



# Milk Money: Cash, Cows, and the Death of the American Dairy Farm

*Kirk Kardashian*

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## **Milk Money: Cash, Cows, and the Death of the American Dairy Farm** Kirk Kardashian

There's something un-American and illogical about a market system where the price of a product bears no relation to the cost of its inputs. Yet we have lived with such a scheme in the dairy industry for decades: retail milk prices have stayed the same, while milk prices paid to farmers have plummeted. The dairy business is at the heart of the culture and economy of Vermont, just as it is of many other states. That fact meant little to Kirk Kardashian until he started taking his daughter to daycare at a dairy farm a few miles from his Vermont home—a farm owned by the same family for generations, but whose owners were now struggling to make ends meet. Suddenly, the abstractions of economics and commodities markets were replaced by the flesh and blood of a farm family whom he greeted every day.

In the tradition of Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser, Kardashian asks whether it is right that family farmers in America should toil so hard, produce a food so wholesome and so popular, and still lose money. This gripping investigation uncovers the hidden forces behind dairy farm consolidation, and explains why milk—a staple commodity subject to both government oversight and industry collusion—has proven so tricky to stabilize. Meanwhile, every year we continue to lose scores of small dairy farms. With passion, wit, and humor, Milk Money shows where we are now, how we got here, and where we might be going.

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