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Dairy Reforms in Jeopardy

Midwest Dairy Coalition Joins in Rally To Urge Passage of New Farm Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Midwest Dairy Coalition joined hundreds of farmers and more than 75 other grassroots farm organizations on Capital Hill today as part of a rally urging Congress to pass a new five-year Farm Bill before current farm programs expire at the end of the month.

“On September 1, enhancements made to the MILC program by the 2008 Farm Bill ended, leaving dairy farmers with a lower level of support at a time when they are already facing consequences of widespread drought,” explains Steve Etko, coordinator, Midwest Dairy Coalition. “Enhancements from the previous Farm Bill included a much-needed trigger based on monthly feed costs. Lack of a feed cost adjuster has caused the MILC program to become ineffective.”

The Midwest Dairy Coalition has stated previously that it supports the dairy provisions of the Senate-passed Farm Bill, as well as the Farm Bill passed by the House Agriculture Committee. However, the bill has not progressed, leaving dairy farmers without an effective program. The Coalition is joining with others at today’s rally on Capitol Hill to call for immediate completion of a final Farm Bill prior to its expiration on September 30th.

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“The Midwest Dairy Coalition is also asking Congress to extend the current MILC program until the Farm Bill debate is completed,” Etko explains. “We recognize that ultimately, Congress must make the new five-year Farm Bill its priority, to give dairy farmers greater options for managing risk during these periods of high feed costs. But we do not want dairy farmers to face additional hardship as we wait for new provisions to become effective.”

Etko noted that the dairy provisions included in the proposed new Farm Bill will actually reduce government expenditures compared to current policy. “That price tag should appeal to those lawmakers highly concerned with the Farm Bill’s impact on the deficit,” he adds.”

Fewer than 10 days remain on the legislative calendar for members of the House before Congress adjourns in October. If the bill fails to gain approval prior to adjournment, the dairy title and other programs face an uncertain future.

“The Midwest Dairy Coalition is urging Congress to pass a new Farm Bill without additional delay and to also pass a short-term extension of the MILC program at its previous level as a stop-gap measure, to assure that the nation’s dairy farmers are not put in jeopardy by inaction on the part of Congress,” says Etko.

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The Midwest Dairy Coalition is an alliance of farmer-owned dairy cooperatives representing dairy farmers in eight Upper Midwest states. The Coalition collectively represents nearly 11,000 dairy farmers or about 20 percent of those in the nation. Representing a large majority of dairy farmers in the Upper Midwest, the Coalition provides an effective and useful forum for discussion, debate and common action on dairy issues of the day.