

DAIRY VIABILITY IN CONNECTICUT

On behalf of Laurelbrook Farm, I'm here to encourage your support for bill #'s SB1257 and SB1356. Establishing a handler fee on milk sold in Connecticut (SB1257) would help to offset the rising cost of production. Recent studies have shown that retail profit margins are large enough to support this handling fee, and if not they have the ability to pass the cost on. Establishing a Connecticut Milk Commission to work on dairy viability in the state (SB1356) would also be an essential part of a program to ensure a fair and just assessment of the handler fee.

The positive outcome of these bills will provide for our family farm, as well as other fellow dairy farmers in Connecticut. The ability for Connecticut to enforce a milk price that reflects the cost of production in our region is crucial to sustain viable agriculture in our state. Connecticut dairy farming provides a variety of fresh, local dairy products, such as milk, cheese, and ice cream that we all enjoy. In doing so, the dairy industry directly and indirectly generates many jobs and business opportunities for our state. Job opportunities on the farm, as well as associated businesses such as: machinery dealers, feed mills, veterinarians, fertilizer and seed dealers depend on each other's existence in order to be successful. Having these businesses in our state not only benefit the dairy industry, but are utilized by the general public, as well. Aside from the economic benefits of the dairy industry, dairy farming also provides and maintains the beautiful working landscapes that the people of Connecticut enjoy. These landscapes provide beauty, recreation, and habitat for wildlife.

I'd like to leave you with this last thought...farmland preservation has become a large concern in our state. The best method of farmland preservation is keeping farms alive. Supporting these two bills will allow Connecticut dairy farmers to have the economic strength to maintain a viable agricultural infrastructure in the state.

Thank you for your time,

Robert P. Jacquier
Laurelbrook Farm