



News Release

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, June 23, 2011

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**NMPF Backs New Comprehensive Immigration Reform Legislation
In Senate to Address Dairy Farm Workforce Needs**
Senate Bill Includes H-2A Visa Program for Dairy Farms

ARLINGTON, VA – The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) today endorsed a new Senate bill containing a comprehensive reform of the nation's immigration laws – and, importantly, provisions to ensure continued access to qualified workers by America's dairy farms.

On Thursday, seven U.S. Senators introduced the "Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2011", S. 1258. The lead sponsor is Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), who introduced the bill along with Sens. Harry Reid (D-NV), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Charles Schumer (D-NY), Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) and John Kerry (D-MA).

"A healthy U.S. dairy sector depends on a viable workforce, which is something our current immigration policies struggle to provide. The status quo is broken, and it can't be fixed simply through more enforcement measures – we need a comprehensive fix," said Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of NMPF.

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2011 includes the dairy H-2A visa eligibility provision (S. 852) that was introduced earlier this spring by Sen. Leahy, and backed by NMPF. The reform package also includes the "AgJobs" proposal, and the DREAM Act, long sought after by NMPF and other agricultural groups. Both a mandatory employment verification system and a program to require undocumented immigrants in the U.S. as of June 1, 2011, to register with the government, learn English, and pay fines and taxes on their way to becoming Americans, are a part of this act as well.

"Dairy farms and other agricultural employers increasingly have been under the microscope for their employment practices," Kozak said. "It is critical that comprehensive immigration reform is passed into law before more employers are targeted by the enforcement agencies. Our producers need a means to hire qualified foreign-born workers to do the jobs that Americans don't want to do."

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A survey released in 2009 of the labor and hiring practices of U.S. dairy operations found that many farms are heavily dependent on foreign laborers, and that the dairy sector would be crippled if it had no access to immigrant workers. That survey is available on the NMPF website: www.nmpf.org/files/file/NMPF%20Immigration%20Survey%20Web.pdf.

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 31 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 40,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.