



# The Hartford Food System

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Mark Winne, Director

April 8 998

Henry A. Virts  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Agriculture  
50 Harry Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Secretary Virts,

I am writing in regard to the Hartford Food System's position on the Northeast Dairy Compact. As a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to addressing the food and nutrition needs of Connecticut's lower income families, we have grappled with the implications of the Compact on our constituency. As the name of our organization implies, our analysis of any food or agriculture related issue is based on its long term impact on any and all sectors of our food system. For instance, we are as concerned about the cost of food to low income communities as much as we are concerned about the long term viability of farming in our Northeast region. In fact, we view the problems facing both producers and consumers as inextricably related. We cannot only consider the needs of one sector without considering the needs of other sectors. To those ends, the Hartford Food System has established numerous programs over the past 20 years that make highly nutritious food more available and affordable to low income groups while, at the same time, creating new market opportunities for farmers.

Our analysis of the Northeast Dairy Compact has led us to the following conclusions:

1. The increase in the price of milk to consumers will not be significant. We have tracked food prices, including milk, in the Hartford market area for the past two and a half years. We found a total increase of 8% in milk prices during that period, most of it occurring in July 1997. This increase is only slightly above the total rate of inflation for this period. Long term price stability, the expected result of the Compact, will be in the consumers' best interest.
2. The Compact's controls on the price of milk in the WIC and National School Lunch Programs appear adequate to protect the interests of a good number of lower income consumers.
3. The long term benefits to dairy farmers are potentially significant. Price stability may very well be the difference between success and failure for these farmers. What is certain, however, is that if we don't take dramatic action soon, there will be no dairy farms in the

• *A non-profit organization addressing food and hunger issues*

Northeast in the 21st Century. The consequences of that scenario go far beyond the impact on food prices as they will certainly have an adverse effect on the quality of all our lives.

In sum, the Hartford Food System believes that the Dairy Compact, in its present form, is a progressive food and agriculture policy for this region. It is attempting to help one very vital part of our food system, namely farmers, while remaining responsive to the needs of our most vulnerable consumers.

If I can provide you with any additional thoughts on this matter, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Winne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Winne" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Winne