



Christopher W. Tague
Assemblyman, 102nd A.D.

Albany, Columbia, Delaware,
Greene, Otsego, Schoharie and
Ulster Counties

THE ASSEMBLY
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Local Governments
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April 5, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Richard Ball
Commissioner of NYS Department of Agriculture
10B Airline Drive
Albany, New York 12235

Dear President Trump, Secretary Perdue, Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Ball,

This letter is provided to bring your attention to an alarming situation, happening in New York State and across the Country, related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it is having on the agricultural industry, particularly the already fragile dairy industry.

We are certainly working during unprecedented times right now and I know ensuring the health and safety of all Americans remains our collective top priority. I believe the way you and your Administrations have handled this public health crisis is to be highly commended and I thank you all for your leadership. You and your teams have done an excellent job in communicating the role we can all play in keeping ourselves and others safe and have taken the difficult, but necessary, steps to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus as much as possible.

With that said, as we respond to the immediate crisis at hand, it would be irresponsible to ignore the devastating consequences many of the protective measures being implemented are having on our economy and the domino effect these disruptions will lead to in the months ahead. The dairy industry had been struggling before this emergency even hit; already highly sensitive to market disruptions, our dairy farms have quickly realized the devastating effects of States, and most of our Country, effectively shutting down.

As an Assemblyman for one of the most rural, agricultural districts in upstate New York, in recent days I have heard reports from several constituents of farmers being forced to dump their milk product amid market upheaval resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. The disruptions to the food service industry due to the implementation of stop the spread measures including reductions in restaurants' operating hours or even full closures, has led to a significant decrease in sales, drastically reducing the demand for milk and dairy products. Simply put, processing plants are being forced to turn away farmers and their highly perishable milk supply because there are such limited options for selling their finished products right now. In turn, farmers are left with an excessive amount of milk with no choice but to unload the worthless product for a loss.

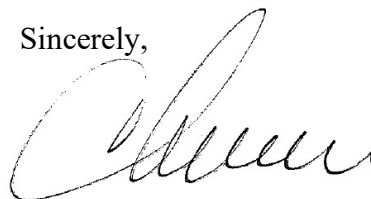
At a time when dairy farmers across the Country are already struggling to stay afloat due to record low commodity prices and the increased importation of foreign dairy products, we must remain a leader in protecting the industry that has long been the backbone of New York State's economy, and that of the entire Nation's. As a former dairy farmer myself, I take the current crisis affecting our local dairy farmers very personally and am heartbroken, as I know firsthand the long hours and hard work that goes into producing milk only to see it wasted. We need to take immediate action to protect these farmers who are chiefly responsible for putting food on our tables.

To that end, I am respectfully requesting the Federal Government's assistance in developing the "No Farms No Food Act of 2020", a stimulus package specially targeted for agriculture to reimburse our farmers at current market price, for any lost product related to the COVID-19 crisis. While the most immediate need right now is in the dairy industry, it is anticipated that market disruptions will eventually yield similar results for all types of agriculture and therefore any program should offer this incentive to all effected producers and processors. Beyond that, I would also ask that both our Federal and New York State Governments look at their abilities to increase government purchasing and distribution of milk and other agricultural products so they do not go to waste, thereby providing another sales market during this tough time.

I truly believe that one of the reasons our Country is the greatest and strongest in the world has to do with our storied history steeped in agricultural traditions which has provided us with a sustained ability to grow our own food. Several generations of Americans have spent painstakingly long hours in fields and barns to get us to where we are today, growing and producing the highest quality food on the planet. Our farmers are simply the best there are, and we need to take care of them, the way they have always taken care of us. Without farms, there would be no food.

I thank you for your attention to this dire situation and look forward to working with you to ensure that when this public health crisis ends, we still have farms left. I would be happy to discuss this with you in more detail and can be reached directly on cell at (518)365-1573. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Christopher W. Tague
Assemblyman, 102nd A.D.

Cc. Hon. Michael Pence, Vice President – United States of America
Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House – United States House of Representatives
Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Republican Leader – United States House of Representatives
Hon. Mitch McConnell, Republican Leader – United States Senate
Hon. Charles Schumer, Democratic Leader – United States Senate
Hon. Collin Peterson, Chairman – United States House Agriculture Committee
Hon. Mike Conaway, Ranking Member – United States House Agriculture Committee
Hon. Pat Roberts, Chairman – U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Hon. Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member – U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Hon. Representatives of the United States House of Representatives – New York Delegation
Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Temporary President & Majority Leader – New York State Senate
Hon. John Flanagan, Minority Conference Leader – New York State Senate
Hon. Carl Heastie, Speaker – New York State Assembly
Hon. Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Majority Leader – New York State Assembly
Hon. William Barclay, Minority Conference Leader – New York State Assembly
Hon. Jen Metzger, Chair – New York State Senate Committee on Agriculture
Hon. Robert Ortt, Ranking Member – New York State Senate Committee on Agriculture
Hon. Donna Lupardo, Chair – New York State Assembly Committee on Agriculture
Hon. Ken Blankenbush, Ranking Member – New York State Assembly Committee on Agriculture

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