

March 7, 2007

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Chairman Finch, Chairman Roy and members of the Environment Committee.

I would like to speak in support of SB 1257 an act establishing a milk handler fee system, and SB 1356 an act concerning the establishment of a Connecticut milk commission.

The last several years have been very hard for Connecticut dairy farms. The price they have received for their milk has been less than their cost of production. Some dairy farms have sold their cows and gone out of business while the others struggle to find ways to make their farms viable. These farms are important to Connecticut not only because they supply fresh milk to the residents of the state, but they keep many acres of land open for the production of forage crops. Farm land is valuable to our local communities for aesthetic, economic, and environmental reasons.

I am the manager of Crop Production Services located in Broad Brook. Crop Production Services supplies farmers in the state with fertilizer, chemicals, seed and agronomic services for the production of a wide variety of crops. I have 16 employees on my payroll. In 2006 38% of my revenues came from the dairy industry. We supplied application services on 38,249 acres of crop land. 72% of these acres were for dairy farms. Farmers have seen fertilizer costs increase an average of 9 ½% per year over the last four years. Seed and chemicals have also increase an average of 2 ½ to 3% per year. The dairy farmers have absorbed these costs while the price of their product has decreased. This is a concern because the dairy industry is very important to the survival of agribusiness in Connecticut. Crop Production Services analyzes many factors when making decisions on capital investment to its facilities. Several of the things that are looked at are the crops grown and the long term viability of the farms served. As a manager I worry that I may not be able to make the investment in my business to be able to better serve the farmers in Connecticut.

I encourage the Connecticut legislature to help make dairy farms viable in the state. The Connecticut dairy industry is important to the residents of the state for the fresh milk they produce, but also for the benefits of the open land they maintain in our towns.

Thank you,

William Syme