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September 18, 2009 3:35PM

Falling Milk Prices Squeeze Dairy Farmers

By [Alexis Glick](#)

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A story that I have learned a lot about over the past six months thanks to my friend Randy Roeker, a dairy farmer, in Wisconsin is the plight of the dairy farmer. Milk prices have dropped 36% in the past year. Milk prices are at one of the lowest levels in three decades. While it is good for us as a consumer, it has been a disaster for dairy farmers.

In past periods of weakness input or feed costs have been much lower resulting in a profit albeit small. This time the input costs are so high and the sale of the final product so low that they're losing money. Losing money at record rates mortgaging everything because they're running business at a net loss. Not even breaking even.

This morning Dennis Wolff the former Agriculture Secretary in Pennsylvania joined me along with Jim Davenport of Tollgate Farms, a dairy farmer, in Columbia County, NY. Jim was lovely. Listening to his personal struggle to make ends meet was very difficult. I could tell how tough it has been and how much pride he takes in his milk and cheese. We talked during the commercial break. He taught me a tremendous amount about the Chinese market and how they have watered down their milk and seized importing. He also taught me about Australia's market and why it has turned around. He was very bright. I felt for him. He told me that if I go to a Whole Foods and buy Hudson Valley Fresh milk in a plastic container with a green label that I will be purchasing his farm's milk. I plan to do that for my three boys. At least I'll know that the money spent is going in to his pocket.

Take a look.



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3