

MILKLINE

NEWSLETTER



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Be A Positive Influence



Surely, a lot has changed over the past several years, but certainly **a lot** has changed in the past year too. I believe that I've always been aware of my surroundings and how things change. Yet, I feel that we are in unprecedented times, and it makes me appreciate what I once took for granted.

For example, these days I realize how grateful I am to see the milk truck arrive in my driveway every day. He has always shown up, but in today's world, I realize his dedication is going to be hard to replace. My milk truck driver is Shannon, and his workday begins at 10 p.m. in the evening, and he works until 2 p.m. in the afternoon. He only gets every other weekend off, and also digs graves on the side. He is great to talk to, has a great perspective on life, but he is nearing retirement age, and I am afraid of who they can even fathom will

be able to replace him.

I know the labor shortage is hitting the dairy industry, and I'm afraid of how it may impact milk hauling.

This is a great example of how, as a dairy farmer, my concerns have changed. I still am prioritizing work on the farm, but now there are new concerns, like feeling secure with my milk hauler. Wondering how my expenses will increase beyond my control. Or wondering if a shortage on tractor or implement parts will keep me from getting fieldwork done.

I remember when you walked into an implement dealer. They either told you the part you're looking for is either right here or it hasn't arrived yet. Then the era came when they could track your parts while they were being shipped, and they could tell you exactly where they were. Now, when you go into the implement dealer, they say that your parts are sitting on a cargo ship, sitting in the ocean and will hopefully get unloaded sometime in the next week or two. I would rather get back to the day when they just didn't know where they were!

I can honestly say that I took it for granted, that when I ordered something, it would arrive in a reasonable amount of time, within the week usually, or that parts were in stock and equipment could get fixed so I could get back to work. Because that's what we do as dairy farmers – we work and get it done.

We didn't know it at the time, but we

were living in great times. Committed milk haulers. On-time deliveries. Manageable margins.

Now, I don't want to paint a picture of just doom and gloom. I think learning more about what is impacting our industry as a whole is making us smarter and more aware. Because of this, we can take that information and do something about it.

Being a member of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, you are part of an organization dedicated to improving your ability to dairy farm, and your participation here today allows your voice to be heard.

In order to make positive changes, especially in the dairy industry, it is vital to understand why certain issues exist and what solutions are possible. I want to encourage you to know that you can be a positive influence on things that matter to you.

But it may take time and endless persistence. It will take an investment in learning and taking the time to listen to others.

As a member of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, you are choosing to be a member that makes the difference.

Let's make the future better today. By working together, let's improve dairy farming for generations to come by being a positive influence on the world around us today. 🐮

*Article by John Rettler,
 FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative*

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.

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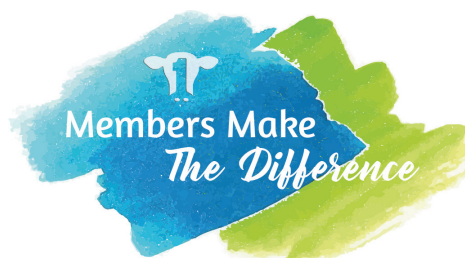
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FarmFirst Celebrates 11th Annual Meeting with 'Members Make the Difference'



FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative members and delegates gathered at the cooperative's 11th annual meeting on February 10-11, 2023 in Stevens Point, Wis. The event highlighted important industry topics, including sustainability initiatives by farmers and processors, state legislative budget issues relevant to agriculture, the cooperative's

resolution session and a member panel featuring impactful leaders within the organization.

The Producer Discovery Workshops kicked off Friday afternoon, featuring Jennifer Block, the Senior Vice President of Dairy Community Relations at the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, who shared how U.S. dairy is involved in the sustainability conversation. While concern for global sustainability issues continue to grow, the team at the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy advocates on behalf of dairy farmers to showcase how farmers have shared priorities when it comes to the environment, and dairy is a relevant and credible solution for a more sustainable future. Building trust and increasing consumer confidence in this industry-wide sustainability platform is the center's top priority.



The second workshop focused on state legislative issues and featured Jennifer Wickman, the Wisconsin Government Affairs Director for Cooperative Network, which advocates for cooperatives and their members in the state capitols of Wisconsin and Minnesota. State budgets are the primary focus in 2023, and Cooperative Network is working to ensure there is adequate and increased funding for producer-led watershed grants, cover crop insurance, nitrogen optimization grant program, dairy processor grants, ag imports, farmland preservation, and the Wisconsin

commodity food bank.

At the cooperative's business meeting the next day, President John Rettler, Tin Valley Farm of Neosho, Wis. reflected on how dairy farmers have faced unique challenges and will continue to persevere in spite of them. The past year showcased how labor shortages are not only impacting dairy farms, but also processors and milk haulers, coupled with challenges throughout the entire supply chain. He shared how inspiring FarmFirst



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Dairy Reductions Being Considered in Nutrition Programs, Action Needed




As the USDA considers slimming down the dairy portion of the WIC program, supporters in the dairy community need to express their concerns about the Agriculture Department's

proposal. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) enhances the quality of program participants' diets and health, and dairy has always been a cornerstone of the WIC program because milk and dairy foods

provide 13 essential nutrients.

In November 2022, USDA published a proposed rule intended to align the foods provided through WIC more closely with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). The proposed rule emphasized balancing food options, promoting nutrition security and equity, and program administration considerations.

Even though nearly 90% of Americans do not meet DGA dairy intake recommendations, and even though dairy's nutrients are vital for the health and development of WIC participants during the life stages covered by the program, the rule proposed a reduction in the amount of foods in the "milk" category, which includes fluid milk, cheese, and yogurt.

FarmFirst encourages members to contact their Congressional representatives and advocate for dairy as a fundamental piece of the WIC program that dairy should not be reduced in any fashion. 


U.S. Dairy Exports Reached Record in 2022

In January, the FarmFirst Board of Directors visited with Will Loux, Vice President of Global Economic Affairs for NMPF and the U.S. Dairy Export Council. He shared the accomplishments of dairy trade from 2022 and a trade outlook for 2023. For the third consecutive year, U.S. dairy exporters have achieved a record level of foreign sales, again demonstrating the commitment that our farmers, as well as U.S. cooperatives, processors and traders have to the export category.

U.S. dairy suppliers exported 2.4 million metric tons, milk solids equivalent, up 5% from 2021. Export volume in 2022 was equivalent to 18% of U.S. milk produced last year, also an all-time high. Export value finished the year up 25% to \$9.6 billion—the first time it has crossed the \$9 billion level. Special recognition should be given to the team at the U.S. Dairy Export Council, as well as the NMPF trade policy team, for collaborating on the many steps it takes to make the U.S. a major player in global dairy sales. 



Special Thanks to our 2023 Annual Meeting Sponsors

FarmFirst would like to thank this year's Emerald sponsors including Charm Sciences, CoBank, Compeer Financial, Cooperative Network, Dairy Management Inc., Elevity, M3 Insurance, StoneX, The Keller Group | Northwest Mutual, Wisconsin Beef Council and the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium as well as these Platinum sponsors featured here for their support of the cooperative. Thank you! 



FarmFirst Celebrates 11th Annual Meeting with 'Members Make the Difference' *Continued from Page 2*

members are for being involved and raising their voice on issues important to them as they advocate for change. Because FarmFirst members care to make a difference for the better of their dairy community, locally and nationally, they are part of the solution in making a bright future for today's youngest dairy men and women.



During the resolution session, delegates reiterated their support for dairy farmers to receive a fair price for their production and to have federal programs more accurately account for feed supplementation costs. Delegates shared in their opposition to federal nutrition programs restricting milk and dairy product purchases due to naturally occurring fat, sugar,

and sodium levels. Delegates reiterated their support against any unnecessary environmental regulation on farmers, in addition to supporting programs that adequately compensate dairy farmers for complying with rules and regulations surrounding greenhouse gas emissions.

General Manager Jeff Lyon shared his thoughts on the strength, resilience, and influence of FarmFirst members, when faced with challenges. He noted that the industry is evolving and members have evolved with it and need to be devoted to the greater good, passionate, become knowledgeable about the issues and be highly regarded in their communities to be effective. He stressed the importance of members believing in themselves as leaders and that they have the ability to improve the industry.



Lyon shared an update on various federal legislative priorities including potential improvements to the 2023 Farm Bill, sustainability opportunities and modernizing Federal Milk Marketing Orders. FarmFirst will continue to advocate for free trade agreements that are favorable to U.S. dairy, push back against changes to rules related to the Waters of the U.S., advocate for Ag Guest Worker reform, dairy nutritional standards and dairy labeling.

The annual business meeting concluded with a special panel featuring four cooperative members taking on additional leadership roles. Janet Clark of Vision Aire Farms from Rosendale, Wis. shared how her interests and concerns as a young mom and dairy farmer led her to become more involved in the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW) and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW). Her involvement there has helped her to better understand how dairy checkoff dollars are




being used to advance and promote dairy products while also building a strong foundation

for today's dairy farmers. Nathan Wiese of Wiese Dairy in Rosendale, Wis. shared how his involvement in the Young Cooperator program has been inspiring and eye-opening as he met with legislators and raised concerns to them about pending dairy policies. Mike Paulus of Paulus Dairy in Fredonia, Wis. gave first-hand perspective on his experience serving on the Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Animal Health and Well-Being Committee, noting that if dairy farmers want to make changes, they need to speak up and participate, and that understanding the process will help them be more effective in making changes. Doug Danielson of DanAnn Dairy in Cadott, Wis. highlighted his experience serving on the Center for Dairy Research (CDR) committee through DFW, and how participating in that role led him to learn so much more about the center's impact on the industry and allow him to provide direction as a dairy farmer involved in checkoff. This member panel fully embodied the annual meeting's theme of Members Make the Difference.

During its awards program, the cooperative recognized its 2022 scholarship recipients with several in attendance that shared their career aspirations and gratitude for the cooperative's support of their education. Awards were also given to the top milk quality producers within the Family Dairies USA milk marketing division. Staff member, Brandon Flasch (10 years) and board members Brian Wozniak (8 years) and Richard Meyer (25 years) were recognized for their career milestones and contributions to the cooperative.

As part of the annual event, a live and silent auction were hosted to help raise funds for youth educational programming. This year's live and silent auction raised more than \$5,000 for youth education, including college scholarships and dairy camp sponsorships.

Following the meeting, John Rettler of Neosho, Wis. was re-elected president of the FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative's board of directors. Other officers elected were Steve Brock of Daggett, Mich. to serve as vice-president, Stephanie Hughes of Pittsville, Wis. as secretary, and Bob Dietzel of East Dubuque, Ill. as treasurer. Newly elected to serve as the District 7 Director is Michelle Popp of Unity, Wis. and Jacqueline Holub of Boyd, Wis. to serve as District 8 Director. Tony Schmitz of Fond du Lac, Wis. was elected by the Young Cooperators Steering Committee to serve as Chair, and Nathan Wiese as Vice-Chair, who will represent the Young Cooperators on the board of directors. 

Welcoming New Faces to Member Services Team

Zeleske, Hodgson Retire as Grzywinski, Walker Join FarmFirst as Field Representatives

Two new faces have joined FarmFirst's Members Services Division with two of our long-time staff members looking forward to retirement.



Barb Grzywinski joined the cooperative staff as a Member Services Field Representative on January 30. She is based out of Fond du Lac and will be serving members throughout Central and Eastern Wisconsin. Barb worked previously as a dairy nutritionist for a feed mill based in Manitowoc, Wis. and has also worked for a short time as a herd manager.

With a passion for dairy and agricultural literacy, Barb is involved in several county agricultural organizations including the Fond du Lac Agribusiness Council and is currently the chair for the Fond du Lac County Breakfast on the Farm.

Her passion to promote agriculture resonates in the excitement she has for her new position at FarmFirst. "I am most excited to continue working with farmers - it's the best part of my job to work with and support them with the cooperative's programs and services," says Barb. Indeed, advocating on behalf of farmers has become second nature. "Farmers have a great story to tell, and I want to help share that message with non-farm families how we are doing the best we can with our land and animals to ensure a high-quality, healthy product."



As Barb joins the team, we also congratulate long-time staff member Dan Zeleske on his retirement. Dan began his career as a test-verification field representative more than 36 years ago when he first joined the Milwaukee Cooperative Milk Producers. In 1986, he joined the Manitowoc Milk Producers Cooperative and then continued through

the merger of the three cooperatives to form FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative in 2013.

"You might call me old-fashioned, but even as it becomes the norm to connect digitally or online, I find it more important than ever to connect in person with members. I am grateful to have spent my career connecting with members and building relationships, and I consider many dairy farmers my friends," says Dan of his career at the cooperative.



Abby Walker joined the cooperative staff as a Member Services Field Representative on February 14 and will be serving the Southwest Wisconsin, Illinois, and Eastern Iowa membership region. Headquartered out of Lancaster, Wis. Abby brings her experience of working in various roles on a dairy farm and the past four years of serving as an

independent dairy nutritionist. She is also active as a member of the Grant County Dairy Promotion Committee.

Working for dairy farmers is nothing new to Abby, however she is eager to begin connecting with members in her area

and to promote the cooperative's program and services. "I am excited to work with dairy farmers and to play a bigger role in the industry. I truly love dairy and agriculture in general as it seems like this position is more than a job but a way of life, and everyone involved in dairy wants to see everyone succeed. Even though the industry is very large, it is like a tight-knit, small community," says Abby.



As the staff member with the longest tenure of the cooperative team, Bob Hodgson celebrated his 38th year with the cooperative as he welcomes retirement. Bob began as a field representative in September of 1985 as a member of the Family Dairies USA team and has continued to serve dairy farmers and plant processors across Wisconsin,

Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. He has seen the cooperative grow and evolve for nearly four decades. His career helped fuel his passion for high-quality cheese, and Bob and his wife Bev became known as 'Cheese Bob and the Cheese Lady' when visiting friends or family as they always brought cheese to share.

"The ride is coming to an end. I've met so many great people at farms and cheese plants spreading from Wisconsin to the UP of Michigan; to South Dakota and in between. Many are close friends today. It's been my whole life and will continue to be as Bev and I go on vacation. All we do is stop at cheese plants along the way to see old friends and buy good cheese! I wish Abby good luck and hopefully can have a successful career like I did," says Bob, reflecting on his career.

Welcome to the FarmFirst Member Services team, Barb and Abby! And congratulations on retirement, Dan and Bob! 🎉

2023 Scholarship Applications Due March 31



Scholarship applications are available once again for the 2023 FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative scholarship program. The

application deadline is **March 31, 2023.**

Please review the application for student eligibility and criteria, and ensure all pieces of the application are submitted. Applications are available online at 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. Visit www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com/scholarships to access the online form. Please confirm receipt of your application. Printed copies must be received or postmarked by March 31, 2023 to be considered. 🎉

JANUARY 2023

	UPPER MIDWEST	CENTRAL	MIDEAST	
Order Name and Number	Order 30	Order 32	Order 33	
Producer Milk (lbs.)	3,078,254,414	1,460,300,955	1,481,563,992	
Producer Price Differential @ base zone	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.80	\$ 1.39	
Statistical Uniform Price/cwt @ 3.5% BF*	\$ 19.68	\$ 20.23	\$ 20.82	
Class I Price/cwt	\$ 24.21	\$ 24.41	\$ 24.41	
Class II Price/cwt	\$ 21.61	\$ 21.61	\$ 21.61	
Class III Price/cwt	\$ 19.43	\$ 19.43	\$ 19.43	
Class IV Price/cwt	\$ 20.01	\$ 20.01	\$ 20.01	
Component Prices & Test Avg. % aves				
Butterfat/lb.	\$ 2.7713	4.26%	4.25%	4.11%
Protein/lb.	\$ 2.8058	3.29%	3.36%	3.27%
Other Solids/lb.	\$ 0.23430	5.76%	5.78%	5.78%
SCC Adjust Rate/1000	\$ 0.00099			
Producer Milk Classified %				
Class I	5.60%	26.52%	37.10%	
Class II	0.90%	6.42%	6.50%	
Class III	93.00%	49.47%	47.60%	
Class IV	0.50%	17.59%	8.90%	
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	



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**FarmFirst 2023 Scholarship
Applications Due March 31**

**Join Us for
Happy
Hour**



**Tuesday, March 28
4:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Denny Sanford Center
Hospitality Rooms 6 & 7**



Enjoy a casual atmosphere with
drinks and appetizers along with
good camaraderie leading up to
Tuesday's entertainment at 7 p.m.

Members
will receive
FarmFirst
apparel.

