

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

September 22, 2021

Secretary Thomas Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to support the recommendations put forth by Maine Governor Janet Mills in response to the recent decision by Danone North America, owner of Horizon Organic, to end all contracts with Maine-based dairy producers by August 2022. This decision will harm not only the hardworking families that operate these farms, but also Maine's agricultural economy. We fully support Governor Mills' request for federal assistance and action to ensure that the 14 Maine dairy farms affected by this decision will have the support and resources they need to survive.

These recommendations include: providing a three month grace period on all USDA loans for impacted producers; directing available COVID-19 relief and/or other federal resources toward financial support and related infrastructure needs; supporting regional and state-specific responses; and addressing the labor shortage in milk hauling. In addition, we strongly agree with Gov. Mills request for the issuance of a final rule on the Origin of Livestock – for which we have been advocating for years. Congress required USDA to promptly issue a final Origin of Livestock rule in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-94), setting a statutory deadline that passed more than one year ago. We ask that you move swiftly to finalize this rule in order to prevent further harm to the organic dairy farmers who have been put at a serious and unfair disadvantage while waiting for this process to conclude.

We appreciate your meeting with the Northeast Agriculture Commissioners following Danone's decision, and encourage you to take immediate action based on the feedback from them and other stakeholders. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

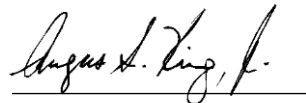
Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Angus S. King Jr.  
United States Senator



Jared F. Golden  
Member of Congress