



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

June is Dairy Month: Aubertine Urges NYers to Recognize, Thank Dairy Farmers

DARREL J. AUBERTINE June 1, 2009

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Multi-billion dollar economic engine faces hard times with milk prices well below cost of production

WATERTOWN (June 1, 2009)—State Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine today urged all New Yorkers to recognize the important role our dairy farmers play in our state’s economy and the everyday lives of its citizens, as we celebrate June as Dairy Month in New York with parades and other events commemorating the industry’s impact.

“The dairy industry is a multi-billion dollar industry in New York State, and often our farmers are overlooked or forgotten,” said Sen. Aubertine, who is Chair of the state Senate’s Agriculture Committee. “Whether you enjoy ice cream, cheese or just a tall glass of milk, dairy products enrich our lives and provide wholesome nutrition for young people and adults alike. To provide the milk for the products we enjoy farmers work long and hard. Their days start early and run late, particularly this time of year when we’re planting, and harvesting hay in addition to milking. In this current crisis, we need to understand and appreciate the stress our dairy families are under right now. Next time you see a farmer, say ‘thank you.’”

Milk prices are set through the United States Department of Agriculture based on a complex formula. Dairy farmers received less than \$12 per hundredweight for April, when their cost of production typically exceeds \$18 per hundredweight. Some USDA statistics say it costs as much as \$26 per hundredweight. State and federal programs are in place to help farmers, including NY Farm Net, a Cornell University network of programs. Sen. Aubertine worked to protect around \$8 million in funding for this and other agriculture programs with the university.

“I’m continuing to work with my colleagues to help them better understand the stresses our farm families are under. We are looking for ways to provide any assistance we can to our farmers and working with our federal officials to alleviate the stress on our farm families,” Sen. Aubertine said. “At the end of the day, government programs are not the answer. The answer is a fair milk price that gives our farmers a return on investment that covers the cost of production. This kind of long term solution must come at the federal level through an improved pricing system and other measures to ensure our farmers receive a fair price.”

Dairy is New York State’s largest agricultural sector, generating \$2.4 billion annually, accounting for over half of the State’s total agricultural receipts. According to Cornell University, for every new job created on a dairy farm, an additional 1.24 jobs are created in the community and for every dollar of output an additional \$.83 is generated. Dairy processing provides an additional 4.72 jobs for every job created in a plant, the highest multiplier in the State, and generates an additional \$1.26 to the community for every dollar of product sold.

“It may not make the headlines when a dairy farm with 30, 50, or even 100 cows closes its barn and stops milking, but the impact is felt in the community,” said Sen. Aubertine, who worked more than three decades operating his own dairy farm in Cape Vincent and continues to grow crops and raise beef cattle. “The dairy industry is a major economic

foundation in the North Country where St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties are the state's second and fourth ranked producers. In Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties we produce more than 450 gallons of milk per resident each year."

As part of Dairy Month, the State Senate is hosting a special photo exhibit this week in the concourse in Albany honoring farming families. The exhibit will show the rich history of many farming families, dating back generations to the founding of our country. On June 5, Jefferson County will host its Agriculture on Display parade in conjunction with the annual Dairy Festival in Watertown and on the following day, St. Lawrence County will host its Dairy Princess Parade in Canton.

"Wholesome dairy products made from the milk our farmers produce every day are an important part of a healthy diet," Sen. Aubertine said. "These foods are rich in calcium and other nutrients, not to mention tasty. As we head into the summer months, there are few ways to cool down as enjoyable as sitting down with a bowl of ice cream. And when we do, let's remember the farmers who made that treat possible."

There are more than 100 dairy processing plants in New York State. Approximately one quarter of the milk produced in New York State is sold as fluid milk. The remaining three quarters is used for processed dairy products. According to New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, last year, New York produced 737 million pounds of cheese, 183 million pounds of cottage cheese, 16 million pounds of butter, 236 million pounds of yogurt and 54 million gallons of ice cream.

Among New York leading dairy markets, our state is the nation's biggest producer of cottage cheese. New York is also third for cheese production, with mozzarella and cheddar being the most popular varieties.