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Media Release

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Complex Transition Provisions Remain a Concern **Midwest Dairy Coalition Supports Farm Bill** **Dairy Provisions of House Ag Committee**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — While acknowledging that it supports the dairy reform provisions passed by the House Committee on Agriculture as part of the Farm Bill reauthorization process, the Midwest Dairy Coalition continues to call for resolution of what it sees as an unnecessarily complex transition process for dairy producers during an already challenging time.

“We support the dairy provisions in the House Ag Committee’s bill, which make many important dairy reforms to address the higher input cost realities that dairy farmers are currently facing relative to 2008, when the last Farm Bill was enacted,” said Steve Etko, coordinator, Midwest Dairy Coalition. “However, the Midwest Dairy Coalition continues to raise concerns over the provisions governing the transition period following the enactment of the new Farm Bill prior to USDA implementation of the new Dairy Producer Margin Protection Program.”

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Coalition Reacts to House Action – 2

In a letter to House Ag Committee leadership July 9, the Coalition urged the House Ag Committee to add provisions to its bill, allowing dairy producers the option of continuing enrollment in the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program until USDA has fully announced the details and procedures of the new margin protection program. Such a provision would have been similar to the Senate transition version.

But that didn't happen. "The Coalition greatly appreciates the efforts of Rep. Tim Walz (D-Minn.) and Rep. Reid Ribble (R-Wis.) in offering an amendment in an attempt to address these concerns. This proposal would have allowed farms to use the existing MILC program at its current level during the interim period as an alternative to the complicated retroactive provisions that remain in the bill. But cost considerations kept the amendment from going forward. Since this issue remains unresolved, we are now urging that it be addressed on the House floor or in conference with the Senate," said Etko.

He said the Coalition is concerned about the burden that the transition complexities could place on dairy producers. "From a practical standpoint, establishing an entirely new dairy program could result in delays in implementation," Etko added. "The cultural shift of moving from a federal dairy safety net program that is fully subsidized by the federal government to one that requires financial contributions by dairy producers will already be challenging."

The Coalition will continue to push for action to minimize disruption and confusion during this transition period. "Allowing farmers the option of continuing participation in the existing MILC program during the transition period would not only minimize unnecessary bureaucracy, but it would allow time for producers to learn about the new safety net options provided to them under the new program," Etko said.

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