



Legislative Watch

Issues important to today's dairy farmers

Senate Committee Passes Climate Change Legislation

In November, Senators Stabenow (MI), Harkin (IA), Baucus (MT), Casey (PA), Klobuchar (MN), Brown (OH), Begich (AK), and Shaheen (NH) introduced S. 2729 – the Clean Energy Partnerships Act. This bill establishes important provisions for agriculture in the offset portion of the Climate Change bill, which was approved by the Senate Environment Committee last month without the ag offset amendment.

NMPF feels very strongly that additional legislation must protect the dairy industry from those who would rather pursue a strictly regulatory approach to managing methane emissions from livestock operations. To mandate greenhouse gas reductions could cause

catastrophic financial losses within the dairy sector. S.2729 provides many of those provisions, and provides opportunities for agriculture to benefit from the legislation.

Although the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed S. 1733, the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, NMPF was disappointed to see the lack of provisions for agriculture. That is why it is critical that the agriculture offsets piece was introduced.

At this time the Senate is not expected to again consider climate change legislation until the spring of 2010.

USDA Dairy Economic Loss Assistance Payment Program

On December 17, the USDA announced rules for implementation of the \$290-million Dairy Economic Loss Assistance Payment (DELAP) program.

DELAP payments were calculated based on each qualifying dairy operation's total pounds of production commercially marketed during the months of February 2009 through July 2009, multiplied by 2, up to a production maximum of 6 million pounds per dairy operation for the year. An estimated \$0.32 per cwt. is being paid on the pounds of milk produced, up to the cap of 6 million pounds.

No application was required to receive DELAP program benefits if a dairy operation or producer's records were currently available in the FSA county office from previous participation in a fiscal year 2009 dairy program administered by FSA.

Dairy producers who do not have production records at the FSA county office, and who have not been contacted to obtain such data for the months of February through July 2009, may apply to receive DELAP program benefits at their local FSA service center. The deadline to submit requests for DELAP program benefits is January 19, 2010.

For more information and eligibility requirements on the new DELAP program, producers should visit their local FSA county office or www.fsa.usda.gov.

The USDA also announced it will spend \$60 million on the purchase of consumer-ready cheeses. The USDA said that it will procure cheddar and mozzarella cheese for delivery between March 16 and December 31, 2010. The products will be distributed through the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

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