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

Delegates, Members Gathered for Cooperative Annual Meeting

Madison, Wis. [February 13, 2023] – 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 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.

FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative, established in 2013 and based in Madison, Wis., represents farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana by providing legislative and regulatory advocacy, dairy marketing services, disaster protection, laboratory testing opportunities and industry promotion. Learn more about FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative by visiting: www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com.

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