

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DAIRY FARMERS TO VOTE ON AMENDED MILK ORDER
FOR THE MIDEAST MARKETING AREA

A referendum in which dairy farmers shipping milk to the Mideast milk marketing area will have an opportunity of expressing their approval or disapproval of an amended order, will be concluded on June 17, 2002.

The order, as proposed to be amended, would include the terms and provisions of the order currently regulating the handling of milk in the Mideast marketing area with the following changes and modifications:

The decision adopts provisions that amend certain features of the pooling standards of the Mideast Federal milk order. Specifically, the decision adopts amendments to the Pool plant provisions that would:

- 1) Eliminate automatic pool plant status for the 6-month period of March through August;
- 2) Eliminate milk shipments to a distributing plant regulated by another Federal milk order as pool-qualifying shipments under the Mideast order;
- 3) Eliminate the "split plant" feature;
- 4) Eliminate the inclusion of diversions to pool distributing plants made by a pool supply plant located outside the marketing area as part of the supply plant's qualifying shipments; and
- 5) Establish a "net shipments" provision for supply plants.

For the Producer milk provisions, the decision adopts amendments that would:

- 1) Increase the number of days that the milk of a producer needs to be delivered to a pool plant;
- 2) Establish year-round diversion limits, adjusted seasonally, for producer milk of distributing plants pooled under the Mideast order; and
- 3) Exclude from receipts the diversions made by a pool plant to a second pool plant from the calculation of the diversion limitation.

Qualified cooperative associations of producers will be permitted to cast bloc votes on behalf of their members on all provisions of the order as amended.

A notice of referendum, a decision that contains the provisions of the order, as proposed to be amended, and a ballot have been mailed to all known eligible voters. No voting by proxy is permitted and each producer will be entitled to only one vote regardless of the number of farms he/she operates. Partnerships, corporations, and other business organizations that operate dairy farms will be entitled to only one vote regardless of the number of partners, shareholders, or others that make up the organization.

The order, as proposed to be amended, was considered at a public hearing held in Wadsworth, Ohio, on October 23-24, 2001.

Dairy farmers who may not have received a ballot through the mail and who feel that they are eligible to vote should call the USDA Referendum Agent at (440) 826-3220.