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**James Mulhern, President & Chief Executive Officer** | **Randy Mooney, Chairman**

September 15, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to request that USDA's Farm Service Agency grant an extension, until Nov. 30, 2015, for farmers to enroll in or elect 2016 coverage for the dairy Margin Protection Program.

We appreciate yesterday's announcement from FSA granting producers more flexibility in premium payment options and believe it could have a positive impact on farmers' decisions regarding next year's enrollment, but only if they have sufficient time to make an informed decision.

The current MPP sign-up deadline of Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> is fast approaching, and it overlaps with harvest as well as the ARC/PLC enrollment deadline. As a result, many farmers considering MPP options are also busy harvesting crops, making crop marketing decisions, and potentially completing ARC/PLC enrollment. Extending the deadline an additional two months will allow farmers more time to finalize these grain-marketing decisions and devote necessary attention to next year's dairy market outlook.

A sign-up extension would also allow the USDA to continue to work on certain program elements that still need resolution or clarification. Critical elements which remain unaddressed include: enabling dairy farmers to purchase supplemental coverage without having their CAT coverage reduced below 90%; and protecting the next generation of farm families by accommodating intergenerational transfers of farm ownership.

The USDA granted two similar extensions last year, and those steps greatly helped to boost enrollment while not complicating the administrative workload of county FSA offices. We believe a similar extension this year, until late November, will likewise enhance participation in the MPP.

I hope you agree that an extension is needed to ensure that dairy farmers have additional time to weigh their options for participation in this crucial safety net program for our industry.

Thank you for your support of the program, and for USDA's efforts to maximize its value to America's dairy farmers.

Sincerely,

**Jim Mulhern**  
President and CEO

Agri-Mark, Inc.  
Associated Milk  
Producers Inc.  
Bongards' Creameries  
Cooperative Milk  
Producers Association  
Cortland Bulk Milk  
Producers Cooperative  
Dairy Farmers of  
America, Inc.  
Dairymen's Marketing  
Cooperative, Inc.  
Ellsworth  
Cooperative Creamery  
Farmers  
Cooperative Creamery  
FarmFirst Dairy  
Cooperative  
First District  
Association  
Foremost Farms USA  
Land O'Lakes, Inc.  
Lone Star Milk  
Producers  
Maryland & Virginia  
Milk Producers  
Cooperative  
Association  
Michigan Milk  
Producers Association  
Mid-West  
Dairymen's Company  
Mount Joy Farmers  
Cooperative  
Association  
Northwest Dairy  
Association  
Oneida-Madison Milk  
Producers Cooperative  
Association  
Prairie Farms  
Dairy, Inc.  
Premier Milk Inc.  
Scioto County  
Cooperative Milk  
Producers' Association  
Select Milk  
Producers, Inc.  
Southeast Milk, Inc.  
St. Albans Cooperative  
Creamery, Inc.  
Swiss Valley Farms  
Company  
Tillamook County  
Creamery Association  
United Dairymen  
of Arizona  
Upstate Niagara  
Cooperative, Inc.  
Zia Milk  
Producers, Inc.