

TED S. YOHO, DVM
3RD DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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April 28, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

As USDA responds to the needs of producers across the country during the coronavirus pandemic, I ask that you take action to assist our dairy producers during this time. Specifically, I urge you to convene an emergency hearing to set a temporary Class 1 price floor for fluid milk for the period of June through August.

Dairy farmers across the state of Florida, and across the country, are in a precarious situation due to the coronavirus pandemic. On top of existing issues facing the industry, dairy farmers are now experiencing supply chain disruptions and have lost markets for their product. As you know, you cannot toggle milk production in dairy cows, leaving farmers no other choice but to milk their cows and dump the milk.

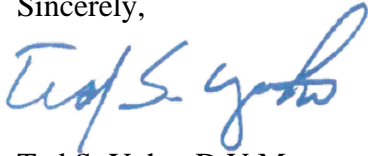
Current estimates from the dairy industry project that dairy farmers will lose more than \$100 million in income as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. We have already seen a price drop of \$4.50/cwt for producers in the market. Moreover, some dairy farmers in Florida are still recovering from the production losses they experienced during Hurricane Irma in 2017, and the ongoing labor shortage poses enough challenges for dairies. We must evaluate all options on the table to support our producers during this tough time.

I appreciate your work to implement the agricultural assistance programs that were included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Securities (CARES) Act. No doubt, these programs will be a tool for our producers during this time. I look forward to working with you to resolve issues with the payment limitations for this assistance that was recently announced. I am concerned that these limitations, while well-intentioned, will hamper the effectiveness of this assistance.

In order to continue to support our dairy farmers during this time, I ask that you promptly convene an emergency hearing to set a price floor for Class I dairy for the period of June through August. I believe that using the average price for March through May to set the price floor, as some industry leaders have suggested, would be appropriate in this situation. A temporary price floor would be a way to support our dairy farmers during this time using authorities already permitted under law.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted S. Yoho". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ted S. Yoho, D.V.M.
Member of Congress