



1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2055-S, STOP 0201
Washington, D.C. 20250-0201

July 31, 2023

MR. TOM CHAPMAN
Organic Trade Association
444 N. Capitol St. SW, Suite 445-A
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Chapman:

Thank you for your July 14, 2023, letter, highlighting challenges of the organic dairy sector and urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to include the proposal for an organic exemption submitted by the Milk Innovation Group (MIG) in any Federal milk marketing order (FMMO) national hearing.

The Secretary of Agriculture has determined the upcoming national hearing will be limited in scope to amendments directly impacting the uniform pricing formulas used in FMMOs. USDA received several proposals that did not directly relate to the uniform FMMO pricing formulas, including the organic exemption proposal, and have determined these proposals to be beyond the scope of the upcoming rulemaking. Not including the organic exemption proposal in this rulemaking proceeding does not prevent MIG or another party from offering the proposal for consideration in a separate rulemaking proceeding. The hearing notice with proposals to be considered can be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/07/24/2023-15496/milk-in-the-northeast-and-other-marketing-areas-notice-of-hearing-on-proposed-amendments-to>. Additional information on the upcoming pricing formula hearing, including how to participate, can be found on the Hearing website: www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/moa/dairy/hearings/national-fmmo-pricing-hearing.

USDA continues to explore avenues to address the short-term and longer-term challenges faced by organic producers. Earlier this year, the USDA Farm Service Agency announced the Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP). ODMAP will provide assistance for eligible organic dairy operations marketing in the 2023 calendar year to overcome post-pandemic financial conditions due to decreased demand for organic milk and dairy products, significantly increased feed costs, and unavailability of organic feed commodities by providing a one-time payment. Certified organic dairy operations that produce milk from cows, goats, and sheep are eligible for ODMAP. Information on how to apply for ODMAP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-bill/farm-safety-net/dairy-programs/index.

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Thank you for expressing concerns of the organic dairy community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Summers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

BRUCE SUMMERS
Administrator