

James Maroney

I have been listening to the meetings of the Task Force for Revitalizing Vermont Dairy and I have heard a lot about how coops operate and about whether they are marketing effectively. But given that Vermont dairy produces a fungible product that is in surplus across the country, given that Vermont accounts for barely 1% of the national milk supply and given that Vermont dairy is nowhere near the low-cost provider, I have heard no discussion at all conceding that Vermont dairy faces economic realities it cannot ignore, cannot change, and cannot survive. I have heard you say twice that the committee's main objective is to get the Vermont dairy farmers more money, and while this statement is painfully obvious, it does not seem to have led to any discussion, given the above realities and our inability to change or live with them, of how that goal can be achieved.

I must say I was struck by the nonchalance with which the various coop officers you invited to testify admit that their 450 small and mid-sized members—the majority—are presiding over a business that is complacent about their nominal owners' destruction. The only explanation for their apathy is that their 100 or so largest members, those milking more than 500 cows, are making both a modest margin and all the milk the coops can utilize. But this attitude seems short-sighted; the largest farms in the northeast will someday soon find themselves unable to compete with farms many times their size in the west and Midwest.

The coops' attitude also ignores the Global Warming Solutions Act, which as you know requires Vermont to reduce its GHG emissions not less than 40 % by 2030 and 80% by 2050. And because the Climate Council is obligated by statute to seek out 'natural systems' and since CAFOs are not by anyone's estimation 'natural systems,' this requirement will strike hardest those farmers milking over 500 cows, the only dairy farms in Vermont presently cash flowing and the very same ones now supplying the coops.

I have been advocating for years that the only way for Vermont dairy to grapple with the above economic realities and survive is to convert to organic. I'm certain you know this. But you may not have read my proposal, which takes as its starting point not revitalizing dairy as a stand-alone objective but Vermont's long ignored duty to meet its water quality standards, which can only be accomplished by first reforming the dairy industry.

The paper I attach below is the product of ten years dairying, two graduate degrees, a book and twenty-five years of reading and study. It describes why this approach is not only sufficient but *necessary* to the accomplishment of both objectives. Perhaps you will share it with the members of the Task Force and then invite me to answer their questions?

Sincerely yours,

James H. Maroney, Jr.