



# Department of Justice

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## **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND USDA HOLD WORKSHOP FOCUSED ON COMPETITION ISSUES IN THE DAIRY INDUSTRY**

### *Madison, Wis., Workshop is the Third of Five on Competition Issues in Agriculture*

WASHINGTON — The Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today held a joint public workshop in Madison, Wis., to explore the appropriate role for antitrust and regulatory enforcement in the dairy industry. The workshop, led by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Antitrust Division Christine Varney, examined competition in the dairy industry and featured panel discussions on trends in the dairy industry, market consolidation and market transparency. The workshop included significant opportunity for producers and the public to comment on trends in the dairy sector.

This is the third in a series of five workshops intended to promote dialogue among interested parties and foster learning with a diverse group of stakeholders regarding competition and regulatory issues in the agricultural marketplace. These workshops are the first-ever to be held by the Department of Justice and the USDA to discuss competition and regulatory issues in the agriculture industry. Additional information about the workshops can be found at [www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm#overview](http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm#overview).

“American agriculture provides the livelihood for an enormous portion of the workforce and sustenance for the rest,” said Varney. “Today’s discussion on the important issues facing the dairy industry has been immeasurably helpful as we consider the ways in which government can help to ensure efficiency and competition in the dairy industry.”

“The dairy industry has been hit particularly hard over the past eighteen months, and, like other agricultural sectors, is experiencing consolidation and shrinking farm numbers,” said Vilsack. “A fair and competitive marketplace is important not only for producers, but also for consumers, and today’s open and transparent dialogue with producers and experts will provide us with a understanding of the complex issues in this important industry and help us determine how we ensure competition and fairness in the dairy industry.”

Secretary Vilsack and Assistant Attorney General Varney began the workshop with opening remarks before leading a roundtable discussion on competition issues in agriculture and the dairy industry, followed by a panel of dairy farmers from across the country to share their first-hand experiences and perspectives on the industry. In the afternoon, a panel of academics and farmers will discuss trends in the industry. Later, a second panel of professionals will

explore issues associated with consolidation. Lastly, a third panel of professionals will examine farm prices for milk, contracts and related issues from a public policy perspective. The second hour-long public testimony will take place before the end of the workshop.

The workshop was held in Madison, Wis., at the Wisconsin Union Theater at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, and was attended by several key federal and state leaders, including Sen. Herb Kohl, Sen. Russell Feingold, Rep. Tammy Baldwin, Governor Jim Doyle and Wisconsin state Agriculture Secretary Rod Nilsestuen.

Videos and transcripts from today's workshop will be available for review at a later date on the Antitrust Division's website at [www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm#dates](http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/workshops/ag2010/index.htm#dates). Individuals seeking more information on the workshops should contact [agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov](mailto:agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov).

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