Behind the Scenes: Cornucopia's Dairy Scorecard



What makes ethical dairy so expensive?

How are the scorecards made?

We aim to score every organic brand **available at retail**

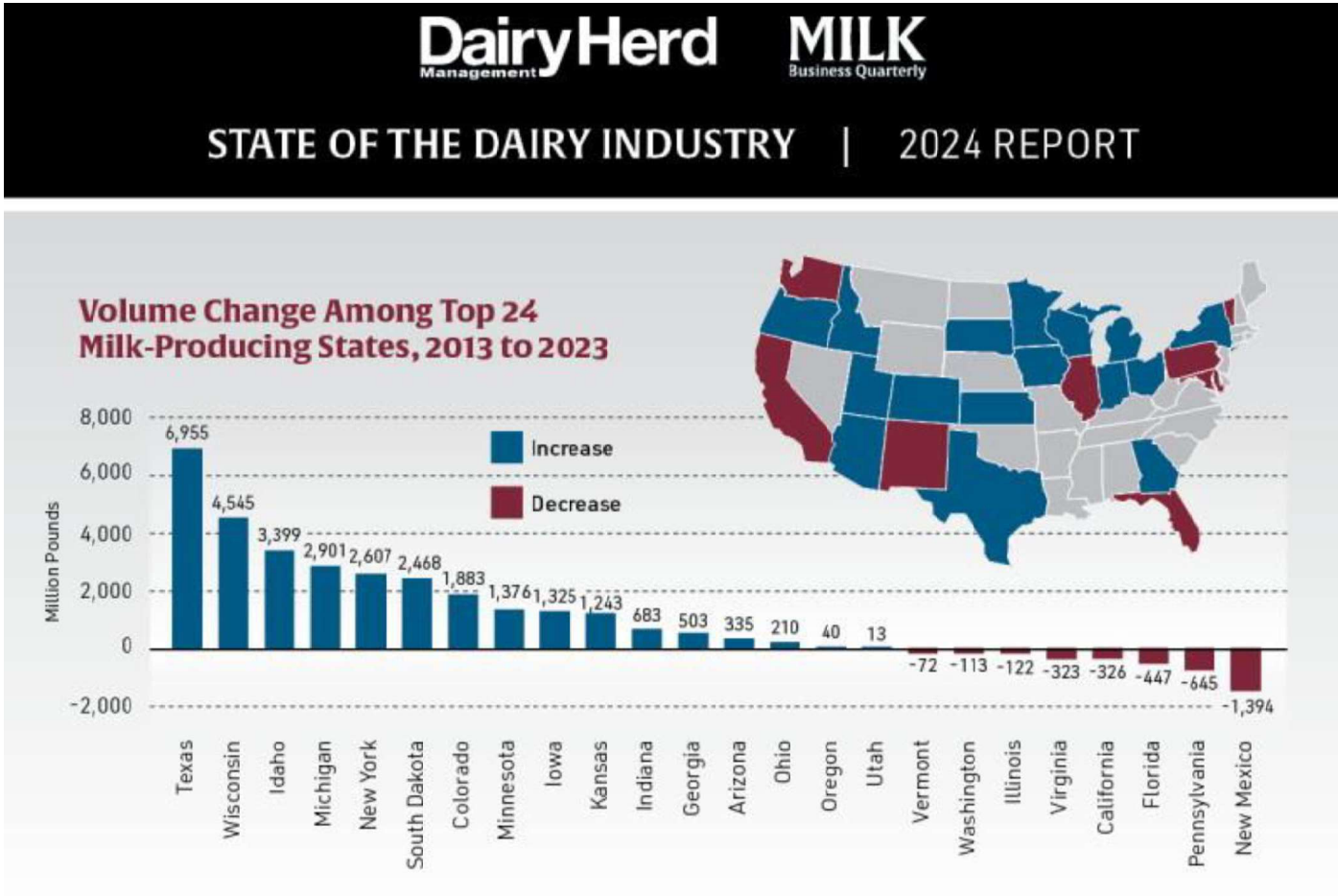
Create survey using feedback from experts → Gather information & individual brand research → Develop scoring mechanism → Create scorecard and adjacent materials

Watchdog work and whistleblower information is built into the scorecard (once confirmed)!

We utilize consumer and industry tips and information – let us know if we are missing an organic brand!

Changes to the US dairy market?

- Most dairy by volume is conventional and produced by industrialized producers
- Research indicates that average production costs per hundredweight (cwt) of milk produced fall sharply with herd size.
- Large dairy farms earn substantial profits, while most smaller operations experience economic losses.



The marketplace has become more confusing with vying marketing claims!

- Claims that appear on fluid milk and yogurt product packaging have multiplied. Grassfed, regenerative, animal welfare, Non-GMO, etc.
- Organic stands out as federally regulated and covering many of the aspects other 3rd party labels cover.

CERTIFIED HUMANE RAISED & HANDLED

ORGANIC PLUS TRUST CERTIFIED GRASS-FED ORGANIC

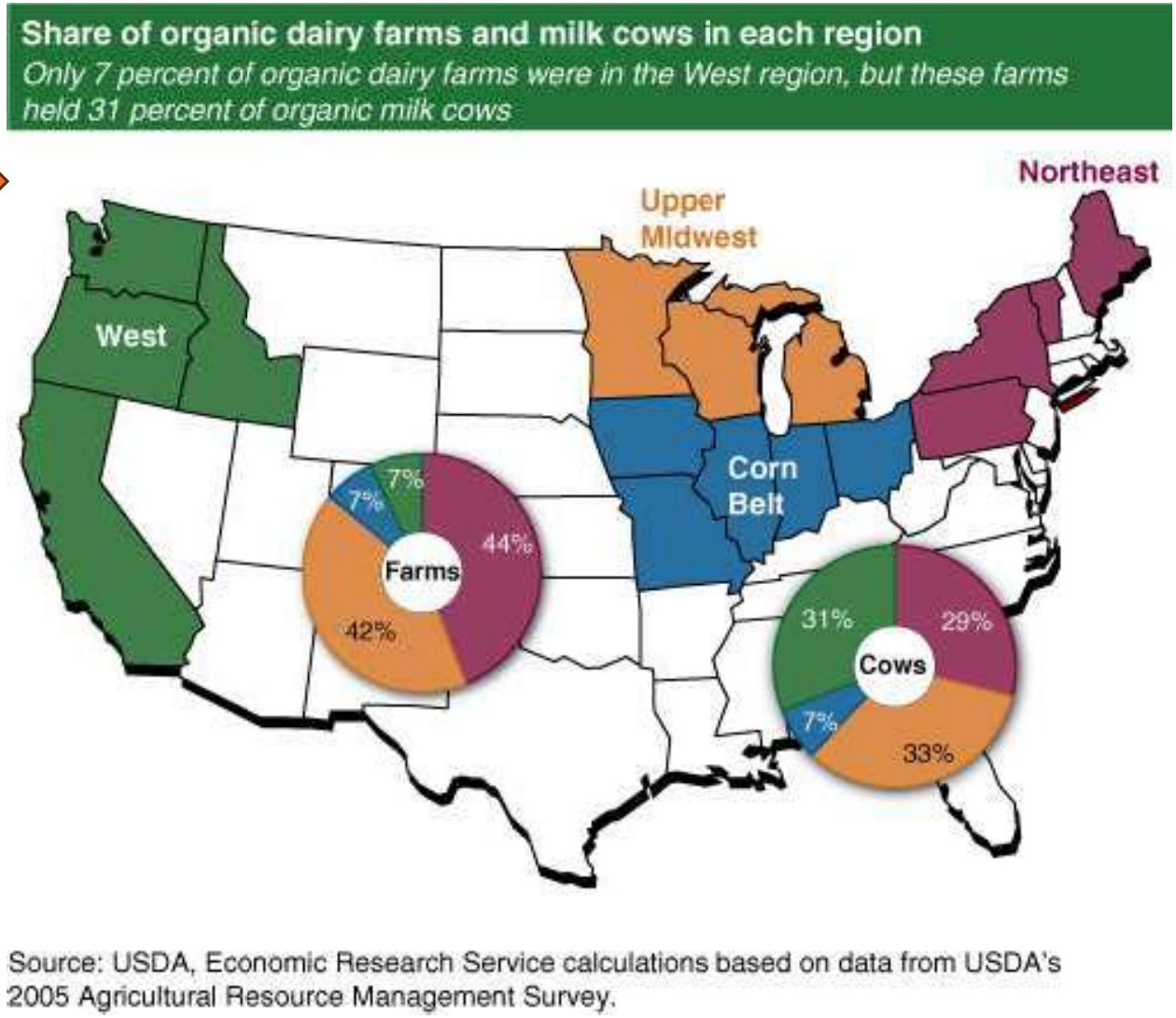
Regenerative Organic Certified™ BRONZE



This is what organic dairy production used to look like!

NOW…

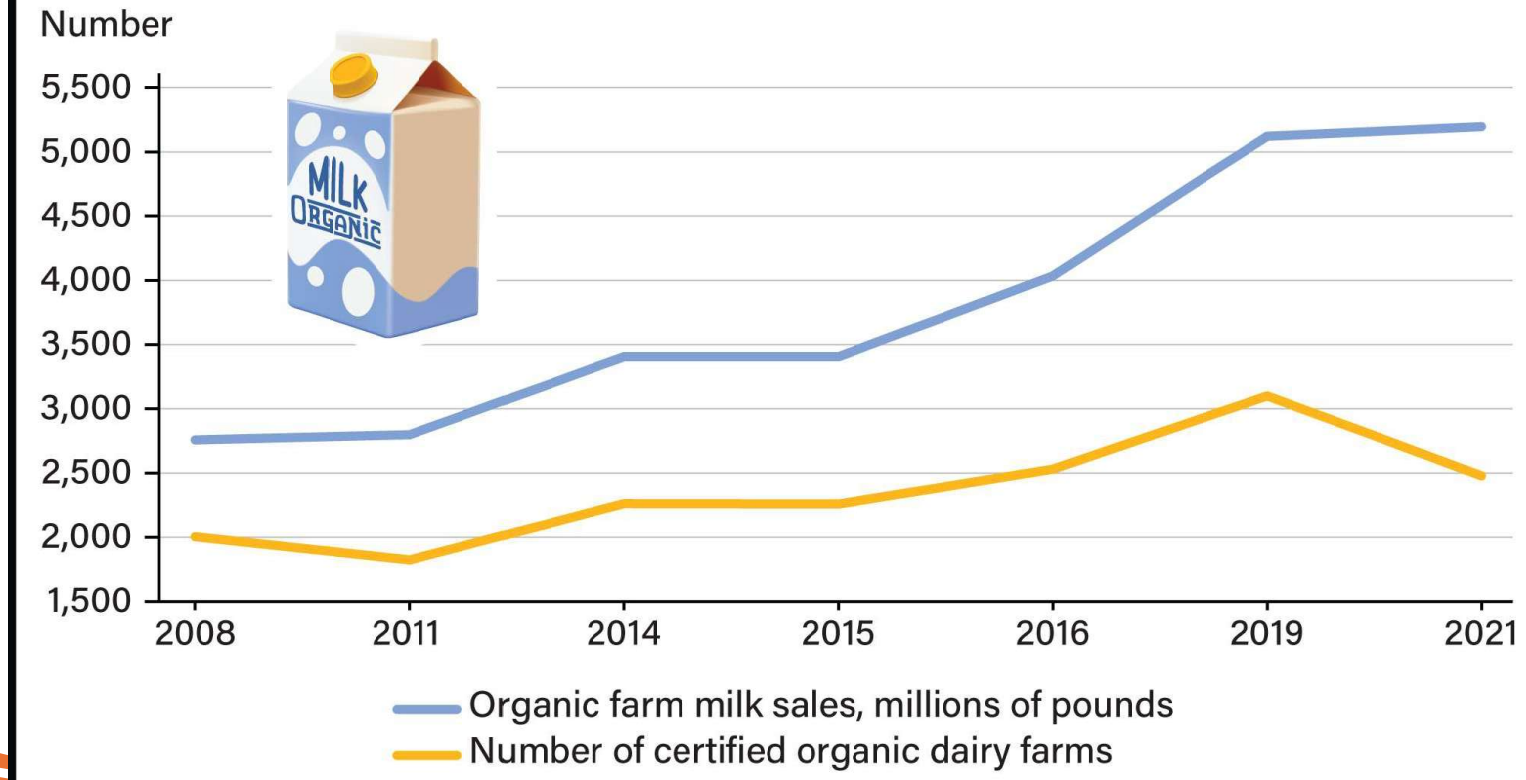
- 13 dairy operations in TX produced 1,015,247,902 pounds of milk versus 407 dairies in WI produced 359,800,417 pounds of milk (3x the amount of milk coming out of TX versus WI)
- 6 dairies in CO produced an unknown amount of milk (amounts withheld when there is a small number per-state)
- Arid regions are being farmed despite poor water access



Source USDA ERS: https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/animal-products/dairy/readings

U.S. organic farm milk sales and certified organic dairy farms, 2008–21

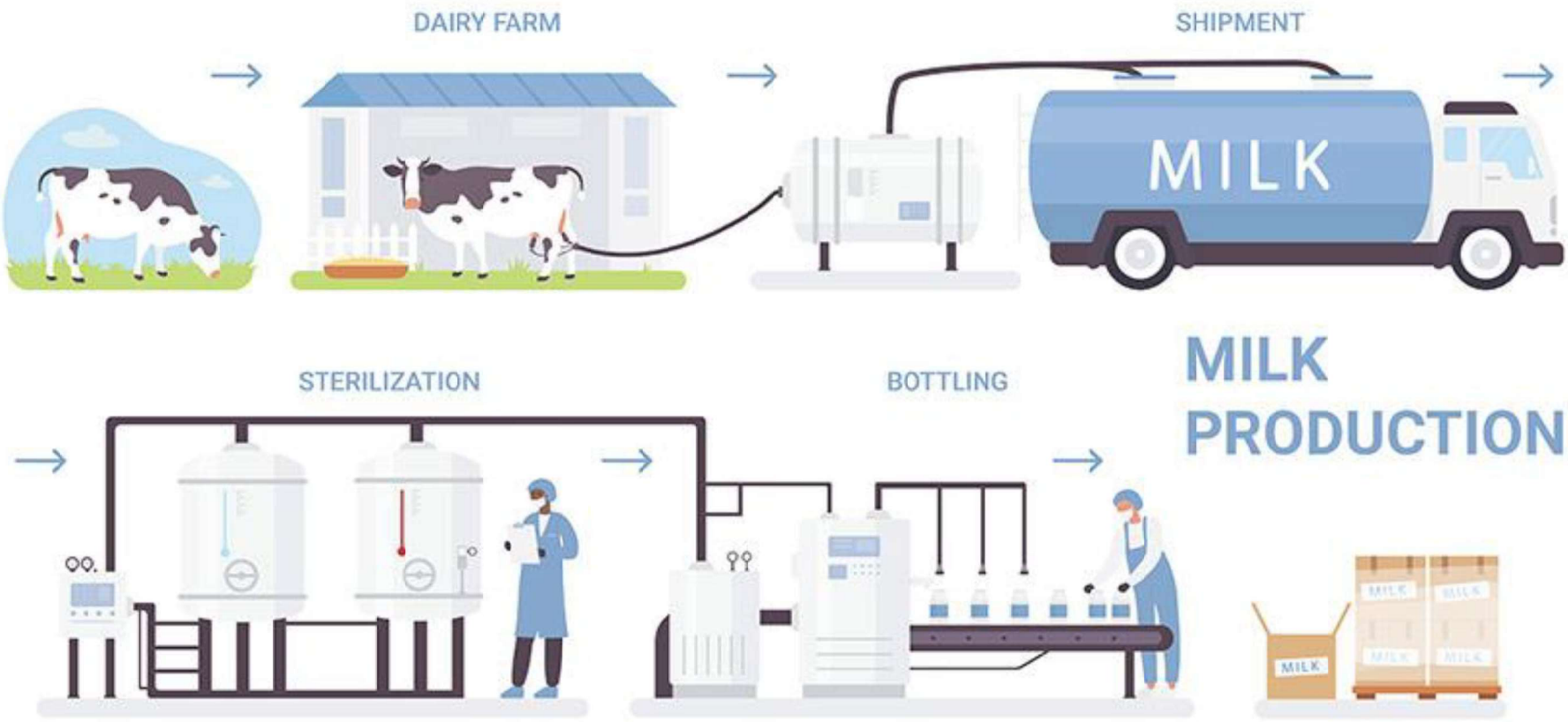
USDA Economic Research Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service 2008 Organic Production Survey, 2011 Certified Organic Production Survey, 2014 and 2019 Organic Survey, and 2015, 2016, and 2021 Certified Organic Survey.

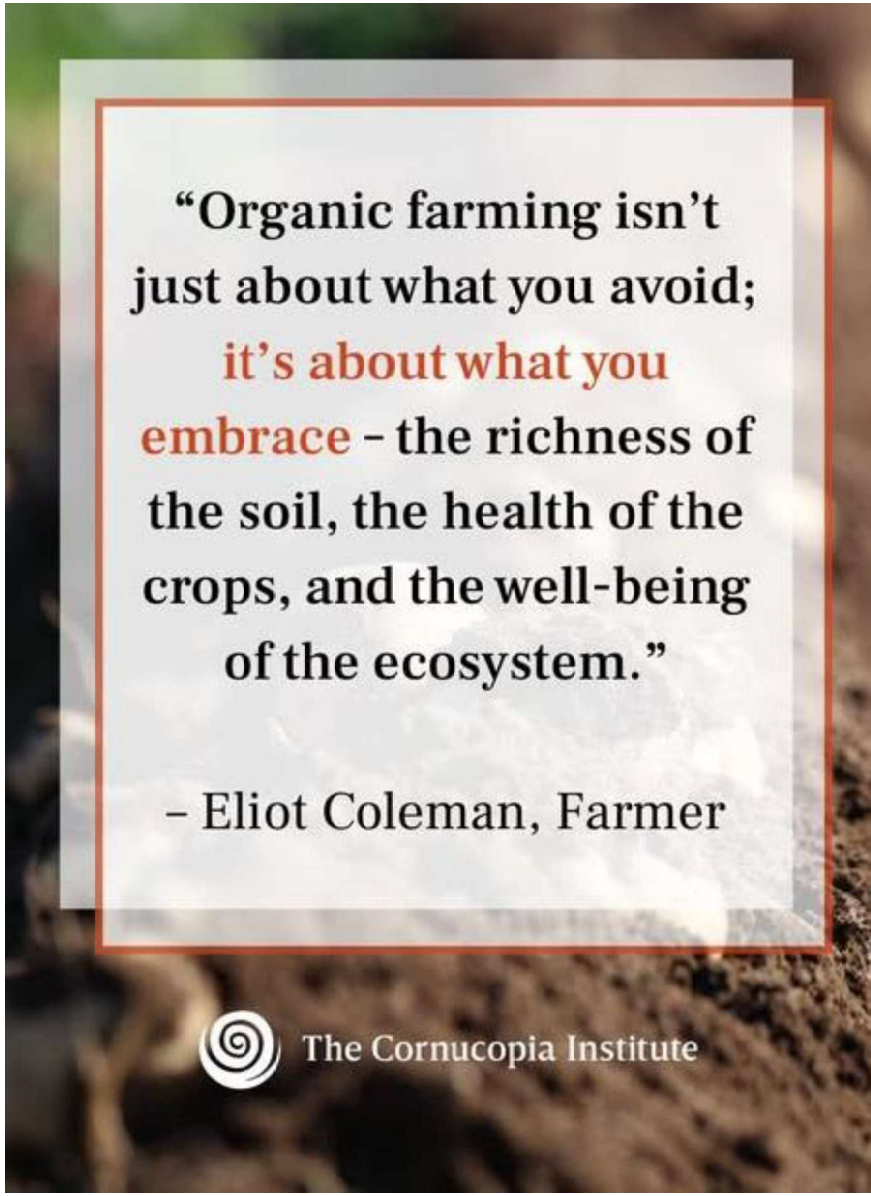
CHARTS of NOTE

How does milk get to the consumer?



What does Certified Organic require?

- Accommodates the health and natural behavior of ruminant livestock
- Require year-round outdoor access, and prohibits continuous total confinement
- All feed for livestock must be certified (including land used for outdoor access)
- Prohibits or restricts certain physical alterations (such as debeaking or induced molting)
- No antibiotics, synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, growth hormones, irradiation, GMOs, sewage sludge, etc.
- Requires improvement or maintenance of the natural resources of the farm, including soil and water quality



USDA Organic is premised on continuous improvement!

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Final Rule

The Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Final Rule updates the USDA organic regulations (7 CFR part 205) to promote animal welfare and encourage consistent livestock production practices. It adds detailed regulations regarding indoor and outdoor space requirements for avian species, animal health care practices, confinement, transportation, euthanasia, and slaughter.

Organic is the ONLY federally regulated label with detailed standards dictating how a product is produced from its **inception to consumer purchase**



Certified organic is the floor for more ethical production. Organic producers still vary widely!



Shelton Dairy, CO



High Plains Dairy, CO

The spread in organic production: the minimum standards to stellar producers!



Aurora Organic Dairy, High Meadow Dairy 2026



Strafford Organic Creamery



Why is ethical dairy production so expensive?

What are you getting when you pay for a top-rated dairy brand?



Strafford Organic Creamery in central Vermont. They milk Guernseys and sell glass bottled milk and great ice cream.

Top-rated brands go above and beyond, but that adds to farmer expense!

- CERTIFICATION COSTS
- INCREASED LABOR & TIME
- ORGANIC FEED COSTS
- ANIMAL WELFARE COSTS
- PAPERWORK BURDEN
- TRANSPARENCY







How are the scorecards made?

We aim to score every organic brand **available at retail**

Create survey using feedback from experts → Gather information & individual brand research → Develop scoring mechanism → Create scorecard and adjacent materials

Watchdog work and whistleblower information is built into the scorecard (once confirmed)!

We utilize consumer and industry tips and information – let us know if we are missing an organic brand!

0-star/in process ⓘ				
Family Farmstead Dairy	*in process*	Fluid Milk, Yogurt, Cheese, Buttermilk, A2, 100% Grassfed	Northeast	0
Horizon (Platinum Equity)	*in process*	Fluid Milk	National	0
Horizon Grassfed (Platinum Equity)	*in process*	Fluid Milk, 100% Grassfed	National	0
Kalona Supernatural (Farmers Creamery)	*in process*	Fluid Milk, Half and Half, Cottage Cheese, Yogurt, Kefir	West, Midwest	0
Kimberton Hills Dairy (Camphill Village Kimberton Hills)	*in process*	Fluid Milk, Raw, Cheese	PA	0
Maple Hill Creamery (Horizon Family Brands)	*in process*	Fluid Milk, Yogurt	National	0
Nancy's (Springfield Creamery)	*in process*	Yogurt, Sour Cream, Butter, Cream Cheese, Kefir	National	0
Neighborly Farms (Hillcrest Farms)	*in process*	Cheese	Northeast	0
Norr Organic	*in process*	Skyr, Yogurt, Wholesale	West	0

The Cornucopia Institute

Questions?

Kestrel Burcham, JD

Policy Director

Burcham@cornucopia.org

