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291-306 On federal funding for the dairy industry

It is no secret that the once booming dairy industry in Erath County is suffering. For years, families from near and far relocated to the area to produce milk. And produce they did - pumping millions of dollars into the local economy, supplying jobs and becoming an integral part of the business community.

Today, however, those same dairies are struggling to stay in business. Industry experts estimate that dairies are losing between \$3-\$4 per cow per day. For a producer that milks 500 cows, that's an estimated \$45,000-\$60,000 per month.

During a recent event that Congressman John Carter attended, one local dairyman called the crisis "equity destruction," saying that every month his family is struggling to survive. Meanwhile, he

is losing much of what he has spent years building.

Last week, the federal government unrolled a plan aimed at helping struggling dairy farmers by increasing the amount paid for dairy products through the Dairy Product Price Support Program.

The program increase will raise the price paid for nonfat dry milk from \$0.80 per pound to \$0.92 per pound, the price paid for cheddar blocks from \$1.13 per pound to \$1.31 per pound, and the price of cheddar barrels from \$1.10 per pound to \$1.28 per pound. The USDA estimates show that the changes will increase dairy farmers' revenue by \$243 million.

Darren Turley, assistant legislative and environmental manager with the Texas Association of Dairymen, called the move a "good first

step" in helping dairymen get back on their feet.

"Anything they (the government) can do to help dairymen get through this terrible time is justified," he said.

Turley said the second step will come within the month when an estimated 87,000 cows will be taken off the market and beefed.

The *Empire-Tribune* applauds the steps the government is taking to help the dairy industry and hopes these measures give producers the much needed boost they will need to continue producing the wholesome products families across the country have come to expect.

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