



News Release

2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201
703.243.6111 | www.nmpf.org

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

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Christopher Galen
(703) 243-6111 ext. 356
CGalen@nmpf.org

NMPF Applauds House Judiciary Committee for Endorsing New Agriculture Guest Worker Program

ARLINGTON, VA – The National Milk Producers Federation said today it supports the efforts by Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and the House Judiciary Committee to pass legislation creating a guestworker program that provides a new opportunity for immigration reform in agriculture.

The committee today approved the Agriculture Guestworker (AG) Act (H.R. 4092), which would establish an entirely new visa program, dubbed the H-2C visa, to allow farm employers to hire foreign workers on a year-round basis. The measure was developed by Rep. Goodlatte after NMPF provided input to the committee about the workforce needs of America's dairy farms.

Although not ideal, the AG Act "helps advance our efforts to assure a stable, dependable and legal workforce for America's dairy farmers, now and in the future," said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of NMPF. "The AG Act is the first step in a long process of establishing a workable solution for dairy farmers' labor needs. It recognizes that we must improve on the current system by pursuing a new approach to matching the supply and demand for workers in U.S. agriculture."

Goodlatte's bill would replace the existing H-2A temporary visa program, which dairy farmers largely cannot use because their labor needs are year-round, not seasonal. In addition to establishing the new visa for future farm workers, it would allow currently undocumented farm workers to apply for H-2C visas so that they can participate legally in the agricultural workforce.

While the version of the legislation marked up in committee requires further improvements, Mulhern said that overall, the AG Act bill "merits the support of America's farming community, and its refinement and passage must be a priority for congressional leaders."

George Rohrer, a dairy farmer in Dayton, Va., and a member of the NMPF Board of Directors, said that farmers "have waited for years for lawmakers to fix our broken immigration system. The AG Act is evidence that Congressman Goodlatte has listened to many of our concerns, and is willing to try a new approach to the problem. As a farmer, it's difficult to plan for tomorrow when you don't know whether you'll be able to hire qualified people today."

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The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), 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 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.