

I am Walt Whitcomb, a part of a 180 milking cow Jersey & Guernsey family dairy farm 100 miles up the coast near Belfast, ME. I serve as chairman of the Maine Dairy Industry Association, a dairyman's group funded by an assessment from all Maine dairy farmer's milk checks.

We would like to add a welcome to Maine from the families who work our 460 dairy farms. Your strategy of visiting each New England State during this critical period before reauthorization is to be commended.

Maine citizens and our elected representatives have through the years made an extraordinary effort to support the dairy industry. Our existence in the state that is at the end o the supply chain is attributable in part to political initiatives. For this, we are grateful and we thank the Congressional delegation, the Governor, Legislative leadership, the Mayor and others who took the time to appear before you today. We also thank the Maine milk processors who have broken ranks with their international counterparts. The support of those who sell our product is as critical as the support of those who buy our product.

Maine farms are worth fighting for. New England farms are worth fighting for. As you know, the Compact helps us not in times like these when on farm prices are relatively high. It is the floor the Compact establishes when prices fall far below cost of production that is critical for dairy industry stability.

The Northeast Compact does not financially harm anyone. As the often quoted U. Conn study verified the impact on consumers is pennies. Opposition seems more a factor of control or perhaps market domination than any buyer instigated wrath.

Many Atlantic coast and Southern states have enacted legislation endorsing dairy compacts. Of particular note is the delegate support of the national volunteer farm organization, American Farm Bureau Federation.

At a time when many agricultural commodities are seeking and receiving billions of public dollars to offset low prices, the ingenuity behind the Northeast Dairy Compact should be applauded. Your ability to somewhat interfere with huge market price fluctuation is a far less costly method of helping producers than the direct subsidy received by some farmers. On our

farm, the check from the federal government, because we grow a few acres of corn for our cows is probably greater than the financial impact we receive from the compact. Not all farmers can or should grow corn. All dairymen benefit from the compact.

Your work is valuable and we thank you for your continued effort. While you put so many hours into helping us, we are working to produce a locally grown, healthy food product for the citizens of the Northeast. Let's hope we're both allowed to continue.