

RECEIVED VIA EMAIL MARCH 15, 2009

Comments on Proposal to Eliminate the Producer – Handler Provision and Revise the Exempt Plant Provision in all Federal Milk Marketing Orders

We operate a small dairy farm in central Massachusetts where we grow hay and corn to feed our fifty milking cows. We pasteurize the milk from these cows and sell the milk by the gallon, cash and carry, to customers who come to our farm. Our farm store is open from 9am to 9pm every day.

Our milk plant, which was built in the 1930's when pasteurizing regulations were adopted, is more expensive per gallon to operate than a large plant should be. Our method of distribution would not suit everyone but our customers do purchase milk as fast as our cows produce the milk. We realize that the food business, especially a basic business like milk, does not provide a big profit. We expect to not lose money as we plant and harvest crops, milk cows, process and retail milk. We expect each section of the business to not lose money. Our full time help is family members.

We appreciate the exemption from paying into the milk pool. Accepting all of the risk surrounding our product is quite different than dividing the risk with other companies. Dairy farms that are listed as Producer Handlers are larger than we are, however, they accept similar risk. We feel that the size limit mentioned in the National Milk Producers Federation letter of January 30, 2009 should be higher than the proposed 450,000 pounds per month.

We ask that you continue the exemption from pool payments for dairy farmers who milk cows, process and retail the milk and are considered Exempt Distributing Plants.

Please consider raising the proposed exemption figure for Producer Handlers.

Sincerely,
Marjorie, James, David and Richard Cooper
Working partners at
Coopers' Hilltop Farm 515 Henshaw Street Rochdale, MA 01542