



January 30, 2009

Legal Policy Section,  
Antitrust Division,  
U.S. Department of Justice  
450 5th Street, NW,  
Suite 11700,  
Washington, D.C. 20001.

**RE: USDA and DOJ Dairy Workshop Panel Recommendation**

On behalf of the members of the California Dairy Campaign (CDC) and the California Farmers Union (CFU), I write to respectfully request the nomination of California Farmers Union (CFU) President Joaquin Contente to serve on the USDA/DOJ Dairy Industry Workshop Panel. Mr. Contente is uniquely qualified to serve on the dairy panel due to his lifelong experience as a dairy producer and his work as a dairy leader to address the consolidation and concentration that has occurred in the dairy sector. Mr. Contente would be able to provide valuable input as a panelist about the impacts of vertical integration and concentration on dairy producers, the need for greater market transparency in dairy pricing so that the system is fair and equitable to producers and consumers.

Mr. Contente owns and operates a dairy farm with his brother Tony in Hanford, a town in the Central Valley of California. As a full-time dairy farmer he has first-hand knowledge of how consolidation and concentration in the dairy sector jeopardizes the future of dairy operations nationwide. In order to be effective it is critical that the USDA/DOJ panel include the viewpoints of producers who understand the challenges in the marketplace today. Until now, federal lawmakers have not addressed the harm that a few large dairy conglomerates pose to dairy producers due to the tremendous market power they enjoy. As a member of the USDA/DOJ dairy panel, Mr. Contente can play an important role in representing the viewpoints of producers as policy reforms to address market concentration and consolidation are considered.

Over the last year, the dairy industry nationwide has undergone an unprecedented crisis due to low producer prices that continue to be well below the average cost of production nationwide. California dairy producers have been particularly hard hit by the plunge in producer prices and many operations have gone out of business or are near the brink of financial collapse. Despite record low producer prices, consumer prices remained comparatively high due to the market power enjoyed by large dairy processors, retailers and others in the dairy sector. Due to his experience as a dairy leader and producer, Mr. Contente would be a valuable asset to the USDA/DOJ Dairy Panel as it formulates federal policy reforms that will foster greater competition in the marketplace and sustain our industry in the future.

Mr. Contente has served as the president of the California Farmers Union since 2000. He also serves on the board of the California Dairy Campaign (CDC) which represents more than 350 dairy farmers throughout California. Through his experience as president of CFU and as a board member of NFU he has gained considerable expertise in federal dairy and economic policy and understands what types of market reforms are necessary to sustain our industry into the future. Dairy policy is a complicated subject area that he has mastered through his work with NFU, CFU and CDC and his lifelong work as a dairy farmer. The USDA/DOJ Dairy Industry Workshop Panel will benefit from his extensive expertise and understanding of federal dairy, agricultural and economic policy as it develops policy reforms.

We strongly urge USDA and DOJ to nominate Mr. Contente to serve on the USDA/DOJ Dairy Industry Workshop Panel because he will provide valuable input to the process. If you should require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 209-632-0885. I thank you for your attention in this regard.

Sincerely,

Joe Augusto  
President