

For Immediate Release

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**RE-ESTABLISHING A VIABLE VERMONT DAIRY INDUSTRY
A Call for BOLD State Action**

A new Report proposes bold State action to address the crisis confronting Vermont's dairy farmers. The Report says the State's regulatory authority over milk price, supply and production can be updated and used more effectively to revitalize the industry's future.

The Report calls on the Governor and Legislature to convene an Administrative and Legislative *Blue Ribbon, Dairy Industry Revitalization Task Force*, to implement the Report's recommendations.

A summary of the Report's findings and conclusions will be presented to a joint meeting of the Vermont House and Senate Agriculture Committees, on **February 20, 9am, in Room 10 of the State House.**

The Report is based on a three-year study by Roger Allbee and Daniel Smith, Esq. Mr. Allbee is a former Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, and Mr. Smith is the founding Executive Director of the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact Commission.

The Report confirms the wide-spread understanding about the crisis confronting the Vermont dairy industry:

"The hemorrhaging loss of dairy farms has led to a pivotal turning point for the state's cultural and historic identity as a "dairy state. Without BOLD State governmental policy changes, distressed operation and farm attrition can only persist, and the Vermont dairy industry and working landscape it supports will continue to confront a perilous future."

The Report goes beyond this disturbing premise, to also find that evolving industry changes provide new cause for optimism:

*"The Vermont dairy industry has evolved into a multi-sector, diverse and high value industry, which now includes both a substantial new in-state processing and manufacturing sector along with the historic raw milk production sector. **This new in-state combination of substantial raw milk production and dairy products' manufacture has reestablished comprehensive State regulatory authority over the State's dairy marketplace.**"*

Effective use of this restored regulatory power, combined with more strategic economic development, can restore rational producer pricing and overall milk

supply, and thereby also achieve remediation of harmful farming practices with reduced public funding.

The report calls on the Governor and Legislature to convene the Blue Ribbon Task Force with the charge to harness the State's revitalized power over milk pricing, supply and production practices, and to devise a more strategic economic development strategy.

The Task Force should include:

- On behalf of the Governor, the Secretaries of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Agency of Natural Resources, and Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
- On behalf of the Legislature, the Chairs of the Senate and House Agriculture Committee, Chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee, Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife; Chair of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs, and Chair of the House Commerce and Economic Development.

State Senator Bobby Starr, Chair of the Vermont Senate Committee on Agriculture, who invited the authors to testify before the Committee on February 20th, states that

Roger and Dan have in-depth knowledge of the Vermont dairy industry, and their Report is very compelling. I agree with them that bold action is needed to solve the chronic milk price and over-supply problems, if we are to continue to have working dairy farms in our state. The Report goes beyond this basic point however. The Report identifies the exciting development of our industry's new and diverse manufacturing sector and, most importantly, explains how this new development creates a new path forward for addressing the needs of both Vermont dairy companies and their supplying dairy farms.

I support Roger and Dan's call for the establishment of a Blue Ribbon Task Force, and I am very hopeful the Report's recommendations will be carefully considered by the Governor and my colleagues in the Legislature.

Background of Report Authors:

Roger Allbee: Former Vermont Secretary of Agriculture; Former State Director of Vt. USDA Farm Service Agency; Former VP and Member of Senior Management Team of the Former Farm Credit Banks and Bank of Cooperatives for Northeast US; Served on the Professional Staff of the US. House Committee on Agriculture where his expertise was dairy and soil and water conservation policies; former appointed member and former Chair of the USDA/USTR Animal and Animal Products Advisory Committee to the US Secretary of Agriculture and the US Trade Ambassador; Member of International Market Team of Washington D.C. law firm and participant as NGO in Seattle Round of Multinational Trade Negotiations; Past Chair of the Working Landscape Council of the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

Daniel Smith, Esq. Former founding Executive Director of the Northeast Dairy Compact Commission; former Legislative Counsel for Vermont House and Senate Agriculture Committees; legal practitioner in specialized field of state and federal milk market regulation, across the country.