

October 21, 2009

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

Secretary Tom Vilsack,

National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and Feeding America sincerely appreciate all you and your staff have done to assist dairy producers while also providing support to the domestic emergency food assistance programs during this time of economic crisis.

NMPF would sincerely appreciate your support for using the \$60 million appropriated in FY 2010 Agriculture Appropriations by January 2010 to fund programs for purchases of processed cheeses, including American, cheddar, and mozzarella, among others, that can in turn be used to provide emergency food assistance to feed American families experiencing economic hardship. Feeding America food banks consider dairy products to be among the most useful commodities, and consider cheese in particular to be a nutritious product that is highly desirable for the nation's food distribution network. In addition, NMPF and Feeding America recommend that these product purchases from the market be done at a price level necessary to pay for processing, packaging, and delivery to the emergency food network. These purchases of cheese would provide a huge and targeted nutritional benefit to millions of food-insecure American families experiencing economic hardship. In 2007, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that 36.2 million people lived in households considered to be food-insecure. Of these 36.2 million, 23.8 million are adults (10.6 percent of all adults) and 12.4 million are children (16.9 percent of all children).

More recently, in September 2009, Feeding America conducted a survey of member food banks which found that, from summer 2008 to summer 2009, 99% of all participating food banks reported increases in demand. This survey found that this increase in demand was largely driven by first-time users and the recently unemployed.

More than 35 million people use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). These benefits typically run out 2.5 weeks into the month, leaving these people at risk for hunger. Food banks are another means for providing food assistance to these individuals as well. Unfortunately, commodities available for food bank distribution are limited by funds and availability. USDA purchasing of surplus cheese is an excellent opportunity to provide another source of a nutrient rich protein to the food banks.

Dairy products are among the top sources of calcium and potassium in the food supply. Calcium is critical for keeping bones strong, and potassium regulates the body's blood pressure and muscle activity. Calcium intake continues to be a critical concern. According to government sources, milk and milk products provide about three quarters of the calcium

available in the food supply. Science shows that consuming three servings of milk, cheese or yogurt every day helps people meet their daily calcium, potassium and other nutrient recommendations and may help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as osteoporosis, hypertension and obesity. Dairy's role in a healthy diet has long been established by the nutrition and science community. This includes the National Osteoporosis Foundation, the Surgeon General, the National Institute of Child Health and Development, the National Institutes of Health, the American Medical Association's Council of Scientific Affairs and many other leading health organizations.

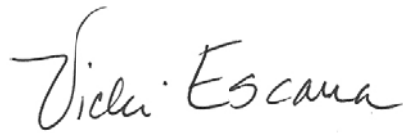
Lastly, targeted assistance can maximize the cost-effectiveness of emergency feeding programs at a time when resources are limited. Targeted assistance avoids disrupting commercial markets, including commercial sales.

Please consider our request as soon as possible or contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,



Jerry Kozak
President and CEO
National Milk Producers Federation



Vicki B. Escarra
President and CEO
Feeding America

Cc: Deputy Under Secretary Michael Scuse