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Media Release

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Contact:

Steve Etko,

Coordinator, Midwest Dairy Coalition,

Ph: 703.519.7772,

Email: steveetka@gmail.com

Dairy Producers Could Face Additional Risk **Midwest Dairy Coalition Opposes** **Extension of Current Farm Bill**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Citing concerns that dairy producers will be taking on greater financial risk when drought is already expected to bring soaring feed prices, the Midwest Dairy Coalition today said it strongly opposes efforts of the U.S. House of Representatives to extend the current Farm Bill.

Although the Agriculture Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives has completed its work on the next Farm Bill, House Republican leaders have voiced their intent to use a drought assistance bill to do a one-year extension of the current Farm Bill through September 2013 rather than bring the new Farm Bill to the floor for debate.

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The Midwest Dairy Coalition has stated previously that it supports the dairy provisions of the House Agriculture Committee’s bill, which makes 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.

“Delaying the Farm Bill for another year would push the debate into a new Congress and essentially force the Farm Bill process to start all over again,” explained Steve Etko, coordinator, Midwest Dairy Coalition. “The Midwest Dairy Coalition is concerned about the negative effects such a move would have on dairy producers, particularly when widespread drought conditions will already bring higher feed costs.”

Etko said an extension of the current Farm Bill would result in a reduced safety net for producers because the current MILC program steps down to a lower level of support starting on Sept. 1 of this year. If left in place due to a Farm Bill extension, preliminary USDA analysis indicates this change would mean the MILC program is not likely to provide any assistance for dairy producers for the period of September through December of this year. Secondly, Etko raised concerns that an extension of the current Farm Bill would mean the dairy debate would begin again next year under even greater budget constraints than have been faced during debate this year.

Etko said if the House Leadership insists on passing a Farm Bill extension rather than bringing up the committee-passed Farm Bill for debate, then at the very least, a provision should be added to maintain the current MILC program with its current structure, and delay the reduction in the program’s safety net. The Coalition is working with Rep. Reid Ribble (R-WI) to urge the Leadership to include such a provision in the extension bill. “Without such a provision to address the unique dairy situation, dairy farmers will be without a safety net at a time when they need it most.”

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