

Ben & Jerry's Comments Regarding the 2018 Federal Farm Bill

Presented to the

Vermont Senate Agriculture Committee

And

Vermont House Agriculture and Forestry Committee

April 20, 2017

To the Honorable Committee Chairs and Committee Members:

Ben & Jerry's business has grown from a corner ice cream parlor in 1978 to a global business in 2017.

Ben & Jerry's success depends on the success of Vermont dairy farms. We envision farms working in a system that supports the utilization of agroecological practices. We see a future when Vermont dairy farmers make a good livelihood, dairy farmworkers have a dignified life, the cows are healthy and productive, the soil is rich and resilient, the water is clean, carbon is reduced; a complete, regenerative, sustainable ecosystem.

Since component pricing came into effect, dairy farmers have been at the mercy of extreme price fluctuations, uncertain markets, and a changing climate. We need a 2018 Federal Farm Bill that reduces uncertainties in the markets, invests in regenerative practices and builds confidence in the future of our dairy farming sector. Concomitant to this, we strongly believe that we need supportive immigration policy that allows for annual worker visas for dairy workers who are in Vermont from outside of the United States so that they can work without the fear of deportation.

To that end, we believe that the 2018 Federal Farm Bill needs to address factors that lead to the following outcomes for Vermont dairy farms:

Dignified Livelihoods for Farmers and Farmworkers:

- Dignified life for the farmer: sustainable business, stable income, succession pathway, and supports family owned farms.
- Dignified life for the farm worker: good pay and benefits, safe and dignified conditions, part of the community
- Supports vibrant rural economies

Healthy Animals:

- Highest standards for animal care
- Supports access to pasture
- Incentives for high quality milk production:
 - Low Somatic Cell Count
 - High butterfat percentage

Agroecological Practices:

- Farms diverse in size, keep land in agriculture
- Low input agriculture is utilized, including no/low tillage, diverse cropping, rotations, and cover cropping
- Soil fertility is maximized
- Nutrient balances are maintained
- Protects freshwater and fosters biodiversity
- Toxic chemical use is reduced and minimized
- The impacts of dairy operations fit within ecological limits
- Leading management practices are utilized
- The farm is resilient to a carbon impacted future

Ben & Jerry's is willing to play as proactive a role as necessary to advocate for a strong 2018 Federal Farm Bill that supports farmers so that they can run healthy, thriving farms that serve the people who own and work on them, their animals, the environment and the community.

Comments submitted on behalf of Ben & Jerry's by:

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