



News Release

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"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"

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NMPF Praises Senate Agreement on Agriculture Worker Component of Immigration Reform Plan is Better for Farmers and Workers, According to NMPF

WASHINGTON, DC – As a bipartisan group of Senators introduced legislation this morning dealing with comprehensive immigration reform, members of the Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC) held a press conference Wednesday highlighting the crucial stake American agriculture, including dairy farming, has in the debate.

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), which is a founding member of the AWC, has made fixing the broken immigration system one of its highest priorities over the past decade. NMPF's President & CEO Jerry Kozak told press conference attendees that "what we're working with lawmakers to do is not merely fixing a broken system, but scrapping an old set of unworkable rules and replacing it with something better."

"The approach in this agreement is better for employers, better for employees, better for law enforcement, better for the economy – better for America," Kozak added.

Kozak identified four key items essential to dairy farmers that any eventual deal on immigration reform must contain. These include:

1. Establishing a blue card for experienced agricultural workers. This provides a means for farmers to keep their existing workforce, including those who may not be legally documented. Dairy farmers should not lose experienced, loyal employees as part of this effort.
2. Creating a new visa system for future workers that is easy to use and affordable. Current efforts won't be worth it if the resulting product is too cumbersome, costly, and confusing for farmers to use.
3. Assuring the future flow of new workers. As the economy and jobs shift and evolve, dairy farmers must have a means to recruit and hire new dairy workers for a long period of time.
4. Eliminating the seasonality element of any ag visa program such as H2A, which prevented U.S. dairy farmers from using it. Dairy farmers need relief from having to demonstrate the seasonal or temporary nature of employment.

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NMPF RELEASE///PAGE TWO

Kozak stressed that although much of the work on comprehensive immigration reform has been done, there is still more to do. Negotiations will continue as members of the Senate debate the legislation, and the discussion also begins in the House of Representatives.

To learn more about the AWC, visit www.agworkforcecoalition.com.

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The National Milk Producers Federation, based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's 30 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 32,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. Visit www.nmpf.org for more information.