

My name is Mary Wilson. I'm a 4th generation dairy farmer from Garland.

Dairy farmers have a very difficult time making ends meet, let alone a profit. In 2004, our farm had the highest profit margin of any dairy in the Benchmark program comparing Farm Credit dairy farm participants in the Northeast. This is only mentioned to demonstrate our farms ability and desire to work hard and manage our business, as all farmers do. We now are in a nearly break-even situation, with products sold not keeping pace with the inflation of our inputs.

Our farm is pretty well known as frugal. We control our inputs to the extent of rarely ridding ourselves of used equipment, always holding onto items, hoping to utilize old pieces as repairs. However, attempts to conserve inputs aren't working to create a workable profit margin. It has just meant more "getting by." There are times when we all can use some help.

The Tier program provided approximately 6% of our income for the year of 2023. It may sound small, and we'd love more, but it kept us from needing to borrow money to cover very inflated expenses.

Inflation has been over 25% in many areas for dairy farmers. Even though inflation affects all of us, dairy farmer income is not controlled by farmers. Our price for milk dropped \$4.89 for 2023 from 2022. That's almost 19% for our farm.

We recently purchased a manure pump for \$30,000.00 as a necessary replacement for some old equipment. We hurried to make the purchase as we were advised that if someone else bought the pump in stock and we had to wait for another to be ordered in, the new one would be about \$38,000.00. That's a 27% increase. Our milk price would never increase at that rate.

The Maine Dairy Industry Association has numbers gathered by Extension Dairy specialist Gary Anderson from farmers across the state demonstrating our cost to produce milk. Our costs are growing without farmers having the ability to forego our necessary inputs. The Tier program buffers these highs and lows.

We do not always need this assistance. Yet current inflation compared to the dismal milk price is evidence of why the foothold the Tier payment provides is necessary, and why our request for a cost of production increase is relevant.

Thank You

Mary Wilson

Thomas Farms of Garland