

June 17, 2005

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Thank you for your letter of June 13, 2005, in which you asked Secretary Johanns to consider the impact on milk prices in milk deficit states before deciding to cap the sales of producer-handlers in the Pacific Northwest and Arizona-Las Vegas milk marketing area. You expressed concern that such a cap could increase the price of dairy products. 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. We have received many comments, along with yours, which will be considered thoroughly 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