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USDA SETS HEARING TO AMEND MIDEAST MILK MARKETING ORDER

WASHINGTON, Sept. 26, 2001—Dairy farmers, milk processors, and the public are invited to testify at a public hearing Tuesday, Oct. 23, 2001, at 8:30 a.m. on proposals that would amend certain pooling and related provisions in the Mideast milk marketing order. The hearing will be held at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel and Suites/Galaxy Banquet Center, Wadsworth, Ohio. At the hearing, USDA will collect evidence to determine if marketing conditions exist that would warrant omission of a recommended decision.

Dairy farmers who primarily service the Class I (drinking milk) needs of the Mideast market requested the hearing. At the present time, milk produced far from the marketing area is being pooled on the Mideast order. This milk receives the higher Mideast blend price but is diverted to manufacturing plants close to where the milk is produced. Therefore, this milk may not be servicing the Class I needs of the Mideast market.

USDA will consider proposals to increase the minimal route disposition requirements; amend the automatic pool plant provision; decrease diversion limits for producer milk; and increase the minimal volume of producer milk that is required to be physically received at a pool plant to qualify for producer status. Proposals also call for eliminating the split plant provision; establishing a net shipment provision; changing the rate of partial payment; and establishing a criteria and imposing a waiting period for supply plants to regain pool status.

Details of the proposals and a notice of the hearing will be published in the Sept. 28 *Federal Register*. Copies may be obtained from the Mideast Federal Milk Marketing Order Office, USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, 7851 Freeway Circle, P.O. Box 30128, Cleveland, Ohio 44130 or USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, Rm. 2968, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

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