

## **NEWS BREAK**

**Article: Skagit Valley organic dairy farms hurt by low milk prices**

**Section: NW SUNDAY, B7**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, April 8, 2018** of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

*Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.*

### **Standards:**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1**

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2**

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

### **Objectives:**

Students will read an article about organic dairy farmers in Washington. They will discuss whether their families currently drink regular or organic milk. Students will debate whether they'll want to feed their children regular or organic milk when they become parents? They'll discuss whether the demand for organic produce and products will increase over time and whether they think dairy farmers will be alright and will prices level out over time?

### Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about? Are there clues in the picture? What can you infer?

### Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“The construction was put on hold **indefinitely** after the price of organic milk tanked during the past year and a half, Dykstra said.”

Write your guess and then look up the definition and write it below your guess. How close did you come to the correct definition?

***Indefinitely* Guess:**

***Indefinitely* Definition:**

### **Comprehension Questions:**

1. Dairy farmer Andrew Dykstra, who started working on the family farm in \_\_\_\_\_ said, "There's been hard times before, and here we are."
2. Conventional dairy farms have been struggling for years. Until recently, Dykstra said, it seemed organic dairy farms were somewhat shielded from what?
3. As of 2014, there were \_\_\_\_\_ dairy farms operating in Skagit County, down from 52 in the beginning of 2003, according to statistics compiled by the Washington State University Skagit County Extension. How many were organic?
4. Mount Vernon organic dairy farmer Alan Mesman said the price he's getting for milk from processors has been dropping about a dollar a month for how long?
5. But in stores, consumers don't see the price change, Dykstra said, as the shelf price for organic milk has hardly moved. Organic dairy farmers attribute the price drop to what?
6. In addition to being affected by the surplus of organic milk, organic dairy farmers are also being hurt by the low price of conventional milk. And while milk prices are going down, Mesman said the price of the grain that is fed to the cows is going \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Gordon said much of the price in the state is based on what will be paid by \_\_\_\_\_, a cooperative to which all the organic dairy farms in Skagit County sell their milk.
8. Without organic dairy farms and their need for organic feed, Charlie Dykstra said local organic crop farmers would lose a nutrient-rich crop rotation. What do dairy farmers add to the ground?
9. And Forgues said that as millennials start having children, he expects the demand for organic dairy products to increase. Why?

### **Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:**

- Does your family drink regular or organic milk?
- Is organic better? Why or why not?
- If you drink organic, do you think you'll want to feed your children organic milk when you become parents? Why or why not?
- Do you think the demand for organic produce and products will increase over time? Why or why not?
- Do you think dairy farmers will be alright? Will prices level out?

News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.  
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## **Newsbreak Answer Key: April 8, 2018**

### **Pre-Reading Discussion:**

Answers will vary

### **Vocabulary Building:**

*Indefinitely:* For an unlimited or unspecified period of time.

### **Comprehension Answers:**

1. Second grade
2. The volatility of the conventional market.
3. 29 farms; Five of those are organic, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
4. For the past year and a half.
5. A surplus of organic milk being produced as more dairy farmers have entered the organic market and consumer preferences have changed.

“It’s such a small market that it doesn’t take much to oversupply it,” said Bow organic dairy farmer Dean Wesen.

6. Up
7. Organic Valley
8. Dairy farms play an essential role in Skagit Valley agriculture, Andrew Dykstra said, and a threat to the dairy farms could affect crop farmers.

Dairy farms add nutrients to the ground, Gordon said, which is good for both organic and conventional crop production.

9. “Many millennials grew up with organic and will want their kids to have the same quality dairy, produced by family farms in their region.”

### **Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay**

**Questions:** Answers will vary