

# MILKLINE

NEWSLETTER



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## Leading with Purpose



As FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative prepares for its 2020 Annual Meeting, I look back on 2019 and can't help but laugh. It was a year full of situations that I had never experienced before. I had never chopped hay with snow on it. I had never dried beans in a corn dryer. And I had never combined corn while simultaneously working up the soil.

All of these situations were moments when I wasn't laughing out of happiness, and I don't care to ever experience them ever again. However, one moment I am happy to have happened? I became a grandpa.

With all the headaches the weather and dairy markets caused, my grandson coming into the world was a very quick reminder to appreciate the moments that really matter. When I look back on 2019, I choose to think of him. Truly, it's

the moments when we have persevered and celebrated moments of happiness that should be defining of our year than the number of challenges we faced.

As farmers, we need to remember the reason why we are in this business. We have to keep that in front of us, that original reason of why we do what we do - why we care for our animals and care for the land.

Most people consider what they do every day to be a job. We also have a way of life.

Dairy farmers get up every day with a purpose. Our responsibilities on the farm certainly give purpose but it's the big picture that drives our passion. We love what we do. We love how every day is different from the last, and we love being able to instill this same passion in the next generation.

As a member of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, take pride in the fact that the cooperative puts the best interests of its members first, in building meaningful programs like our Milk Loss Program due to natural disasters and our new leadership program designed to prepare the next cooperative leaders. 'Leading with Purpose' is not something taken lightly with FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. It means always doing what's in the best interest of our members.

2019 was quite a year. While we were all eager to see that year come to an end, let's make 2020 just as

memorable for all the right reasons. FarmFirst's board of directors and staff look forward to leading with purpose every day, as we continue to serve and support you, our FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative members. 🐮

*Article by John Rettler,  
FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative*

## DATE CORRECTION Official Notice: FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Meeting

Notice is hereby given, by the President and Secretary of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, a regional cooperative with headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin (the "Cooperative"), pursuant to the Cooperative's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and proper actions of the Board of Directors of the Cooperative (the "Board"), that the regular Annual Delegate Member Meeting of the Cooperative will convene at 8:30 a.m., **Saturday, February 15, 2020** at the Premier Best Western Hotel & Convention Center, 1 N. Main Street, Oshkosh, Wis. for and in consideration of action upon any and all matters which may lawfully come before said meeting.

Said meeting will continue until the disposition of all proper business. Dated this 1st day of February, 2020, by: John Rettler, President. 🐮

Dedicated to serving and representing you, our family farm members, FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative represents farms in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana through policy advocacy, dairy marketing services, laboratory testing opportunities and industry promotion.



CONTACT INFORMATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Stanley, Wis. 715-703-0361

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Treasurer: Richard Meyer  
Unity, Wis. 715-223-2058

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Eldorado, Wis. 608-516-8789

Steve Brock - Daggett, Mich. 906-290-1917

Bob Dietzel - East Dubuque, Ill. 563-543-2368

Wayne Gajewski - Athens, Wis. 715-370-5078

Jean Reisinger - Spring Green, Wis. 608-546-6162

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All Dairy Farmers Welcome to Attend  
Producer Discovery Workshops on Feb. 14



FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative welcomes dairy farmers to attend the cooperative's Producer Discovery Workshop series as part of its 2020 Annual Meeting taking place on Friday, February 14, 2020 at the Premier Best Western Hotel & Convention Center in Oshkosh, Wis.

"Opening the doors to our Producer Discovery Workshops allow for more dairy farmers to learn what industry experts have to say about key topics that affect our industry. The more dairy farmers engaging in these thought-provoking discussions ultimately benefits the industry as a whole," says John Rettler, dairy farmer and president of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. "Education is part of the foundation of this cooperative, and we are proud to extend these workshops to all dairy farmers."

'Leading with Purpose' is the 2020 Annual Meeting theme, featuring workshop topics that reflect the cooperative's proactive approach in seeking continued improvements in the 2018 Farm Bill's dairy safety net, known as the Dairy Margin Coverage program, and learning more about evolving consumer trends and challenges facing the demand for dairy in the future.



The first Producer Discovery Workshop kicks off at 1:15 p.m. 'The Impact of Dairy Policy in 2020,' features Dr. Mark Stephenson from UW-Madison's Center for Dairy Profitability as he shares how the Dairy Margin Coverage program proved to be profitable for participants in 2019 in addition to exploring current legislative, regulatory and trade issues and their potential impact on milk prices into 2020 and beyond.



The second workshop 'Dairy Evolutions & Revolutions,' begins at 2:45 p.m. and features Katie Burgess, a Commodity Risk Analyst from Blimling & Associates, sharing what advances in technology and evolving consumer preferences have created a new upheaval - with online groceries, dynamic discounters and tricked out convenience stores.

Workshop attendees will learn some of the latest trends that are changing the way consumers shop and interact within the marketplace.

"Some of the hottest topics among dairy farmers are improving dairy pricing mechanisms and connecting with consumers. Our workshop series focuses on these key topics, giving dairy farmers plenty to think about as we head into 2020," says Rettler. "FarmFirst leads with purpose every day, and this year's annual meeting is just another example of that."

There is no cost to attend, however attendees are asked to make reservations to ensure sufficient seating. Call Julie at 608-286-1909 by February 13 to make a reservation. For more information about FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative's 8th Annual Meeting and to learn more about guest speakers, please visit www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com.

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FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com

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www.facebook.com/FarmFirstDairyCooperative

## FarmFirst Applauds USMCA Signing by President Trump



FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative applauds the signing of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) by President Donald Trump on January 29.

Since the trade talks started, FarmFirst has been engaged on advocating for key provisions to be included in the trade agreement. President John Rettler shared comments following the president signing the trade agreement into law.

“This is great news for U.S. dairy farmers. It is no secret that Mexico is a top dairy export country, and this agreement will allow that trade relationship to continue to flourish. Additionally, this trade agreement also expands market access for U.S. dairy products into Canada, a market opportunity that has long been restricted to U.S. dairy. It was no small feat in getting this trade agreement across the finish line. We are elated to see this agreement receive the President’s signature today.”

This new, modern trade agreement champions key provisions for U.S. dairy farmers including increasing market access into

Canada, addressing the class 6 and 7 pricing distortion issues, and maintaining quality trade with Mexico. Additionally, this agreement also establishes new protections for products that rely on common cheese names, such as parmesan and feta.

While the signing marks the end of the political battle in the U.S. for USMCA, it will be several more months before the terms of the agreement are fully implemented. Canada’s parliament must still ratify the pact, which is expected to happen by early spring. After that step, the three countries must address all of the implementation obligations outlined in the deal before the USMCA can take effect. Once the nations have completed those procedures, they must exchange letters with each other to complete the notification process, with the deal going into effect 60 days later.

Now that the trade agreement has received the president’s signature, it is up to our trade ambassadors to ensure this agreement is fully implemented to its full potential. FarmFirst will be monitoring and providing input to make sure the implementation of this agreement to ensure that U.S. dairy is reaping the full benefits from this hard-won trade deal. Its passage is important, but it is just as important to follow through on being fully implemented in both spirit and letter.

U.S. dairy exports are expected to increase by more than \$314 million a year, according to the International Trade Commission. 🇺🇸

## Final Waters of the U.S. Rule Released

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Army Corp of Engineers released a new final Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule on January 23, 2020. This action puts an end to years of contentious rulemaking and will provide a common-sense approach to regulating waters of the U.S.

On Oct. 22, 2019, the EPA and the Department of the Army published a final rule to repeal the 2015 Clean Water Rule: Definition of “Waters of the United States” to restore regulatory text that existed prior to the 2015 Rule. That final rule became effective Dec. 23.

In the interim between repealing the 2015 Rule and introducing a new one, the agencies implemented pre-2015 Rule regulations, as informed by applicable agency guidance documents and consistent with Supreme Court decisions and longstanding agency practice. This action was a temporary fix as the agencies continued their work in crafting the latest WOTUS rule now in place today.

The National Milk Producers Federation has engaged with EPA on this issue for years, in meetings and in numerous written



comments, seeking improvements to the 1986 WOTUS rule, which lacked clarity for farmers. While NMPF will need to carefully review this new rule, overall the proposed rule is believed to provide much-needed clarity and not infringe on the rights and responsibilities of state jurisdictions.

FarmFirst is encouraged by the final rule regarding WOTUS which will hopefully bring clarity and more stability. This revised approach establishes tighter limits around the power of the EPA to define waterways. 🇺🇸



## FarmFirst Sponsorships Available for PDPW Workshops & Events




The winter months can be a great time for learning and preparing for the year ahead. FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is proud to promote the educational programs offered through the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW). With extensive and diverse list of programs available year round, here are few FarmFirst is able to provide sponsorships to.

**PDPW Business Conference, held at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wis. on March 18-19**, is the premier educational event for the dairy industry where active dairy farmers and agribusiness professionals from across the country and globe assemble for the latest in research, innovations and education. Attendees can expect best-in-class keynote speakers and breakout sessions focused on pressing industry topics, as well as engaging small-group learning lounge sessions, previews of new industry research, and hands-on workshops.

**PDPW Stride - A Step Into Student Leadership, held April 4-5** in Juneau, Wis. is a brand new program designed for high school students ready to explore the next level in leadership, science, technology, communications, their career, networking, and other critical skills as your student takes steps towards higher education and their career.

**PDPW Agricultural Community Engagement (ACE) Meeting, held April 14** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Madison, Wis. will bring together dairy and livestock farmers, community leaders, elected officials and conservation officials who want to grow strong vibrant communities. Join in on this meeting focused on topics that impact the day-to-day lives of dairy farmers, including transportation, the environment, education and more.

Interested in attending a PDPW workshop, conference or webinar? Sponsorships are available through FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative! Simply call Julie at 608-286-1909 to learn more and to get registered. 

## FarmFirst Urges Congress to Pass DAIRY PRIDE Act



FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is calling on Congress to pass the DAIRY PRIDE Act soon and make providing

clarity to consumers in the dairy case a priority.


"Today's consumers are inundated with ads and sales pitches, especially when it comes to purchasing products that support a healthy lifestyle and provide quality nutrition. Imitators of real dairy products are no exception to portraying themselves in this light, although they pale in comparison to the nutrition package and overall taste profile that real dairy provides," says John Rettler, dairy farmer from Neosho, Wis. and president of FarmFirst.

Echoing the same concerns that NMPF's Executive Vice President Tom Balmer presented on January 29 to the House Energy & Commerce's Committee subcommittee on Health, FarmFirst asks for Congress to put consumers as their priority.

"Consumers are being clearly misguided when a product uses the word 'milk' on its packaging and completely lacks the

properties of milk's nutrition, taste profile, and overall simplicity of a naturally-produced product. The ingredient list couldn't be simpler: milk. No stabilizers, no emulsifiers, no blending, no powders, no whiteners, and no sweeteners. Just real milk," adds Rettler.

While federal guidelines make it clear that a product labeled with 'milk' must come from a cow or certain other lactating animals, the FDA has failed to enact these regulations. The DAIRY PRIDE Act would designate foods that make an inaccurate claim about milk contents as "misbranded" and subject to enforcement of labeling rules. It would require FDA to issue guidance for nationwide enforcement of mislabeled imitation dairy products within 90 days of its passage and require FDA to report to Congress two years after enactment to hold the agency accountable in its enforcement. The legislation would force FDA to act against plant-based imitators of milk, cheese, butter and other products that brazenly flout FDA rules.

"The DAIRY PRIDE Act would allow for much needed clarity in the dairy case and remind consumers that often substitutes just can't compare. This issue has gone on far too long, and its truly American consumers that continue to be misguided. FarmFirst urges Congress to pass this legislation as soon as possible and require the FDA to enact a regulation they've ignored," says Jeff Lyon, general manager of FarmFirst. "We give special thanks to Senator Baldwin (D-WI) for taking the leadership on this important issue along with the other congressional leaders taking the health of today's consumers seriously." 

## Youth Corner 2020 Scholarship Applications Available



Scholarship applications are available once again for the 2020 FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative scholarship program. The application deadline is **March 31,**

**2020.** Please review the application for student eligibility and criteria. Applications are available online at [www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com](http://www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com) or by calling 608-286-1909.

**Use the online application for an easy and quick submission process!** Applicants can once again submit their application directly online via our online submission form. Printed and completed applications are also accepted. Visit [www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com/scholarships](http://www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com/scholarships) to access the form. Please confirm receipt of your application. **Don't delay! Apply Today!** 🇺🇸

## Member Appreciation Breakfast During Central Plains Dairy Expo



FarmFirst members are invited to attend a member appreciation breakfast taking

place on Thursday, March 26 at the Crooked Pint Ale House (located within the Holiday Inn) at 2040 W. Russell Street, Sioux Falls, SD.

Members are welcome to enjoy a warm, delicious breakfast being served from 7:00 a.m. until 8:15 a.m. while visiting with General Manager Jeff Lyon. No formal presentation is included, however Jeff and Field Representative Betty Lund will be present to visit with members about membership opportunities, disaster programs, and hear first-hand of their outlook for 2020.

Members in attendance will also receive a special FarmFirst item. Make your reservations today! Reservations allow for a more accurate meal count. Call Betty at 715-491-9119 today! 🇺🇸

## Featured FarmFirst Member Benefit: Milk Loss Program



Among the many advantages FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative provides to members, the Milk Loss Program is near the top of the list. Members may receive financial assistance when they experience milk income loss due to a variety of situations through no fault of their own, including:

- Loss due to electrocution or lightning
- Loss of electric power
- Loss due to impassable roads due to snow or flooding
- Loss by fire or windstorm



A few changes have been made to the program to provide more disaster coverage including:

- Coverage for snow-covered roofs collapsing due to a snow incidence
- One-day storage is no longer required



In recent years, the program has provided payments to several members during winter months following significant snowstorms. A snowstorm in February 2019 resulted in more than \$45,000 being paid to members in Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The year

prior, the April 2018 snowstorm resulted in 19 FarmFirst members receiving payments, paying a total of \$29,381 following that spring snowstorm.

This disaster benefits program is a unique benefit to FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative members; not many cooperative programs offer such a program to their members in their time of need.

"We always have and always will continue to advocate for our members, especially for stronger dairy policies that support their dairies," says Jeff Lyon, General Manager of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. "Dairy farmers need their cooperative to look out for them, and we believe that FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative continues to put members' best interests first. During these weather-related disasters, we are glad that we can provide some support and relief."

More information about FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative's Milk Loss Program is available at [www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com](http://www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com). For any situation-specific questions, please contact your field representative or the FarmFirst office. 🇺🇸



Visit us at an  
Upcoming  
Tradeshaw!



Marshfield Farm Show, Marshfield, WI - February 19-20

Eau Claire Farm Show, Eau Claire, WI - March 3-4

PDPW Annual Business Conference, Madison, WI - March 18-19

Central Plains Dairy Expo, Sioux Falls, SD - March 24-26

Wisconsin Public Service Farm Show, Oshkosh, WI - March 31 - April 2

# DECEMBER 2019

	UPPER MIDWEST	CENTRAL	MIDEAST
Order Name and Number	Order 30	Order 32	Order 33
Producer Milk (lbs.)	1,798,253,969	1,046,576,843	1,529,217,740
Producer Price Differential @ base zone	\$ -0.40	\$ -1.29	\$ -0.93
Statistical Uniform Price/cwt @ 3.5% BF*	\$ 18.97	\$ 18.08	\$ 18.44
Class I Price/cwt	\$ 21.13	\$ 21.33	\$ 21.33
Class II Price/cwt	\$ 16.81	\$ 16.81	\$ 16.81
Class III Price/cwt	\$ 19.37	\$ 19.37	\$ 19.37
Class IV Price/cwt	\$ 16.70	\$ 16.70	\$ 16.70
<b>Component Prices &amp; Test Avg. % aves</b>			
Butterfat/lb.	\$ 2.1952	4.03%	4.07%
Protein/lb.	\$ 3.6515	3.22%	3.30%
Other Solids/lb.	\$ 0.13410	5.74%	5.78%
SCC Adjust Rate/1000	\$ 0.00103		
<b>Producer Milk Classified %</b>			
Class I	12.90%	37.62%	37.30%
Class II	8.70%	11.70%	18.70%
Class III	69.90%	21.74%	23.30%
Class IV	8.50%	28.94%	20.70%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%



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Attend our 2020  
Producer Discovery Workshops -  
Free to All Dairy Farmers!

## Welcome New Members

We would like to welcome these individuals and farms that have joined FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative recently.

We look forward to your participation and involvement in the programs and services of your cooperative where we put members first.

Ver-Jan Acres, Inc

Earl & Marilyn Van Ruiswijk

Aaron Moeller

Kris Garbrecht

Tribune Dairy LLC

William Gudex

Dwight Nolt

Elias & Annetta Fox

Darin & Elaine Leffel

Kyle Shirk

Mark Michel

Kurt Schneider

Leon Spranger

Matt Strief

Theodore Behake

Patrick & Beth Philips



## Sign up for the FarmFirst E-Newsletter!

Don't miss out on receiving industry news and cooperative updates! Submit your email by calling 608-286-1909 or emailing [info@farmfirstcoop.com](mailto:info@farmfirstcoop.com).