer is footing the bill to make processors and retailers rich at the expense of the poor," said Winne.

While excessively high milk prices hurt the poor and all consumers, low prices for dairy farmers place them in an untenable business situation. "No one can operate a business for very long," said Winne, "when your product price is below your production costs."

Connecticut's 220 remaining dairy farms currently use over 100,000 acres of farmland for pasture and livestock feed production. "When the business that uses that land to raise cows goes under, so does the land," said Winne. "If those 220 Connecticut dairy farms disappear," said Winne, "they'll be replaced by thousands of houses and shopping centers. Those beautiful fields of green that we've come to savor on our trips through the Connecticut countryside will soon look like 'Anywhere, USA!'"

The Hartford Food System is a non-profit organization founded in 1978. Its mission is to increase the access of the Hartford area's lower income and elderly residents to nutritious and affordable food. The organization operates the Holcomb Farm Community Supported Agriculture project that produces over 100,000 pounds of organic produce annually for low-income and elderly Hartford residents. It also staffs the Working Lands Alliance, a 135-member coalition that is dedicated to the preservation of Connecticut's working farms. The Hartford Food System is a member of and staffs the City of Hartford Food Policy Commission, a City Council-appointed agency that works to ensure that Hartford residents are able to purchase good food at reasonable prices.