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Secretary of Agriculture: \$13.6 Million Remains Available for Pennsylvania Dairy Industry, Farmers Urged to Apply for Relief

Reading, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding visited the Scattered Acres Dairy Farm in Reading today, one of Pennsylvania’s many dairy farms that had to dump milk as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic’s effect on dairy markets in the commonwealth. On the farm, Secretary Redding revealed that nearly \$13.5 million of the \$15 million CARES Act-funded Dairy Indemnity Program was still available for farmers to claim in direct relief payments.

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the early days, we saw Pennsylvania’s dairy farmers face devastating losses. Hard work, sweat, and tears went – quite literally – down the drain,” said Secretary Redding. “We all saw it, the legislature recognized it, and we met it with a \$15 million direct relief payment program. Don’t leave this money on the table – apply today and receive \$1,500. It’s that easy.”

Any dairy farm that experienced financial losses due to discarded or displaced milk during the COVID-19 emergency disaster may apply for assistance. In addition to farms directly affected, farms that did not have displaced milk but have had COVID-19-related fees assessed on their milk check may also apply. Each farm with a documented loss will receive a minimum of \$1,500 and can apply for an additional prorated share of the remaining funds, not to exceed the actual amount assessed by the handler. The deadline to [apply](#) for the Dairy Indemnity Program is September 30, 2020.

“At the height of the pandemic in Pennsylvania, many of our dairy farmers were forced to dump milk,” said state Senator Judy Schwank (D-Berks), Democratic chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. “In addition to the emotional toll of literally pouring your product down the drain, our farmers have faced serious financial ramifications. I encourage every dairy farmer to take a look at this program.”

Currently, only 900 farms have applied for the \$1,500 in direct relief, leaving more than \$13.6 million to be claimed. Pennsylvania is home to nearly 7,000 dairy farms with an economic impact of \$12.6 million and more than 52,000 jobs. The commonwealth’s more than 500,000 cows produce more than 10.2 billion pounds of milk annually, ranking Pennsylvania seventh in the nation for total milk production.

“Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is so very grateful for the recognition and leadership of the state legislature and Governor Wolf of the importance of utilizing federal funds in this manner assisting Pennsylvania’s dairy farmers to remain economically viable in this time of unprecedented challenges throughout the entire industry,” said Joel Rotz of the PA Farm Bureau. “It is important to understand these dollars don’t stop at the farm gate. They are immediately reinvested into local businesses that are critical to maintaining our rural communities.”

For information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit agriculture.pa.gov/COVID. For the most accurate, timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit on.pa.gov/coronavirus.