

June 5, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As the global economic crisis continues to sweep across the nation, our nation's dairy farmers are facing tremendous challenges. The price of milk has declined sharply over the last few months while the cost of inputs has remained high. In short, our nation's dairy industry is in jeopardy. If nothing is done to address the profitability of our nation's dairy farms, I am concerned that a staggering number of them will be forced to shut down. This will not only devastate family farms and the dairy industry, but it will make us more vulnerable to reliance on foreign imports. The loss of dairy farms would also harm thousands of rural communities where agriculture and dairy are the primary sources of income.

I urge you to hold a listening session as soon as possible in Ohio on the price of milk, the cost of feed and inputs, as well as overall health of the dairy system. This will allow legislators and the Department to gain insight into the problems that dairy farmers and professionals are facing, so that we may properly address the situation.

With over 3,000 dairy farms and a strong food processing sector, the dairy industry is very important to Ohio. Ohio agriculture has experienced unprecedented change over that last few years, but the values of Ohio's farmers have remained steadfast. Ohio agriculture has a rich history and to ensure a bright future, we must address this situation immediately.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to working with you to maintain and strengthen family farms and agriculture in Ohio and in our nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator