



U.S. Representative

Bernie Sanders

*A Special Focus on Agricultural Issues*



Fall 1999

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

*Dear Vermont Farmer,*

I know that it will come as no secret to you that family farmers in Vermont and across this country are facing tremendous financial pressure. In fact, according to government statistics, from 1988 to 1997 twenty percent of full-time farmers in this country went out of business. The State of Vermont has lost 25 percent of its dairy farms since 1990.

Within that rather dismal reality I am very pleased that the final days of this year's congressional session brought some good news for family dairy farmers. Against enormous opposition, I and the other members of the Vermont delegation successfully secured the reauthorization of the **Northeast Dairy Compact** for two years.

We were also successful in overriding the Option 1-B proposal for Milk Marketing Order Reform, thus providing a more favorable price for Vermont farmers' milk that recognizes our higher costs for transportation and feed. Multiple component pricing will be especially advantageous for those with colored cows. I urge you to study the new program. Your co-ops or the milk market administrator should be able to supply you with this information, or feel free to call my office.

While the reauthorization of the Northeast Dairy Compact and the passage of Option I-A are important steps forward for Vermont agriculture, Congress must do even better in the coming years. Rather than just maintaining the status-quo, we need to develop a long-term federal agricultural policy that provides family farmers with a fair and stable price for their product and which emphasizes the needs of small farms, rather than factory farms and agri-business.

Another initiative for family farmers is a federal **agri-tourism** pilot project that I added to the agricultural appropriations bill this year. While not every farm family wants to be involved with agri-tourism, I strongly believe that agri-tourism may provide a financially rewarding way for some farmers to diversify their operations. This million dollar pilot program is an effort to generate additional farm income by leveraging funds, starting a revolving low-interest loan fund, helping with marketing and promotion, and assisting farmers in any way to promote the value-added products grown or raised on their farms.

I invite you to take part in a public meeting that I am holding on **Saturday, December 11, 1999** at the Statehouse in Montpelier from 1:00 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. to discuss how Vermont can best move forward to take advantage of agri-tourism. A small working group from various state agencies has undertaken some preliminary research. Now, I would like to hear your ideas.

Lastly, I am happy to tell you that Congress recently passed a \$125 million Milk Market Loss program for dairy farmers. This program will be similar to the milk market loss program that USDA offered this past spring.

If my office can provide any help or information on agricultural or any other issues, please do not hesitate to call us. Our toll free number is 1-800-339-9834.

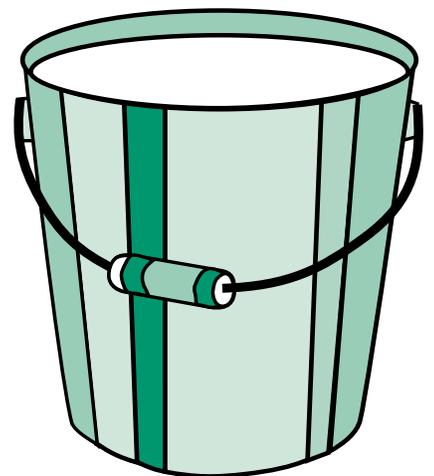
Sincerely yours,

Bernard Sanders  
U.S. Congressman

Join Congressman Bernie Sanders  
at the Statehouse

**Saturday, December 11, 1999, at 1 P.M.**

I need your ideas! How can Agri-Tourism grant funding best be spent? What unique ideas exist for leveraging this funding? Can a program be designed that can be self-sustaining? What help do farmers need to make agri-tourism a rewarding way to diversify their farms?



**Rep. Bernie Sanders**

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*If you receive more than one copy of this newsletter, we apologize. Please feel free to pass the extra copy along to an interested friend.*

*This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense.*

**Contact Information of Interest to Vermont Farmers**

United States Department of Agriculture, Montpelier	802-828-6040
Farmers Home Administration, Berlin	802-229-1413
Rural Economic and Community Development Service, Montpelier	802-828-6000
Vermont Department of Agriculture, Montpelier	802-828-2500
University of Vermont Extension Service, Burlington	802-656-2990

Vermont Farm Service Agency Telephone Numbers			
Brattleboro	254-9766	Morrisville	888-4935
St. Albans	527-1296	White River Jct.	295-7942
Rutland	775-8969 775-8034	Newport	334-6090
St. Johnsbury	748-2641	Williston	879-4785 879-0615
		Middlebury	388-6748



**Emergency Aid for Vermont's Farmers**

**\$125 Million Dairy Milk Market Loss Program**

This year Congress approved a \$125 million Milk Market Loss program for dairy farmers. This program will be similar to the milk market loss program that USDA offered this past Spring that distributed some \$4.6 million to the 1,600 Vermont dairy farmers who participated.

We can expect about \$2.25 million for Vermont dairy farmers or about 10 to 12 cents per hundredweight from the new program. USDA is currently finalizing the details for distributing the \$125 million. It is not clear at this point whether farmers who received money under last year's program will have to re-

apply or whether they will automatically receive additional payments. I have urged U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Glickman to distribute the money quickly and to allow additional farmers the opportunity to apply. I will update you when the regulations are finalized.

**Flood and Drought Relief**

The Freedom to Farm Act has turned into the Freedom to File Act! Bear with your FSA offices as they gear up to serve the ever-increasing number of programs needed to support you. They are often short-staffed by budget cuts, and there is now pressure to consolidate offices once again.

Contact your Farm Service Agency for information on the following federal programs designed to aid farmers suffering from this past year's floods and droughts: Livestock Incentive Program (especially turkey farmers), Livestock Assistance Program (pasture losses), Milk Market Loss Program (dairy producers), and Disaster Loss Program (apples and other crops).

