

SUSAN M. COLLINS
MAINE

413 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904
(202) 224-2523
(202) 224-2693 (FAX)

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

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July 29, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to request your continued assistance in identifying funding, support services, and any other resources at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that could be used to assist my constituents in the dairy industry whose land, livestock, and overall operations have been harmed by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination.

As you are aware, PFAS contamination has harmed at least two dairy producers in Maine, resulting in the dumping of milk and a direct effect on the health of dairy cattle. The second farm recently tested its milk and found high contamination levels in June and July, that ranged from 12,700 to 32,200 parts per trillion. While this is a small operation of 40 to 50 milking cows and retail milk from Maine remains a safe and healthy product, this figure is 153 times above the 210 parts per trillion threshold at which milk can no longer be sold commercially in Maine.

While I understand that USDA has provided some initial support to my constituents through the Dairy Indemnity Payment Program, I am concerned that this program was not set up to address the impact of long-term contamination. Additionally, because of the relatively new threat of PFAS contamination, other existing programs intended for disaster relief may not currently be applicable.

I appreciate your assistance in identifying additional USDA programs or resources that are available to assist dairy and other agricultural producers who have been harmed by PFAS contamination, including any potential federal funding for testing and remediation. If the current programs are insufficient, I am committed to working with you and the Department to identify other possible funding mechanisms that could be updated or initiated to help address PFAS contamination.

Thank you for your assistance with this very challenging situation facing two dairy producers in Maine. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator