



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural
Marketing
Service

1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC
20250-0225

JUN 22 2005

Mr. James L. Mason
1209 South Sunset Drive
Tacoma, Washington 98465

Dear Mr. Mason:

Thank you for your letter of June 4, 2005, in which you asked the Secretary to consider the impact on milk prices and consumers before deciding the regulatory status of certain producer-handlers in the Pacific Northwest milk marketing area. You expressed concern that the proposed change in the regulatory status of some of these producer-handlers could increase the price of dairy products that they sell to consumers. The Secretary has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The Department of Agriculture appreciates the importance of the issues discussed in your letter regarding the regulatory status of producer-handlers in Federal milk marketing orders. The comment period on the recommended decision closed on June 13, 2005. We have received many comments, along with yours, which will be considered carefully before a final decision is issued.

Thank you for your interest in the Federal milk marketing order program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JRM" or similar initials.

John R. Mengel
Acting Deputy Administrator
Dairy Programs