

AUG 18 2005

The Honorable Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

Thank you for your letter of July 28, 2005, to Secretary Johanns, cosigned by Senator Ron Wyden, expressing your opposition to findings made by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) concerning the regulatory status of certain producer-handlers in the Pacific Northwest and Arizona-Las Vegas milk marketing areas. The Secretary has asked me to respond on his behalf.

USDA 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. Please be assured that we will consider your comments carefully before a final decision is issued.

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

Sincerely,

/s/

Bill Hawks
Under Secretary
Marketing and Regulatory Programs