

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative: Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative request includes USDA payments for milk disposal

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Contact: Jamie Mara | (920) 209-3990 | jmara@voiceofmilk.com

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, one of the largest dairy co-ops in the country, continues to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to act quickly to help farmers and people struggling to afford food during the national emergency caused by COVID-19.

In [a letter](#) sent on Friday to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, Edge laid out three areas the cooperative sees as critical as the USDA considers how to apply relief from money allocated under the CARES Act economic stimulus package.

- Direct financial relief to dairy farmers, including losses by farmers who have had to dispose of milk due to the collapse of a massive market in food service.
- Major government purchases of dairy foods that can fill a growing need among food assistance programs as millions of people lose jobs.
- Flexibility in labeling, packaging and nutritional guidelines for dairy products redistributed to food assistance programs so people can receive the food without delays.

Edge stressed that the USDA's response for dairy must be equitable, farm size-neutral and all-encompassing.

“Instead of folding in the face of COVID-19, farmers have answered the call by

continuing to provide safe, nutritious food that people need to live healthy lives,” the group stated in its letter. “We are doing our part, but we need help to continue this mission.”

Parts of Edge’s request align with programs recommended by other dairy groups, including Minnesota Milk Producers Association, National Milk Producers Federation and International Dairy Foods Association.

In seeking financial relief for farmers, Edge is pushing for a two-part response. One is the Dairy CORE Program proposed by the Minnesota Milk Producers Association. [That program](#) would provide immediate financial relief to dairy farmers for April, May and June through a \$3 per hundredweight payment for each month relative to a farm’s milk production in March. The program would make one \$9 per hundredweight lumpsum payment up front.

The second part is disaster-type payments for milk losses incurred during the month of April, based on March production.

“Regardless of decisions already made, all farmers would have the opportunity to plan their operations around the Dairy CORE Program. No farmers should be left behind,” the cooperative said.

Earlier this month, Edge joined several other Midwest agricultural groups in broadly recommending bulk food purchases and direct financial help for farmers. The most recent request identifies mechanisms to deliver that help.