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## **Latest Disaster Package Provides Much Needed Relief for Farmers, FarmFirst Urges Distribution of Funds As Quickly As Possible**

*Madison, Wis.* [April 17, 2020] – FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative approves of the \$19 billion-dollar agriculture disaster assistance package released today, providing much needed financial support to U.S. dairy farmers.

“Every day, dairy farmers have continued to get up and do their job to their best ability, day in and day out, producing a wholesome, nutritious product for consumers across the world,” says John Rettler, dairy farmer from Neosho, Wis. and President of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. “And every day, dairy farmers have wondered how much further the markets will drop and how much more their bottom line can erode after already making it through the past five years of challenging markets.”

While many businesses were doing well before COVID-19 hit the economy and shuttered businesses across America, U.S. dairy farmers were already feeling battered and bruised from the past few years after surviving ongoing trade disputes and low commodity prices.

“Today’s announcement by the USDA of direct payments to dairy farmers is greatly appreciated to ensure that they can keep producing wholesome dairy products,” says Rettler. “We urge the USDA to distribute these much-needed funds to dairy farmers as quickly as possible. Time is of the essence as dairy farmers contemplate how to weather this storm of COVID-19.”

“These are unprecedented times for all of us. And it calls for unprecedented support of those in our nation that supply the food to feed us all,” says Jeff Lyon, General Manager for FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. “We appreciate the work by Congress and the USDA in building this plan to support agriculture. Today is a very important step in what will be a long road of survival and then recovery, and we look forward to working with members of Congress to help determine additional assistance that will ultimately be needed.”

Of the \$19 billion dollars, \$2.9 billion will be distributed in direct assistance to dairy farmers along with \$3 billion being designated for purchases within dairy, produce and meats for donation programs, specifically designating at least \$100 million per month in dairy product purchases.

*FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, established in 2013 and based in Madison, Wis., represents farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana by providing legislative and regulatory advocacy, dairy marketing services, disaster protection, laboratory testing opportunities and industry promotion. FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is a merger of three long-time prominent Wisconsin-based cooperatives. Learn more about FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative by visiting: [www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com](http://www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com).*

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