



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

## Dairy Farmers Make Their Plea - Forum At State Capitol Addresses Growing Milk Crisis

JAMES L. SEWARD October 19, 2009

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ALBANY, 10/19/09 -- Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today heard from dairy farmers and industry leaders from across the state regarding the ongoing milk crisis which has been described as a “depression” for farmers.

**“The stories of hardship experienced by many of our upstate farmers are heart-wrenching,”** said Senator Seward. **“Many family farms that have been part of our landscape for generations have**

**already disappeared, and if we fail to act now, more will be forced into foreclosure.”**

Testimony today at the state capitol highlighted the desperation many farmers are feeling as they continue to cope with historically low milk prices.

**“A short-term cash infusion is needed to support our farmers, and to keep them in business; a business which drives much of our upstate economy.”** Seward continued. **“We also need a commitment from the federal government to fix the archaic milk pricing system.”**

Dairy farmers in New York received an average of \$12.50 per hundredweight of milk sold during September, up 50 cents from August but \$6.50 less than September a year ago. A study by Cornell University estimated that farmers need to be paid at least \$17.00 per hundredweight in order to meet their production costs.

In recent months Seward has taken several steps to assist upstate dairy farmers struggling with low milk prices, including:

- o Requesting Governor Paterson release at least \$60 million in unclaimed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money to provide emergency relief;
- o Calling on New York State Attorney General Cuomo to launch a full scale investigation into the dairy industry with particular attention toward possible violations of price gouging and/or anti competitive laws;
- o Met with dairy farmers and agribusiness leaders several times to hear their plight first hand.

Seward is co-sponsoring the 2009 Dairy Investment Act, which would provide \$60 million of direct emergency relief to struggling dairy farmers. In 2006, Seward led the fight to create the Dairy Investment Act which provided \$30 million in immediate financial assistance to

struggling farmers. The funds served as a lifeline to New York's dairy farmers, and helped stabilize other sectors of the upstate economy dependent on agriculture.

**“Repairing New York’s number one industry, agriculture, will pay dividends across our upstate economic landscape. We need to keep the pressure on both Washington and Albany so our hard-working farmers can breathe easier and continue their time honored work of providing our nation with food and protecting our land,”** Seward concluded.

New York is the nation's third-largest dairy state, generating \$2.3 billion annually, over half of the state's total agricultural receipts. New York's 6,200 dairy farmers produce 1.4 billion gallons of milk annually. The average dairy farm in New York state is family owned and consists of 100 cows, producing an average of 19,303 pounds of milk per cow per year.