



Maine Farm Bureau Association

July 9, 2001

Chairman Schmidle and members of the Northeast Dairy Compact Commission

My name is Jon Olson. I am the Executive Secretary of the Maine Farm Bureau Association, the state's largest general farm organization of 5,100 members. Maine Farm Bureau is a non-governmental voluntary organization, financed and controlled by its member families. Maine Farm Bureau's mission is to increase net farm income and to ensure the quality of rural life.

Maine Farm Bureau's policy is to favor the reauthorization of the Northeast Dairy Compact.

The Northeast Dairy Compact has helped maintain the competitiveness of Maine's dairy farms. This has enabled them to annually produce milk valued at over \$100 million. While we can generously defend the Northeast Dairy Compact on this economic fact alone, there are other reasons it should continue and keep the dairy industry viable. This has far-reaching benefits for the state's rural and urban citizens.

Maine's dairy farmers play a vital role maintaining the critical infrastructure for all of Maine's agriculture. Without the state's dairy farmers there will be fewer large animal veterinarians practicing in Maine. There would be fewer equipment dealers selling parts and services for all farmers. There would be less availability of bulk deliveries of feed and custom feed mixes for other livestock farmers. Maine dairy farmers provide a critical mass that keeps all of Maine agriculture sustainable.

Maine dairy farmers also produce non-priced goods and services which are vital threads in the social fabric of Maine's communities and is a key to our quality of life.

These free benefits have a tremendous social and environmental impact. They include open spaces, rolling farmland, biological diversity, recreational opportunities, and clean air and water. While often overlooked and taken for granted, these agricultural by-products have helped create and strengthen familyhood and communityhood, all important contributions to values of living in a place we love and where we want our children to live.

The Northeast Dairy Compact, since its beginning in 1997, has been positive and important to this state. We urge its reauthorization.

Thank you for your attention. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.