April 16, 2020

Re: USDA Relief Funding for Dairy

Idaho Dairymen,

It appears that we are very near an announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the details of major economic assistance for several sectors of agriculture provided by Congress in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (‘CARES Act’). Among other provisions for economic assistance for farmers and nutrition assistance for the public, that bill provides $9.5 billion for specialty crop producers, livestock and dairy producers and farmers who sell directly through local markets and restaurants. The Congress gave Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue broad authority on assigning the funds in order to speed up the process of getting the assistance out the door and into the economy.

All four members of the Idaho congressional delegation, Representatives Mike Simpson and Russ Fulcher and Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, supported the CARES Act and have gone to work since the bill was signed into law three weeks ago to help make sure Idaho agriculture gets the support it needs in the wake of our nation’s response to this public health crisis. Representatives Simpson and Fulcher went on the record and joined several of their colleagues in urging the Secretary of Agriculture to implement significant help for dairy farmers. Senator Risch originated and led a letter supported by Senator Mike Crapo and 13 of their colleagues from around the country urging the Secretary to ‘go big’ to help the dairy industry through this crisis.

As you can imagine, the Secretary of Agriculture is getting input from industry groups all over the country on useful ways to deploy the assistance funds. It is a virtual certainty that no one sector is going to get everything they asked for. Another certainty is that the Idaho dairy industry has had the support of 100% of the state’s congressional delegation for effective dairy industry assistance implemented on behalf of producers equally across the board. IDA thanks them for their help for our industry during this most difficult of times and looks forward to continuing that working relationship into the future.

Here is a sampling of statements from the Idaho congressional delegation about the work they have been doing on your behalf:

**Congressman Mike Simpson**

'I have been in close contact with dairy farmers in Idaho and I understand the extreme hardships they are facing during this pandemic. I have been in close contact with USDA and signed letters to Secretary Perdue urging funding from the CARES Act be used to help our dairy farmers in Idaho. The unprecedented but necessary measures our country has pursued have serious impacts on our economy and specifically the food service industry which has trickled down to our farmers. I will continue to look for ways to help Idaho farmers during these challenging times.'
Congressman Russ Fulcher

'I am committed to making sure Idaho’s producers are included in these ongoing discussions to provide relief from the economic impacts of COVID-19. The dairy industry in particular is undergoing significant hardships, and I recently signed a letter to USDA Secretary Perdue asking for a necessary allocation of $9.5 billion provided to the Commodity Credit Corporation in the CARES Act. It is important for me to hear from Idaho’s farmers and ranchers, so I urge you all to please reach out to my office directly with specifics on your situation, and suggestions on what we can do to help. We are here to serve you, and sincerely appreciate the immense contribution you make to our communities and state.'

Senator Mike Crapo

'Idaho's dairy producers have not been immune to the economic strife felt across the nation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The dire situation our dairy producers face continues to worsen with every passing day. Without these producers, American households face continued risks of lack of access to nutritious dairy products. Congress and the Administration must continue to provide appropriate resources to ensure economic stability for the dairy industry so it can continue providing a stable and abundant food supply both now and long into the future.'

Senator Jim Risch

'Idaho's dairy farmers are some of the hardest working people around, but the COVID-19 pandemic has upended life for the agriculture industry beyond anything we've seen in living memory. I was proud to lead my Senate colleagues in requesting support for the dairy industry during this time of crisis, and will continue working with the USDA to ensure that Idaho's farmers and ranchers, who have always cared for us, are cared for in return.'

We will continue to work with our delegation going forward and have already begun discussions as to ways they can continue to assist Idaho's dairy industry with a 4th round of relief that is being discussed.

If you have any questions during this time or need contact information for any of the delegation members, please reach out by emailing me at rick@idahodairymens.org or call me at 208-308-3383.

Sincerely,

Rick Naerebout
Chief Executive Officer
Idaho Dairymen’s Association, Inc.