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March 17, 2014

Honorable Senator Bruce Tutvedt, Chairman
Economic Affairs Interim Committee
P.O. Box 207706
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Senator Tutvedt:

I wish to provide comments to you regarding the on going issue of milk dating in Montana and the request by Coremark International before your committee.

As a long time resident of Montana and one who has been involved with retail grocery operations for many years I would like to add my support to any proposal under consideration that would allow for milk sold in Montana to have longer dates.

As a retailer, the current short date cycle effects my bottom line in that I often throw away milk that is out of date, by the Montana standard, yet will have another 9 selling days on it by the standard of adjoining states. This creates an artificial market for Montana's dairy producers by creating a situation where perfectly good fluid milk is being thrown away; where in other states that same product is sold with longer dates.

I know for a fact from speaking to truckers who come through my store that Darigold Farms, for example, is shipping bulk milk and milk products out of state. If our farmers are so flush they can export our milk, and in Washington state even sell it lower than the Montana price, how is that helping Montana's consumer.

I believe all of us as Montanans want to see our agricultural industry thrive; I know for many parts of the state agriculture is the life blood of many communities, however if the milk industry is creating such a huge amount of product they are exporting to surrounding states, and dating the product with longer dates, do we really need this antiquated method of milk dating.

Finally, let me add that for many of us in the convenience store business, Coremark is our only source for milk and dairy products. Darigold no longer has a route in West Yellowstone and Meadowgold will not service small accounts like mine. We are left with only this one option for milk products.

I believe that dairy farmers are fearful of anything that changes their current situation but it would seem that based on what I have observed in the milk industry, they'll be ok.

Please give serious consideration to extending the dates on milk in Montana and give small retailers a chance to cut their losses on milk sales.

Thank you for allow my input.

Sincerely,

Ken Davis, Mgr