

USDA News

DECISION ON PROPOSED CALIFORNIA FEDERAL MILK MARKETING ORDER RATIFIED

On March 19, 2018, the *Federal Register* published a proposed rule announcing the ratification of the evidentiary record of the California Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) rulemaking proceedings by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Judicial Officer (JO).

On March 9, 2018, the USDA JO completed his review and ratified all of Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Clifton's actions. This included instructions regarding corrections to exhibits, rulings on objections, rulings on the admission of evidence, rulings on the conduct of the hearing, and rulings on requests for corrections to the transcript of the hearing. The JO ratified ALJ Clifton's Certificate of the Transcript, except that he revised the list of exhibits that ALJ Clifton identified as not having been admitted into evidence by adding "Exhibit 108-Exhibit D" to that list.

Consequently, USDA will move forward with the California FMMO rulemaking proceedings by issuing and publishing a final decision in the *Federal Register*. 🐾

Source: *Federal Register*. 83 FR 11903. Available at www.federalregister.gov/.

AMBER WAVES ARTICLE: EXAMINING CONSOLIDATION IN U.S. AGRICULTURE

The following is an excerpt from an Amber Waves Article

Agriculture production in the United States has been shifting to larger farms for many years. However, such consolidation has become more complex since the 1980's, with major consolidation in cropland offset by shifts in grazing and pastureland away from the largest farms and ranches—and with episodes of dramatic change in some livestock sectors, even as we count more small farms. An analysis of farm-level records from USDA's Census of Agriculture and its Agricultural Resource Management Survey allows us to see how consolidation has unfolded.

Consolidation in livestock production follows a different pattern than that in crops. When it has occurred, it has not unfolded at a steady and persistent rate over time. Instead, livestock consolidation proceeded episodically, with periods of sharp change in the size of operations, followed by stability.

Some shifts have been dramatic. For example, the midpoint milk cow herd in 1987 was at 80 cows—half of U.S. milk cows were in herds of at least 80 cows, and half were in herds with no more than 80. By 2012, the midpoint increased more than tenfold, to 900 cows.

Highlights from the article:

- Agriculture production has shifted to larger farms over the last three decades.
- Technology has been the primary driver of this shift, which has been large and widespread across crop and livestock commodities.
- Despite the shift to larger operations, family businesses still dominate U.S. agriculture: consolidation has shifted acreage and production to larger family farms.

The full article is available on the Economic Research Service's [website](http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/). 🐾

Source: USDA. Economic Research Service. Feature: Farm Economy. Available at www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/.