

Dear Secretary Tebbetts

I am writing on behalf of the chairs of the Task Force for the Revitalization of Vermont's Dairy Industry.

They wish to thank you, Diane Bothfeld, Laura Ginsburg, and EB Flory for your testimony at the June 7, 2021 meeting of the Task Force. It was very helpful.

However, after reviewing the PowerPoint presentation, there were some questions regarding the number of farms the Agency listed as operating in 2010. On one slide 996 farms are listed as operating in 2010, but on two other slides 1,037 are listed as operating.

Similarly, one of the Agency's slides lists 537 farms under the number of farms pooled in FMMO #1. But the Northeast Dairy Statistics lists 569 farms as pooled under the order.

I communicated previously with Diane Bothfeld about these questions. Diane noted that there were two errors, and she offered to make corrections. I conferred with the Task Force chairs about whether they would like correction, and they asked that the Agency correct those numbers in the presentation so that it can be posted to the Task Force website.

However, before the corrections are made, the chairs would like to better understand how the Agency tracks or collects data for the purposes of tracking or accounting for dairy farms in the State.

1. Could the Agency describe in a paragraph or two how it determines the number of cows per farm, specifically what data is available for each of the identified LFOs, MFOs, SFOs, and CSFOs. Does all the data come from water quality permitting or is some of it from the dairy licensing and inspection program/requirements.
2. Where is the information regarding percent of sales off the farm derived from? It is assumed to be from antibiotic tracking, but how does the Agency access this information.
3. And how does the Agency gather information on the distribution of milk usage?
4. Is all of the data state data? Or does the Agency gather information from federal sources, such as from the federal milk market order administrator. Or is the federal data a way to compare or confirm state data?
5. And how does the Agency determine the number of SFOs since they are not required to have a water quality permit or certification? Is this drawn from the FMMO administrator?

6. Likewise, does the Agency have independent information for the number of farms pooled under the FMMO? Or does the Agency draw that data from the FMMO administrator?
7. In addition, what information does the Agency collect on licensing forms or during inspection? Are farmers required to report the number of cows that are present on the farm or that they are milking?

The Task Force chairs believe answers to these questions could educate the Task Force regarding how dairy farms are monitored and how the flow of milk is tracked. This information could inform potential alternatives to revitalizing the dairy industry.

Thank you in advance for the time spent answering these questions. Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

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