

## No Cow Left Behind: A Cautionary Tale

By Alexandra Miletta and Katherine Morris

In green pastures across the heartland  
Dairy farmers could tell with a glance  
If their cows were unusually skinny  
No prognosis was left up to chance

In time there were remedies  
Recipes tested  
Farmers were trained  
New diets suggested

Despite some progress  
The farmers were concerned  
And did their best to uncover  
What the cows had learned

About eating proper doses  
And grazing in the field  
So that they'd be healthy  
Their stoutness revealed

Then the government issued a warning  
"Our cows are underweight!  
The ones in Europe and Asia  
Get fat at a faster rate!"

Experts jumped into action  
Dairy farmers were urged to comply  
With new strict diet guidelines  
And discouraged from questioning why

A law was passed to move things along  
"No Cow Left Behind!" was its name  
Norms were issue by age and weight  
To ensure all cows' growth was the same

Food was measured in exact proportions  
Cows must be fed in troughs and rows  
Thus ignoring the farmers' wisdom  
For how a scrawny cow grows  
The law had another component

To measure the cows with precision  
The scales must be digitally calibrated  
To accomplish our fattened up vision

The farmers were told to get cows on  
those scales  
Whether they liked it or not  
And to measure the girth of their bellies  
To gather the data they sought

The cows, reluctant and unhappy,  
Attempted to stand on those scales  
They ate the bland diet we fed them  
But hated that stale hay in bales

They remembered the fresh grassy  
pastures  
Where they used to munch and play  
And longed for the freedom of choosing  
How to spend a warm summer's day

Then one night at the dinner table  
Two farm children wondered aloud,  
"Why don't we feed our cows better  
food?  
And not pack them into a crowd?"

We should let them run around  
Enjoy the fresh air outside  
They we'll see how those bellies  
Begin to get really wide!"

So they tested their theory  
Prepared tasty concoctions  
With inventive ingredients  
And culinary options

One day it was oatmeal  
With wheatgrass and soy  
Dinner was crunchier –  
Roasted peanuts and bok choy

The cows on that farm  
Just feasted for weeks  
On exotic combinations  
Like chocolate covered leeks

The children discovered  
A foregone conclusion  
The cows' weight loss crisis  
Was just an illusion

The cows were depressed  
Not too skinny or thin

A variety diet  
Was the way to begin

To lift up their spirits  
Give them lofty ambitions  
The children painted cow portraits  
In full color renditions

They sent them to Washington  
With detailed description  
But the question remains  
Will the politicians listen?

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Illustrations by Chiara Pasqualotto, 2004 (see <http://www.clairepas.it> )



