



Legislative Watch

Issues important to today's dairy farmers

Farm Bill Passes Senate; Conference Committee with House Up Next

The Senate passed its version of the Farm Bill by an overwhelming majority of 79 to 14 on December 14. The next step will be a conference committee, where work will begin on sorting out the differences between the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill. Congress returned to work in mid-January.

NMPF was pleased with the Senate bill's numerous provisions that will benefit dairy farmers. The Senate measure mirrors the House

bill's language substantially revising the dairy price support program — an item developed and backed by NMPF. The Senate bill also expands direct payments to dairy producers through the Milk Income Loss Contract program. MILC payments would rise to the original 2002 payment rate of 45 percent, and the volume of milk eligible for payments would rise from 2.4 million to 4.15 million pounds after FY 2008.

The Senate bill does not contain language applying the dairy check-

off program to imported products, something that NMPF said they would urge House and Senate conferees to adopt when they meet.

In addition to the dairy items, the Senate Farm Bill also has favorable treatment of renewable energy systems, increased funding for the EQIP program, and more funding for energy programs focused on animal manure management systems.

USDA's Acting Secretary Chuck Conner made it clear that USDA would recommend the President veto the bills as they currently stand. The White House's main concerns are the proposed tax increase to cover new farm bill spending, and the lack of reform in the income limit levels of those receiving farm payments.

NMPF continues to closely monitor the activity in conference and keep members up to date on activities.

NMPF Continues Push for Immigration Reform in 2008

Although 2007 came to a close with no resolution to the labor issues pressuring dairy farmers across the nation, NMPF continues to push hard for comprehensive immigration reform that would address the workforce needs of dairy producers. NMPF reconvened its Immigration Task Force, which met in late 2007, to evaluate the current political situation and determine the best direction in dealing with the future supply and demand needs of the dairy industry labor force.

After the Senate failed to pass sweeping immigration legislation last June, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) began an effort to address the needs of agriculture specifically, rather than take on the more difficult task of comprehensive immigration reform. The AgJOBS legislation, of which she is a lead sponsor, would provide workable reform for many farm employers, allowing them access to current and new workers. It has a significant number of cosponsors, but it is short at this time of the 60 votes needed to pass it in the Senate.

With raids and labor shortages beginning to have an impact on the agriculture sector and consumers, members of Congress are split between those who want reform that acknowledges the needs of employers, and those who want to limit foreign workers.

NMPF is committed to finding a workable solution for the dairy industry. The Task Force directed NMPF staff to develop a plan that would identify specific actions to be taken by NMPF during 2008. The plan has now been distributed to the task force for review.

Looking for a new lending relationship?



Call Ron Dingerson and Jeff Geukes Today!

269-367-4442

www.AmericanFarmMortgage.com

From Commercial Farm Operations
To The House In The Country

- FSA Guaranteed Loans
- Purchases
- Refinances
- Leasing



FDA Finds Cloned Animals Safe for Consumption; USDA, Industry Groups Continue to Support Moratorium on Cloned Animal Products

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) concluded that meat from cloned cattle is as safe to consume as meat from conventionally bred cattle as stated in their January 15 final Risk Assessment, Risk Management, and Guidance for Industry on the safety of milk and meat products, and animal health for cloned animals and their progeny.

The FDA also said that edible products, such as milk, that come from cloned cattle are as safe to consume as products produced by conventionally bred cattle.

“All of the report on the compositional analysis of meat or milk from bovine clones show that there are no biologically significant differences in the composition of milk derived from clone and non-clone cattle,” the FDA stated.

The FDA also indicated that they are not requiring any additional measures relating to food derived from clones and the offspring of clones, including labeling. Under current laws, FDA may require specific food labeling if there were any safety concerns, or if there is a material difference in the composition of food. FDA has not identified any food safety concerns, and they have found no material difference in food from clones as compared to food from conventionally bred animals.

FDA scientists found that the milk components from dairy clones were of the same type and present in the same amounts as milk sold every day. Therefore, there is no science-based reason to use labels to distinguish between milk derived from clones and that from conventional animals. Should a producer express a desire for voluntary labeling (e.g., “this product is clone-free”), it will be considered

on a case-by-case basis to ensure compliance with statutory requirements that labeling be truthful and not misleading.

Industry groups, such as the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) are pleased with the FDA’s conclusion; yet continue to support the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s voluntary moratorium on the marketing of cloned animals and their products, due to a concern over the potential economic implications cloned animals may make on the cattle market.

“We endorse the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s request that cloning technology providers and the owners of existing cloned livestock continue to observe the moratorium on the commer-

cial marketing of cloned animal products,” Jerry Kozak, NMPF President and CEO said, following FDA’s announcement. “This period of purposeful review is important given that opinion research that has indicated a degree of consumer apprehension of this technology.”

He also noted the need to ensure regulatory status of cloned animals with respect to exports markets.

The USDA maintains they will work to facilitate a smooth transition of cloned animal products into the marketplace.



The classics are back!





The 2007 FFA Tractors are now on sale.

This year’s FFA tractor is a 1/16 scale Farmall 806. The first Farmall in the series! It is available at Tractor Supply Company (TSC) stores statewide. All proceeds benefit the Michigan FFA Foundation.



Now only \$56.98!

For more information about how you can support the FFA, contact the Michigan FFA Foundation at (517) 432-2482 or online at www.michiganffa.com

MICHIGAN STORES:

- ADRIAN
- ALBION
- ALPENA
- BAD AXE
- BATTLE CREEK
- BAY CITY
- BIG RAPIDS
- CADILLAC
- CARO
- CEDAR SPRINGS
- CHARLOTTE
- CLIO
- COOPERSVILLE
- DUNDEE
- FENTON
- FREMONT
- GAYLORD
- GREENVILLE
- HASTINGS
- HOLLAND
- HOUGHTON LAKE
- HOWELL
- HUDSONVILLE
- IMLAY CITY
- IONIA
- JACKSON (W)
- JACKSON
- JONESVILLE
- LANSING (N)
- LANSING (W)
- LAPEER
- LOWELL
- LUDINGTON
- MIDLAND
- MONROE
- MT. PLEASANT
- MUSKEGON
- NEW HAVEN
- NILES
- OWOSSO
- PAW PAW
- PLAINWELL
- PORT HURON
- PORTAGE
- ROMEO
- SAGINAW (N)
- SAGINAW
- SALINE
- SANDUSKY
- SAULT ST. MARIE
- SOUTH HAVEN
- ST. JOHNS
- STURGIS
- THREE RIVERS
- TRAVERSE CITY
- WEST BRANCH
- WILLIAMSTON