August 1, 2015

To Whom this May Concern,

The village of Cabot has been home to a creamery in continuous operation since 1893 and cooperatively owned since 1919. Cabot Creamery, the flagship operation of the Agri-Mark dairy cooperative, aspires to be an excellent corporate citizen that values our Vermont connections and the communities in which we farm, work and sell products. The well-being of our environment is essential to our success.

A key element of our environmental management program is our stewardship of water resources, including our well-established Land Application Program. This effort, also commonly known as land spreading or land spraying, applies wash water from our creamery to farmers’ fields. Our program has been in place for twenty-five years, dating to 1990, and represents a more regulated version of a successful approach from the Upper Midwest that pre-date Vermont’s program.

Farmers value our Land Application Program both for the addition of nutrients to their fields (reducing purchased fertilizer needs) and for the irrigation. To be an approved field: each farmer must first agree to participate; we must then have a registered engineer conduct an environmental assessment of each field (to assess each field’s assimilative capacity); the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) must then provide final approval for each field. Although less than 5% of total volume, some wash water is also put into farmers’ manure lagoons to balance the moisture level before manure spreading in the springtime.

The wash water that is land-applied is nearly entirely water (over 99%), with less than 1% from dairy nutrients (e.g. whey and other dairy solids) and trace residuals from the cleaning process (we use only food-grade, FDA-approved cleaners/sanitizers). ANR requires rigorous monitoring and testing of groundwater, surface water and of the wash water itself to ensure that application is safe for people and our environment.

Some have suggested that we build a waste treatment plant in Cabot to process our wash water. This scenario was analyzed by ANR over thirty years ago and found to be impossible based on the volume of discharge that would be necessary to the upper Winooski River where our facility is located. ANR found that the river is too small to assimilate this additional discharge and that the practice of land application of wash water was, and still is, a more environmentally sound method of disposal.

Ultimately, a quarter century of monitoring has shown that our Land Application Program is sound and that returning our creamery wash water back into our watersheds through our current program offers an ecologically-proven way to properly handle this water.

On behalf of our farmers and our employees, thank you for your interest in our cooperative and in our award-winning dairy products.

Sincerely,

Edward G. Pcolar, Sr. V.P. Operations