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Spending Bill Directs USDA to Assist Organic Dairy Producers & Boosts National Organic Program Funding

Washington, D.C. – December 23, 2022 — Today, Congress passed a massive spending bill, averting a government shutdown and funding federal government activities for the rest of fiscal year 2023. Embedded in the legislation are key provisions to advance organic agriculture.

Organic Dairy Provisions

Congress is calling on USDA to provide emergency relief to organic dairy producers. The National Organic Coalition (NOC) asked Congress to address this crisis caused by severe drought conditions, supply chain backlogs, and a surge in organic feed prices. Report language accompanying the bill directs USDA to report back within 30 days on available sources of USDA funding to address the organic dairy crisis.

There is also report language focused on the need for detailed data about market conditions for organic dairy producers and enforcement of organic standards, two priority issues that impact the viability of organic dairy operations.

“After six years of pay prices that are significantly lower than the costs of production, organic dairy producers have no reserves left and many operations are at risk, said **Ed Maltby, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, a NOC coalition member**. “We appreciate that the House and Senate Appropriations Committees are flagging this urgent issue. We are calling on USDA to meet immediately with all stakeholders and take immediate action to provide relief to ensure the survival of organic dairies.”



Increased Funding for the National Organic Program at USDA

The bill will boost fiscal year 2023 funding for the National Organic Program (NOP) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from \$20 million to \$22 million. The NOP is responsible for overseeing the growing organic industry, which generates about \$63 billion in sales annually in the United States, and is charged with updating and enforcing USDA organic standards in a uniform way around the globe and investigating complaints of fraud.

Funding for Organic Research

The bill continues funding for organic research through the Organic Transitions Program, which will receive \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2023. The bill also boosts funding for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to \$50 million. NOC had requested funding increases for these critical research programs to help farms meet future challenges, including research related to barriers to transitioning to organic production.

NOC appreciates the leadership of organic champions - House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Member Chellie Pingree, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Tammy Baldwin, and Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patrick Leahy - for their leadership in securing these key wins for organic farmers, consumers, and businesses. NOC congratulates longtime organic champion Senator Patrick Leahy, who is retiring from the Senate at the end of this year after 40 years of service. Senator Leahy is the lead author of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, an unwavering defender of organic integrity, and friend to NOC.

About the National Organic Coalition:

The National Organic Coalition (NOC) is a national alliance of organizations working to provide a "Washington voice" for farmers, ranchers, conservationists, consumers and industry members involved in organic agriculture. NOC seeks to advance organic food and agriculture and ensure a united voice for organic integrity. www.nationalorganiccoalition.org