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August 30, 2009

Paul Hoge
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Food Safety, Division of Milk Sanitation
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110-9408

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Hoge:

I am writing to express my support for direct transactions from dairy producers to consumers, and urge you and your department to exempt these transactions from further DPA regulation, including those proposed at this time.

I live in northern Virginia and purchase raw dairy products and other farm products from Meadow Breeze Farm, a Pennsylvania concern that will be affected by the proposed sanitary regulations. Currently, I purchase hundreds of dollars of products each month from this farm in Pennsylvania, in an effort to obtain products that we cannot easily obtain here in Virginia.

My experience is that farm-to-consumer products from Pennsylvania are of high quality, and given current sanitary regulations, are more than sufficiently disease-free (as well as pesticide free, which is one reason I purchase them). Given the current farm technologies and current regulations, there has been no public health threat from family farms in your state, and there is little evidence to conclude that these operations represent a broad public health threat.

Therefore, I urge you and your department to:

- *Modify the proposed provision for testing for "pathogens" to refine the language to "testing for pathogens that cause illnesses in humans only."*

As you are probably aware, there are countless pathogens which do not affect humans, and there is really no reason a farmer should be required to test for all pathogens that exist. This seems over burdensome, and to no avail.

Please note that the recent public health threats from the food industry originated from foreign imports or were generated from facilities that process large amounts of product. The relative health of the food produced by these factory farms is of great concern. I urge you to use state resources to address the very real and documented public health issues that these facilities represent.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Mercil, RN, MSPH

cc: Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission

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