



1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2530-S, STOP 0225
Washington, D.C. 20250-0225

September 10, 2024

Ms. Brenda Cochran
Sent via email: (b) (6) @yahoo.com

Dear Ms. Cochran:

I write in response to your letter dated September 5, 2024, requesting an extension of the public comment period for the July 15, 2024, notice in the Federal Register titled "*Milk in the Northeast and Other Marketing Areas; Proposed Amendments to Marketing Agreements and Orders*" (89 FR 57580) (recommended decision).

I recognize the ongoing importance to the industry of the proposed amendments to the Federal milk marketing orders. The national price formula rulemaking proceeding continues to allow all parties the opportunity to publicly share their viewpoints with USDA on a variety of key price formula issues through the open comment period. As part of the transparent rulemaking process, USDA reviewed and considered nearly 12,000 pages of testimony and exhibits received over 49 days of hearing to prepare its recommended decision. The comment period is currently open, and any member of the public may submit a comment by the September 13, 2024, deadline. USDA will review and consider each public comment received on the recommended decision.

The duration of the comment period is mandated by the regulations (7 CFR 900.29) which state that public comments will be due no later than 60 days after publication of the recommended decision in the Federal Register. As a courtesy, USDA posted the recommended decision on its website on July 1, 2024, 14 days in advance of publication in the Federal Register. This allowed stakeholders an additional 14 days to review and consider the recommended amendments. Following the comment deadline, and also mandated by regulation (7 CFR 900.30), USDA has 60 days to issue a final decision and address all timely and relevant public comments received.

Until the final decision is issued, USDA is under *ex parte* communication restrictions (7 CFR 900.16). USDA cannot make any comments on issues such as the impact of amendments prior to issuance of the final decision as it would be considered an *ex parte* communication. Your letter and this response will be placed on the public record of the proceeding and posted on the *National Federal Milk Marketing Order Pricing Formula Hearing* website.

Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of U.S. dairy farmers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Erin Taylor".

Erin Taylor
Associate Deputy Administrator
AMS Dairy Program