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USDA REOPENS COMMENT PERIOD FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF DAIRY PRODUCT MANDATORY REPORTING PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1, 2007 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it is reopening the comment period for the interim final rule for the Dairy Product Mandatory Reporting program. The rule was published on July 3 and became effective Aug. 2. The original comment period ended Sept. 4.

Under this action, additional comments are due Dec. 3, 2007. Comments submitted during the first comment period need not be resubmitted. The reopening of the comment period will provide interested parties with an additional opportunity to submit comments on all aspects of the program. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will review and consider all submitted comments as it writes a final rule.

The Dairy Market Enhancement Act of 2000, and certain provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill amended the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to establish the program. The mandatory reporting program provides timely, accurate, and reliable market information to facilitate more informed marketing decisions and promote competition in the dairy product manufacturing industry. The program: (1) Requires persons engaged in manufacturing dairy products to report certain information including the price, quantity, and moisture content where applicable, of dairy products sold by the manufacturer; and (2) Requires persons storing dairy products to report information on the quantity of dairy products stored. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) collects the information. Any manufacturer that processes and markets less than 1 million pounds of dairy products per year is exempt from the reporting requirements.

AMS has implemented a plan to verify the price information submitted to NASS. AMS visits butter, nonfat dry milk, cheese and dry whey manufacturers that file reports. AMS verifies that eligible sales transactions agree with information reported to NASS and will check for eligible sales transactions that were not reported.

Details of the reopening of the comment period for the interim final rule will be published in the Nov. 2 Federal Register. Comments should be sent to John R. Mengel, Chief Economist, USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, Office of the Chief Economist, STOP 0229-Room 2753, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0229. Comments may also be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.