



Janet Finch-Saunders AC/AM

Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy

Assembly Member for Aberconwy



Lesley Griffiths AM,
Minister for Environment, Energy, and Rural Affairs,
Welsh Government,
By Email

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20 April 2020

URGENT

Re: Dairy Sector

Janet.Finch-Saunders@Assembly.Wales

Dear Minister,

I hope that this email finds you and all of your team well during this time of so much worry.

Whilst I appreciate the considerable pressure you are under, I would be most grateful if you could kindly give urgent attention to the unfolding crisis in the Welsh dairy sector.

In the first instance, I would like to acknowledge the steps you have already taken in an effort to support the sector, such as providing an extra month for the submitting of the Single Application Form, allocating an additional £5.5m to the BPS and Glastir 2019 support scheme, and welcoming the temporary easing of competition laws for the dairy sector across the UK. However, these steps do not go far enough. As your press release on 17 April 2020 rightly stated 'The dairy sector has felt an immediate impact from the closure of the food services sector and the realignment of the supply chain and market prices'. It follows that myself and numerous constituents are eager to see you do more to ensure that further support is immediately available to struggling dairy farmers.

It is heart-breaking to hear of and see photos of farmers having to resort to throwing away milk and losing their livelihoods. Similarly, I am aware that others are facing delayed payments and significant price cuts, placing potentially disastrous pressure on a sector which is often negatively hit by market volatility and sees farmers operating on a very small profit margin (during good times!) for their high quality milk. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could as a matter of urgency:

- Provide access to the Economic Resilience Fund for all in the agricultural sector affected by coronavirus market disruption;
- Explore public procurement contracts to make sure our NHS, military, and prisons are all sourcing fresh Welsh milk;
- Establish whether there is any possibility of the public sector purchasing more milk for consumption by individuals receiving State support, such as hospital patients, the homeless, and children of key workers;

[Cont...]

Mi wnaff Janet Finch-Saunders cadw unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol yn gwbl gyfrinachol, ac fel arfer mi fydd rhaid iddi rannu'r wybodaeth 'efo aelodau o staff i'w galluogi nhw i ddellio 'efo'r awdurdodau perthnasol er mwyn eich helpu a'ch cynorthwyo chi. Efallai mi fydd angen i rywun ysgrifennu atoch er mwyn darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf o bwys. Gadwch wybod i ni os nad oes diddordeb gennych mewn cael eich cysylltu at y diben hwn.

Janet Finch-Saunders will treat in confidence any personal information which you may pass on to her, and she will normally allow her staff to see it, so that they can consult with relevant authorities in order to help and advise you. We may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues which you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

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[Cont...]

- Consider other ways of taking milk off the market as we approach peak production such as the setting up of community schemes for milk and milk products to give to the most deprived and vulnerable in our communities through food bank schemes;
- And assist with the management of the flows of milk through the supply chain.

The number of dairy producers in Wales is on a downward decline. This is true here in North Wales. For example, according to the Food Standard Agency we have seen the loss of 10 more suppliers between April 2019 and 2020. Undoubtedly, those that remain have had to fight hard to maintain their businesses, and are facing an increasing lack of cooperation from global banks which seem to be losing interest in small and medium sized Welsh businesses generally. Consequently, I believe that more than ever there is a need for the Welsh Government to step forward and be ambitious in its efforts to help save the dairy sector from further decline. Indeed, it cannot be right that Business Wales is only advising the following: 'We continue to work with farm businesses and organisations in securing alternative markets and we are actively considering what additional financial assistance might be needed for the industry'.

By supporting dairy farmers, you would be backing our rural communities. As you probably know, the sector is an important rural employer and provides a considerable amount of work for contractors and the self-employed. As such, the failure of dairy farms through no fault of their own, would have further far-reaching devastating effects on rural Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

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