United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC, 20250

April 13, 2010

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to you out of concern about low dairy prices. In 2009, the dairy industry experienced its lowest prices in over 40 years. Early forecasts show prices improving through 2010, but low milk prices have persisted. At a time when many dairy farmers are struggling to recover from last year's historic low prices, milk prices are projected to remain below the cost of production. It is critical that the Department of Agriculture take quick action to respond to these disastrously low milk prices.

The USDA took several proactive steps to respond to low dairy prices last year. We believe the USDA should take similar actions this year, such as continuing the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP), expediting DEIP payments and using the Dairy Product Price Support Program (DPPSP) to bolster the falling prices for non-fat dried milk, barrel cheese, and cheddar block cheese. In 2009, the USDA helped increase market prices without causing product acquisitions by the Commodity Credit Corporation by temporarily raising support prices. In that instance, the USDA was able to help dairy farmers earn a higher market price for their products without having to purchase cheese at the increased prices. We believe that the USDA could take the same action today to temporarily increase market prices to aid dairy producers, without incurring the costs of a purchase.

Spring planting season is upon us and quick action is needed to provide dairy farmers with critical assistance. We ask that the USDA use all existing authorities to assist our struggling dairy producers.

Sincerely,

Patrick Leahy

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

Herb Kohl

HERB KOHL
United States Senator

RUSS FEINGOLD
United States Senator

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator

AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator

BERNIE SANDERS
United States Senator

CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator

ARLEN SPECTER
United States Senator

RON WYDEN
United States Senator

BARBARA BOXER
United States Senator

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United States Senator

TOM HARKIN
United States Senator

TIM JOHNSON
United States Senator

JOHN KERRY
United States Senator

JOE LIEBERMAN
United States Senator

JEFF MERKLEY
United States Senator

BLANCHE LINCOLN
United States Senator

MICHAEL BENNET
United States Senator

AL FRANKEN
United States Senator

KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator

BEN CARDIN
United States Senator

ORRIN HATCH
United States Senator