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Secretary of Agriculture advocating for farmers in D.C. - [Update 8:22 a.m.]

Montpelier -- The Douglas administration announced today that Secretary of Agriculture Roger Allbee is in Washington, D.C. for the remainder of the week advocating for federal reforms aimed at getting better prices to farmers for their milk. In a release, Douglas said federal emergency aid for farmers and comprehensive reforms of the national dairy pricing system must be a priority for Congress.

"I'm pleased the Legislature and I have come to an agreement on a responsible package of revenues to extend our relief package. I'm especially pleased they recognized we could fund this priority without new taxes," the Governor said in the written statement. "The state alone, however, cannot provide all the assistance our farmers need. The Congress needs to pass an emergency farm relief appropriation and meaningful reforms of our federal pricing system for dairy."

Allbee said the Douglas administration's emphasis on federal aid and comprehensive reforms would be the focus of his trip to Washington, where he will meet with counterparts from the other 49 states.

"For too long dairy farmers have struggled with price volatility and the rising costs of production. We need to find a way at the federal level to make it more affordable for farmers to stay in a job they love," Allbee said.

"Because of the complicated federal dairy pricing system, it's critical that Vermont talk with other states to find solutions," Allbee added. "We are already working with states like New York and Pennsylvania to find a fairer pricing system for our dairy farmers."

While in Washington, Allbee will also be on Capital Hill as Congress gears up for the 2007 Farm Bill. "Our Congressional delegation is already working hard on this bill and I want to offer my help in this critical legislation that will shape farm policy for years to come," Allbee said.
