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FarmFirst Applauds Senator Baldwin on DAIRY PRIDE Act

Bill Prompts FDA to Enforce Existing Milk Labeling Standards

Madison, Wis. [January 12, 2017]—FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is pleased to support Senator Tammy Baldwin’s most recent piece of legislation, the DAIRY PRIDE Act which would require that non-dairy products made from nuts, seeds, plants and algae no longer be mislabeled with dairy terms like milk, yogurt and cheese.

“Thank you, Senator Baldwin, for taking the initiative to protect the definition of milk, cheese and yogurt. Your advocacy supports the hard and honest work of dairy farmers in Wisconsin and throughout the nation, and more importantly, supports clear and accurate information to be shared on food labels, something consumers deserve,” said David Cooper, General Manager of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative.

This new legislation also received resounding positive support from dairy farmers across Wisconsin.

“Consumers deserve to be treated with respect and that begins with proper and accurate food labels. Milk is clearly defined by the FDA, and this definition should also be enforced. It’s about time the FDA upheld its responsibility of enforcing existing labeling requirements, especially when it comes to dairy,” said John Rettler of Tin Valley Farms in Neosho, Wis.

“Dairy has built a strong reputation as a reliable source of important nutrients we need daily. To use these dairy terms on plant-based products undermines the real value that dairy provides in the form of naturally occurring Calcium, Vitamin D, Vitamin A among others,” said Janet Clark of Vision Aire Farms in Eldorado, Wis. “Consumers associate dairy with the nutrients they need, and those are naturally occurring in milk from cows.”

“As a proud Wisconsin Dairy Farmer, I support Tammy Baldwin’s efforts to introduce the DAIRY PRIDE Act. I know the economic struggles we dairy farmers face on a daily basis, as I am also an Ag Lender, helping through the low milk prices of 2015 and 2016. We don’t need competition from plant-based drinks being labeled as milk and sending a false message to consumers, and also falsely advertising them as being better than cow’s milk. When compared on nutrients and price, cow’s milk still comes out on

top. I am opposed to all false labeling of food products that aren't true dairy products," said Jim Smidel of Brothers Smidel Farms, LLP in Kewaunee, Wis.

This bill would protect the integrity of milk by requiring foods that make an inaccurate claim about milk contents to be considered "misbranded" and subject to enforcement. The bill would require FDA to issue guidance for nationwide enforcement of the definitions of milk within 90 days. After two years, the FDA would be required to report to Congress and be held accountable for this update in enforcement obligations.

This legislation also comes after dairy products received criticism from the National Academy of Science.

"The timing of this legislation couldn't be better, as the National Academy of Science Committee recently suggested a reduction in the amount of dairy servings recommended for women and children involved in the WIC program, which overall sends a message to other nutrition programs," says Cooper. "Dairy products are rich in nutrients and are an important source of nutrition for children and adults. Hopefully this legislation can serve to remind everyone of the powerful package that dairy provides consumers, in addition to why this clarity needs to be made within the marketplace."

FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is based in Madison, Wis. and represents farms in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana through policy bargaining, dairy marketing services, laboratory testing opportunities and industry promotion.

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