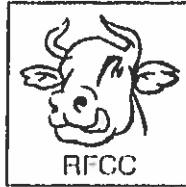


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Comment
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Real Food Consumer Coalition

September 4, 2018

Lydia Johnson, Ph.D.
Director, Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services
PA Department of Agriculture
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110



Dear Dr. Johnson,

The Real Food Consumer Coalition (RFCC) and the producers and consumers we represent strongly support the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's proposal to amend §59a.402 to read as set forth in Annex A.

Artisanal and raw milk cheeses are a vital and growing niche market for American consumers. In addition to the obvious broad economic and consumer choice benefits of increased sales, this change would help small and mid-size dairy farmers maintain their farms and businesses as the overall dairy industry experiences consolidation and many farmers struggle to find an outlet. For the farmers we represent, this is an increasingly important method for them to diversify their income and add value to a product.

RFCC represents consumers seeking to source directly from farmers and farmers who subsist off direct sales. The consumers searching for artisan cheeses would rather continue supporting the farmers they already know and trust for the full spread of cheeses they purchase.

Current Pennsylvania law restricts cheesemakers in their production and sales of raw milk cheese and we support a full expansion to the 57 FDA permitted standard identities.

Failing to take this opportunity to expand cheese options for cheesemakers will mean lost sales for PA dairy farmers and cheesemakers.

The proposed change would align PA law with federal regulations enforced through FDA 21CFR Part 133, and thereby open the market for dairy farmers and cheesemakers in PA who wish to provide to their customers an increased variety of raw milk cheeses. It is our hope that PA will continue to serve as a leader in direct farmer-to-consumer food choice.

We appreciate the PA Department of Agriculture's attention to this issue and its support for sustainable farmers and producers.

Sincerely,

Liz Reitzig
Real Food Consumer Coalition
info@realfoodcc.com