

## **Executive Director Report for January 2023**

1. Omnibus Bill passed: The agreement (The Omnibus Bill) is concerned with the dramatic rise in organic feedstock prices for livestock, especially organic dairy producers, as a result of severe drought conditions, international trade wars, supply chain backlogs, and unprecedented inflation. The Committees are working closely with the department to better understand this issue and find a solution.
  - a. USDA has been tasked by Congress with the request to report back within 30 days of enactment of this Act on available funding sources to address the problems facing organic farmers.
    - i. This includes exercising authority under the Commodity Credit Corporation and include the 2022 losses in the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program.
    - ii. “The agreement recognizes the need for organic dairy producers to have detailed data about market conditions in order to make decisions about the value of their products. Within 60 days of enactment of this Act, AMS is directed to brief the Committees on the feasibility of collection and publication of organic fluid milk data from all Federal Milk Marketing Orders. The agreement directs AMS to continue strong enforcement of organic dairy production standards and to resolve significant variations in standard interpretation that exist among organic certifiers and organic dairy producers. AMS shall continue to conduct critical risk-based oversight, particularly for large, complex dairy operations.”
    - iii. NOC’s Suggestion
      1. \$6 per cwt based on 2021 production with a cap of 5 million pounds per operation. The estimation of the increase in the cost of production by NOFA VT for 2022 is \$6 dollars /cwt based on their study that they have been doing with the University of Vermont over the last 17 years.
    - iv. West Coast Organic Dairy Crisis Coalition’s ideas on what will happen:
      1. Commodity Credit Corp (could be around March/ April) – Payments from USDA on internationally sourced feed (mostly soy meal)
      2. Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (could be an immediate application period once approved) – revenue decrease comparing 2022 to 2018.
      3. Unknown USDA- FSA Program Modifications – not sure exactly what this looks like. This would most likely be a program moving forward but not retro.
    - v. OTA position:
      1. They are focused on their Organic Feedstuff Relief Task Force continuing conversations with USDA about the need and contours of any program suggestions.

- vi. Now what?
  - a. Continued partnerships with Rep. Huffman and Sen. Feinstein staff to get congressional insight into this process and continue to push USDA.
  - b. WODPA involvement with USDA and/ or Congress meetings
  - c. Provide formal commentary on programs and make specific requests to congress members to approve what USDA comes up with.
2. OFA's National Organic Dairy Call (scheduled for January 9 – will provide update prior to meeting)
3. CALAMP: California Agricultural Mediation Program
  - a. A team of mediators that offer their services for free to farmers, funded by USDA.
  - b. Mediators available free to farmers for the challenging conversations with business partners, neighbors, feed companies, creditors, farm transitions, etc.
  - c. [How to Have Productive Conversations When Disagreements Happen | Ag Proud](#)
  - d. [Certified States - Coalition of Agricultural Mediation Programs \(agriculturemediation.org\)](#)
4. Ag Funding Assistance Program – We signed up and gained access to the online calendar for a 30 day trial period. Opportunities currently available include:
  - a. [Livestock Forage Program \(LFP\) \(usda.gov\)](#) - (Due within 30 days of end of calendar year loss occurred)
  - b. [Dairy Margin Coverage Program \(usda.gov\)](#) - (Deadline moved to January 31, 2023)
  - c. There are also a handful of programs to check out regarding disaster relief that may be worth checking into for those dealing currently with the adverse weather (floods, etc). [Farmers.gov](#)
5. Mercaris update
6. Next Year's conference – location ideas?