

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 2, 2009

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Room 200-A
Washington, DC 20250

Tom
Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your continued work on the national dairy crisis. With farm milk prices having plummeted over 40% since early this year, it is critically important that the monetary assistance contained in the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act be in the hands of American dairy farmers as quickly as possible.

Although the \$350 million in monetary assistance will not solve the problems that Pennsylvania dairy farmers face, these funds will provide significant and critical relief. As you know, the dairy industry is Pennsylvania's top agricultural sector, contributing more than \$4 billion each year to the state's economy. Ninety-eight percent of our 7,434 dairy farms are family-owned. The large majority of farms, over 80%, have less than 100 cows. In fact, the average is 63 cows per farm, one of the lowest averages in the country. Despite this, Pennsylvania is the 5th largest dairy state, illustrating the significance of this industry to our state and how many people the crisis is effecting.

I respectfully ask that you expedite the distribution of the \$350 million in monetary assistance, and to keep in mind the small dairy farms in Pennsylvania to the greatest extent possible. I hear from farmers on a daily basis about the day-to-day struggles that they face. I believe that without timely and fair distribution of these funds, more and more farms in Pennsylvania will close their milking parlor doors for the last time.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. I look forward to our continued work to support America's dairy farmers.

Sincerely,

*Thanks for all
your good work.*


Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator