

# MILKLINE

NEWSLETTER

**FARM FIRST**  
DAIRY COOPERATIVE

**HIGHLIGHTS:** *Sarbacker New Director of Communications and Marketing* p 2  
*FarmFirst 2023 Priority Issues* p 3

*FarmFirst Sets 2023 Priorities* p 3  
*Hodgson, Members Awarded* p 3

*US Dairy Climate Collaboration* p 5  
*May is Beef Month* p 6

## Advocacy in Action



There was no shortage of critical agricultural issues to discuss at Cooperative Network's Wisconsin Coop Day at the Capitol held on April 18.

FarmFirst member Abby Swan from Westfield and I joined cooperative representatives from the dairy and farm supply sector, mutual insurance companies, health care, credit unions, and electricity generation to meet with legislative leaders.

Priorities specific to agriculture that we addressed included:

**Support for the Ag Road Improvement Program** - a \$150M program that is targeted toward repairing local roads and bridges. The ARIP is being led by Senator Howard Marklein and Representative Travis Tranel.

### Support for Seasonal Farm

**Service CDLs** - Legislation has been introduced by Representative Jon Plumer (AB74) and Senator Cory Tomczyk (SB66) that would have Wisconsin match federal law and increase the use of farm service CDLs from 180 days to 210 days in a calendar year.

### Support for Producer-led Watershed & Climate Change Projects

Producer-led programs are the most effective way to implement sustainable practices that protect the environment as well as the long-term economic needs of agricultural producers. We asked for increased funding for DATCP's Nitrogen Optimization Grant Program to \$2M as well as increased funding for DATCP's producer-led watershed program.

### Support for Dairy & Export

**Development** - The DACTP Dairy Processor Grant program supports industry innovation and last year businesses applied for funding totaling \$1.7 million. We asked that funding for this program be increased to \$2 million over the biennium. Similarly, the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports has proven to be a valuable program that has increased dairy exports by 37.7 percent in 2022. We asked that funding for this program be increased and streamlined so that it is allocated with the budget and doesn't have to be approved on an annual basis.

**Support for Badger Box** - Over the past two years, DATCP has created and administered a state commodity food purchasing program to supply Wisconsin foodbanks with Wisconsin commodities. This program was funded with federal monies during the COVID pandemic. We asked for continued support at \$20 million over the biennium to continue the partnership between DATCP, food banks and pantries, and Wisconsin agricultural producers and processors.

Other priorities that all cooperative sectors discussed included the challenge of finding and hiring skilled workers. We stressed that workforce development should be a key focus of the state budget and legislative efforts in 2023 and to pursue various strategies.

Further, we also asked legislators to support elimination of the Personal Property Tax, a \$250 million dollar tax and put those funds back into Wisconsin's economy. This priority had support from both Democrats and Republicans.

Lastly, we expressed our support for continued funding to bring broadband to rural Wisconsin. We pointed out that cooperatives (telephone and electric) account for the majority of grants awarded in the recent \$100 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). However, there are still more than 600,000 households in the state that do not have high speed internet.

*Continued on Page 5...*

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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**Sarah Sarbacher Welcomed as Director of Communications and Marketing**



FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is pleased to welcome Sarah Sarbacher as Director of Communications and Marketing.

Raised on a dairy farm in southcentral Wisconsin, she has always had a passion for agriculture – particularly the dairy industry. “I am looking forward to working for an organization whose mission and values align with my own passion for the dairy industry,” says Sarbacher. “It will be a privilege to work with and promote the services and advocacy that FarmFirst provides its members.”

Sarbacher comes to FarmFirst from Boviteq, a bovine IVF company and division of Semex, where she served as the Client Service Supervisor for North America. Prior to her role with Boviteq, she worked in various areas of agriculture throughout her career including positions with US Livestock Genetics Export, Compeer Financial, Minitube, and Agri-View Newspaper.

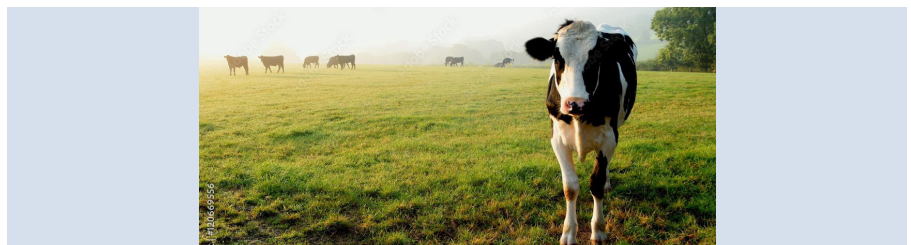
In her role as Director of Communications and Marketing, Sarbacher will oversee and implement all marketing, communications and public relations efforts to promote the services and programs that FarmFirst provides to members.

“Sarah brings a strong dairy background and professional versatility gained from her 20-year career in the agriculture industry,” said Jeff Lyon, General Manager of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. “We are excited to have her join us and feel that her skills and experience will be a great addition to our team.”


As the cooperative welcomes Sarah to the team, FarmFirst also wishes past Director of Communications & Marketing Julie Sweney well on her new endeavor, as she has accepted the position of Executive Director at the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC), which she began on March 6. Sweney had been a part of the cooperative team since January of 2014 as she developed membership communications, promoted the cooperative brands, elevated members voices through policy statements and advocacy efforts, and was instrumental in building the foundation of the Young Cooperator program.

“It has been such a rewarding experience to work for dairy farmers from across the Upper Midwest. Growing up on a dairy farm and still being active in my family’s farm today, I know first-hand the dedication and hard work dairy farmers have in order to take on the risks and challenges they do,” says Sweney. “I am still working on behalf of dairy farmers as it relates to animal disease traceability and will forever be grateful for the opportunity I had to work with and alongside so many great farmer leaders.”

“I will be forever grateful for all the help and support Julie gave me when I came to FarmFirst five years ago,” says FarmFirst General Manager, Jeff Lyon. “Julie had an understanding of nearly every aspect of our programs and services and knew so many members. I wish her all the best at WLIC and future endeavors.”



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## FarmFirst Sets Policy Priorities for 2023

In March, the FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative Board of Directors reviewed and identified the top priority issues that the cooperative will focus on with its advocacy efforts for 2023.

**Federal Order Modernization** - With the anticipation of a national hearing, FarmFirst will be engaged on all issues related to Federal Milk Marketing Orders to make sure there is shared benefits for dairy farmers and their processors when the national hearing is considered.

**2023 Farm Bill** - Discussions are underway, and FarmFirst will remain engaged on the Dairy Title, specifically on changes to enhance the Dairy Margin Coverage program, to make sure it remains an effective safety net for dairy farmers.

**International Trade** - Advocating for comprehensive trade agreements that will allow for increased market access that do not sacrifice dairy interests for gains by other industries or agriculture commodities and also the implementation of current trade agreements.

**Dairy Labeling** - FarmFirst will continue to advocate to have the Food & Drug Administration enforce its existing standards with respect to the definition of milk and other dairy related terms so plant-based, cell-based, lab-grown, and products cannot capitalize on dairy's great reputation and nutritional quality. In addition, FarmFirst will work for passage of the Dairy Pride Act.

**Environment** - Support climate smart policies that recognize the contributions dairy farmers have already made to reduce their carbon footprint and advocate for policies that will adequately compensate dairy farmers for their conservation, nutrient management, and soil health improvement efforts. Further, FarmFirst will continue to support the implementation of rules based on a clear, consistent, and reasonable definition of what constitutes Waters of the United States.

**Agriculture Labor Reform** - Advocating for policies to ensure there is a reliable, consistent, and legal workforce for the dairy industry for years to come.

**Consumer Confidence** - Continue to share the story on how farmers take care of the health and well-being of their animals and ensure the safety of the milk supply.

**Consumer & Childhood Nutrition** - Expanding fluid milk and other dairy product options in school lunch programs and making it a permanent part of the school lunch program. Further, support the increased use of milk and dairy products by publicly supported institutions, facilities, and individuals.

**Beginning Farmers** - Building the foundation for new, beginning farmers to have the resources available to begin dairy farming. 🇺🇸



## Hodgson, Members Receive Awards

In April, recently retired FarmFirst field representative, Bob Hodgson, was recognized at the Dubuque County Dairy Promotion Annual Banquet with the 2023 Dairy Farm Support Person award for his 38 years of dedication and service to the dairy community. Bob was a field representative for the cooperative for 38 years, beginning his tenure in 1985 with Family Dairies USA. He retired earlier this year.

In addition, the following awards were received by FarmFirst Members: Lowest Somatic Cell Count Award - Derek Hammerand, Young Dairy Producer Award - Richard Decker, Outstanding Dairy Farm Family Award - Gene and Connie Duschner Production Certificate Awards (10% over state

breed RHA) Streif Farms, Tim and Derek Hammerand, Jay and Marlene Decker, Gene and Connie Duschner, Mike and Julie Deutmeyer, Eric and Amanda Gaul 🇺🇸



# Need Peanut “Butter”? Got “Milk” of Magnesia? We’re Fine With That

Written by Alan Bjerga, Senior Vice-President of Communications at NMPF

Of all the misinformation the plant-based sector has aimed at dairy over the decades, one of the most aggravating has been the idea that because dairy farmers want nut-juice manufacturers to stop pretending their products are equal to theirs, they must somehow also oppose terms like peanut butter, Cream of Wheat, and other common products that have dairy-associated words in them.

They do this to both to obscure our real point – that their mimicking of dairy’s properties and use of dairy terms to sell nutritionally inferior imitations creates a real public health issue – and to try to make our arguments seem silly. But the problem is, that’s never been our position – it’s just another “plant”-ed lie. We’ve even specifically rebutted the point, in the Citizen Petition we sent FDA in 2019. So once more, with feeling, here’s the difference between our position on terms like “peanut butter” vs. plant-based dairy alternatives.

It all comes down to:

21 U.S. Code § 343 – Misbranded food

Plant-based fake-dairy products are misbranded. According to FDA regulations, a food shall be deemed to be misbranded ... “If it purports to be or is represented as a food for which a definition and standard of identity has been prescribed by regulations.”

The italicized part is the important part. (That’s why we italicized it.) The main principle behind the concept of misbranding is “don’t pretend to be something you’re not,” and that’s the difference between plant-based imitators and common foods that have long used dairy terms without pretending to be in the same food category.

Cream of Wheat is a wholesome breakfast food, but no one’s urging you to pour it in your coffee. Coconut-milk-in-a-carton is problematic (we’ll explain why), but coconut-milk-in-a-can isn’t being sold as a beverage.

Nut butters are spreads, but they don’t substitute for butter in baking — and if you decide to slather body butter on your toast because you thought it’s dairy flavored with ... then you’re just an awful human being, and you deserve to vomit. By the same token, Milk of Magnesia isn’t pushing to worm its way into the federal school lunch program, even if the occasional school lunch may make some students wish that were so.

The common thread is that none of these items are trying to masquerade as dairy products. They aren’t promoting marketplace confusion, and they aren’t implying nutrient content they don’t provide.


Contrast that with the plant-based imposters. They’re sold in gallon jugs, cartons and tubs. Even though most don’t require refrigeration because they’re not fresh, they try to fool consumers by paying grocery stores to put their products in the dairy case. They add artificial colorings to make them look like the dairy products they mimic, and they market themselves as being able to do whatever true dairy milk, butter, cheese, or yogurt can do – with the implication that if they can do the same things, they must be equivalent, which in nutrition, they clearly are not.

That’s misleading, as consumer research shows. That’s misbranding, as the FDA defines the term. And that’s what we oppose, as we continue our fight for labeling transparency.

This charade’s been going on for decades. As then-WhiteWave CEO Steven Demos said in 2001 of how soy beverage came to be a dairy imitator: “We also had to figure out how to get this product category to market. Dairy milk is a staple food that we consider a fundamental part of the scenery in a supermarket. Why not position fresh soymilk to be as close as possible?”

That attitude is all about market position – but not market integrity. But integrity has never been the plant-based sector’s strong suit. We’re hoping that our campaign to add comments to FDA’s draft guidance on plant-based beverage labeling will encourage the agency to start enforcing its own rules, just as we’re supporting the DAIRY PRIDE Act as a congressional solution.

We’d encourage you to use the materials we provide as you compose your letter to FDA. Write it while you’re enjoying a peanut butter sandwich and cooking a coconut-milk-based curry. Maybe treat yourself to some chocolates for dessert (the cocoa butter in them must be 100 percent pure to meet FDA’s chocolate standard of identity, by the way).

Dairy is fine with that. We know who we are — and we know where the confusion always comes from. It’s time for it to end 



*Alan Bjerga joined NMPF in October 2018 as its new Senior Vice President of Communications. In this role, he leads NMPF’s communications efforts, focusing on media relations, marketing and digital storytelling. This article originally appeared in NMPF’s Dairy Defined weekly feature.*

# US Dairy Announces Collaboration on Climate

In April, the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the US Dairy Export Council (USDEC) announced the signing of a set of principles and a new partnership with the National Agricultural Organizations (FARM) from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Bolivia and Colombia to constructively engage governments and international organizations around the world on the issues of livestock, agriculture, climate and trade.

Far too often, global convenings and climate proposals reflect ideologies at the expense of science, ignore progress that the industry has made in reducing emissions, and try to impose one-size-fits-all approaches on an industry they do not fully understand.

In collaboration with the National Agriculture Organizations (FARM), and the Pan-American Dairy Federation (FEPALE), USDEC and NMPF will coordinate and support engagements with government officials and international organizations in promoting policies that encourage sustainable productivity growth while taking into consideration the unique needs of the livestock industry as well as profitability for farmers.

To launch this important strategic collaboration, USDEC, NMPF, FARM and FEPALE co-hosted a seminar on April 19 and 20, 2023, on “The Road to Sustainability in Livestock Production in the Americas,” bringing together influential leaders from across the livestock sectors of the MERCOSUR and South America region. Attendees heard from global

experts and discussed ways to reduce the livestock sector’s greenhouse gas emissions while remaining viable for the next generation of farmers.

Both the partnership and meeting are being organized with an eye toward the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment and COP28, where the organizations will play a role in shaping the discussion around agriculture’s role in a sustainable future. 🇺🇸



## Advocacy In Action *Continued from Page 1*

grants awarded in in the recent \$100 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). However, there are still more than 600,000 households in the state that do not have high speed internet. We asked for continued funding of PSC Broadband Expansion grants to lay that “last mile” of infrastructure. And to the extent possible, spend incoming federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) monies under the same criteria as current PSC Broadband Expansion Grants.

Coop Day at the Capitol was more than just lobbying on issues important agriculture and the state. It was also great opportunity to reiterate the importance and success of the cooperative model for doing business not only in agriculture but for all types of businesses.

Be assured that FarmFirst will continue to work with our partners to make sure our priorities make their way through the legislative process or get included in the state budget. 🇺🇸



*Article by Jeff Lyon, FarmFirst General Manager. Lyon serves on the Cooperative Network Board of Directors. Cooperative Network is a trade association of cooperatives from 12 different business sectors in Wisconsin and Minnesota.*

# MARCH 2023

	UPPER MIDWEST	CENTRAL	MIDEAST	
<b>Order Name and Number</b>	<b>Order 30</b>	<b>Order 32</b>	<b>Order 33</b>	
Producer Milk (lbs.)	3,036,290,465	1,580,243,830	1,631,286,054	
Producer Price Differential @ base zone	\$ 0.19	\$ 0.38	\$ 0.81	
Statistical Uniform Price/cwt @ 3.5% BF*	\$ 18.29	\$ 18.48	\$ 18.91	
Class I Price/cwt	\$ 20.79	\$ 20.99	\$ 20.99	
Class II Price/cwt	\$ 19.52	\$ 19.52	\$ 19.52	
Class III Price/cwt	\$ 18.10	\$ 18.10	\$ 18.10	
Class IV Price/cwt	\$ 18.38	\$ 18.38	\$ 18.38	
<b>Component Prices &amp; Test Avg. % aves</b>				
Butterfat/lb.	\$ 2.7300	4.24%	4.16%	4.11%
Protein/lb.	\$ 2.4085	3.23%	3.33%	3.26%
Other Solids/lb.	\$ 0.2338	5.79%	5.80%	5.78%
SCC Adjust Rate/1000	\$ 0.00092			
<b>Producer Milk Classified %</b>				
Class I	5.70%	24.26%	33.20%	
Class II	0.90%	7.05%	6.40%	
Class III	92.20%	45.11%	45.00%	
Class IV	1.20%	23.58%	15.40%	
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	



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## May is National Beef Month!



*What better time to fire up the grill and celebrate with your favorite cuts of beef! Make sure to add in some dairy to your grilled creations. Don't forget the cheese!*