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FarmFirst Advocates for Overweight Transport Permits for Fluid Milk

Madison, Wis. [October 24, 2023] – FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative General Manager, Jeff Lyon, provided written testimony to the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government in support of Senate Bill 431, a bill that would grant the state Department of Transportation the authority to issue annual or consecutive month permits, allowing the transport of fluid milk and other milk byproducts in vehicle combinations exceeding highway weight limits, up to a maximum of 98,000 pounds.

Lyon highlighted the challenges faced by dairy farmers and milk haulers, including tight profit margins due to lower milk prices and increased production costs. “Over the last few years dairy farmer profit margins have been extremely tight with lower milk prices and higher input costs which include but are not limited to labor, feed, crop input, equipment, energy, and milk hauling costs,” noted Lyon. “Generally, dairy cooperatives and proprietary milk plants have independent milk haulers to pick up milk at individual farms and deliver it to designated milk processors. Similar to dairy farmers, milk haulers are experiencing higher costs for labor, new equipment and equipment repair and energy.” “To minimize hauling costs many farms, have their milk picked up every other day. Daily or every other day pickup depends on the amount milk produced daily on a farm and the size of the bulk tank,” said Lyon. “Picking up milk at individual farms and making sure the hauler has full load of milk is an inexact science due to the amount milk on each farm, the distance between farms and the distance to the plant.”

The Wisconsin dairy industry plays a pivotal role as a \$45 billion-dollar economic driver for the state. Senate Bill 431, if enacted, would not only foster industry growth over time, but would allow for flexibility and more options for dairy cooperatives, milk processors and haulers to pick up farmers’ milk to minimize increases in milk hauling costs.

Lyon's testimony reflects FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative's ongoing commitment to advocate for the best interests of its members and the dairy industry as a whole.

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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