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Even Santa Prefers Real Dairy



"Up on the housetop, reindeer pause, out jumps good old Santa Claus. Down through the chimney with lots of toys, all for the little ones Christmas joys."

But then, as Santa is getting ready to put presents under the tree, something catches the Jolly Old Elf's eye. A carton of lab-grown milk and a platter of cookies made with plant-based butter. To send a message, he drops a lump of coal in each stocking and heads back up to the sleigh.

Not a very happy Christmas for that family and one that could have been avoided.

Even Santa knows that nothing compares to real dairy products - especially during the holiday

season.

This scenario highlights the fact that there is something truly special about the genuine, time-honored taste of real dairy products, especially during the holiday season. As families and friends come together to celebrate, dairy plays an

In a world where alternative dairy options are landing on store shelves, remember that even Santa can taste the difference.

integral role in creating the delicious dishes and treats that make this time of year even more festive.

Consider the warmth of a cup of creamy eggnog, the indulgence of a cheese platter with an assortment of flavors, or the richness of buttery treats that melt in your mouth. And nothing compares to real whipped cream on top of a slice of pumpkin pie, ice cream alongside a slice of fruit pie or a piece of creamy rich cheesecake. These delights are not just food; they are traditions passed down through generations, which connect us to our roots.

My roots are engrained in dairy farming. I come from a long line of dairy farmers on both sides of my family, and I have fond memories of holidays on our farm while I was growing up. I also know firsthand that the holidays do not mean downtime for dairy farmers - the cows don't clock out, and neither do you. The entire FarmFirst staff

and I appreciate the hard work that each and every one of you are putting in to ensure that we can go to the grocery store and pick up all of the butter, cheese, and milk that we need in order to continue on with my family traditions during the holidays.

In a world where alternative dairy options are landing on store shelves, remember that even Santa can taste the difference. I know I'll be leaving him a glass of wholesome, real dairy milk, and cookies loaded with the goodness of real butter.

At FarmFirst, we appreciate each and every one of our members, and wish you all a wonderful holiday season. 🐄



*Article by Sarah Sarbacher,
 FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative
 Director of Communications and
 Marketing*

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Nathan Wiese Appointed to Young Cooperator Advisory Council



Nathan Wiese, FarmFirst member and Young Cooperator Representative on our Board of Directors, was recently appointed to the National Milk Producers Federation Young Cooperator Advisory Council. The National Young Cooperators Program is led by an advisory council that is composed of 10 dairy farmers from across the U.S. They provide input on priority topics to be addressed at in-person and virtual events throughout the year. This group also provides regular guidance and feedback to refine and enhance program offerings to make them as relevant and accessible as possible. Congratulations Nathan! 🎉

Leichtfuss's Attend Young Cooperator Leadership and Development Conference

In November, Mark and Vanna Leichtfuss, members from Two Rivers, Wisconsin, attended the 2023 NMPF Young Cooperator Leadership and Development Program in conjunction with the NMPF Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida. This event focuses on developing leadership and management skills, as well as a variety of other topics determined by the YC Advisory Council that aim to enhance producers' profitability and resilience.

The National Young Cooperators (YC) Program, established in 1950, has provided training and leadership development opportunities to beginning dairy farmers for over 70 years. The National Milk Producers Federation, which manages the YC Program, represents the majority of U.S. dairy farmers and their cooperatives, making it uniquely positioned to reach its target audience through an existing network of member cooperatives and their farmer-owners.

The National YC Program aims to provide dairy farmers under the age of 45 with the education, tools and resources they need to improve their profitability and resilience through year-round in-person and virtual programming.

Specifically, the program aims to achieve the following objectives:

Enhance the leadership skills of beginning dairy farmers to make them more effective managers and more influential leaders.

Strengthen the resilience of beginning dairy farms by positively impacting farm and business management practices.

If you would like to become involved with FarmFirst's Young Cooperator Program, please contact your member services representative or call our office. We are working on developing this program and would like input from our Young Cooperator members as we do so. 🎉



visit us at
FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com



DMI's O'Brien Highlights Science-Based, Partnership-Driven Results

Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) CEO and President Barbara O'Brien outlined a series of checkoff-led successes, including more science-based and partnership-driven results, to 780 dairy farmers and industry representatives attending the 2023 joint annual meeting of the United Dairy Industry Association, National Dairy Promotion and Research Board and National Milk Producers Federation held in Orlando, Fla, Nov. 14-15.

O'Brien delivered her remarks in a question-and-answer format with Pennsylvania dairy farmer and DMI Chair Marilyn Hershey and emphasized farmers' "fingerprints" are reflected in the checkoff's Unified Marketing Plan.

"I made a pretty big deal when I first became CEO (two years ago) that I would go on a listening tour and it continues," O'Brien said. "With so many new leaders and a renewed DMI business plan, we took the checkoff on the road - probably 40 meetings in the first quarter of the year - where we introduced DMI or reintroduced who we are today, the capabilities and roles of each of the checkoff companies and how together, we can grow value for farmers.

"The key takeaways are listening and action, that I, and the checkoff staff, listened to farmers. We've made deliberate, meaningful changes that reflect your input, so farmers see their fingerprints on a plan that drives greater efficiency and impact."

O'Brien outlined three areas of checkoff-led impact from 2023:

Delivering more science and outside investments

More focused partnerships and new product innovation

More in-market voices advocating for farmers and the industry overall

She emphasized the checkoff's unique leadership capabilities across the industry by stating, "If it wasn't for the checkoff, who would do this work?"

"If not checkoff, who is going to make those investments in research and in new partnerships to ensure we're seen as a modern wellness solution?" O'Brien said. "Who is going to seek relationships with these foodservice giants who can help drive consumer behavior?"

"Who is going to work with and through others to protect dairy's reputation that is so critical to the business here and around the world? Who is going to monitor the emerging threats that we continue to see on farms and now plants? Who is going to make those investments to ensure we continue to drive our global position as a supplier of choice? For me, if not checkoff, then who?"

O'Brien reviewed specific highlights from 2023, including:

Taco Bell menu growth - checkoff-led efforts at Taco Bell led to the chain making the Grilled Cheese Burrito, which uses more than 10 times the amount of cheese than its regular crunchy taco, a permanent menu item. The checkoff's onsite food science team also helped lead extensions on the line of frozen beverages, which use real dairy creamer. All told, Taco Bell is projected to see dairy volume increases of up to 7 percent.

McDonald's dessert emphasis - the checkoff helped McDonald's revitalize its line of dairy desserts and shakes. O'Brien pointed to the Grimace Shake, which was introduced this summer and became a viral hit that led to shake sales doubling during the campaign. The checkoff also assisted with launches of new McFlurry flavors and supported preventative maintenance testing of ice cream machines that ultimately will help keep them running.

School milk experience - O'Brien referenced that 37 milk processors representing more than 90 percent of the school milk volume committed to providing healthy, nutritious school milk options with no more than 10 grams of added sugar per 8-ounce serving, which meet USDA's new proposed rule. DMI and state and regional checkoff teams continue to test ways for students to enjoy milk and other dairy-centric beverages in schools, including dispenser and aseptic options and offering milk in unique ways, such as on-the-go options and offered in athletic departments.

Fuel Up to Play 60 evolution - a changing and more complex school environment resulting from the pandemic led to DMI transitioning its school-based Fuel Up to Play 60 program to a more focused "Fuel Up" platform. As a result, DMI ceased its 15-year partnership with the NFL and has entered a no-cost memorandum of understanding with the league. Fuel Up allows the checkoff to work with a broader cross-section of partners and delivers schools and families solutions and resources that increase access to milk and other dairy products, expands meal participation and finds new ways to educate students on the role dairy nutrition plays in wellness and academic achievement.

O'Brien and Hershey attended the recent International Dairy Federation World Dairy Summit that attracted more than 1,240 dairy leaders from 55 countries to Chicago. Hershey said many farmers and other representatives from around the world complimented the checkoff's work.

"I consistently heard from farmers from other countries that they wished they had a mechanism like the checkoff to lead and invest in collective work benefitting all farmers - science, innovation, marketing and issues management," Hershey said. "We have built something that our peers across the world wish they had, and quite frankly I have been asked many times, 'how can we develop these programs?'"

O'Brien said the checkoff is more critical than ever in a time of economic challenges for farmers.

"The current farm environment and the economy is such an important reminder to all of us and I'd like to say to the farmers who are here and across the country, as your staff, we are so sensitive to those business challenges you face every day," O'Brien said. "We use it to drive us to put our energy into the Unified Marketing Plan and make sure every dollar is spent efficiently to build trust and drive demand here in the U.S. and around the world."

For more information about the dairy checkoff, visit www.usdairy.com

Farm Bill and DMC Program Extended



The stop-gap funding bill that Congress and the President approved in November will not only keep the government open into the new year, but also extend the current Farm Bill through September of 2024.

Steve Etko, lobbyist for Midwest Dairy Coalition stated, “Essentially, this simply extends the existing Farm Bill programs, such as the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program for one year. In some ways, this is disappointing because it postpones the opportunity to make needed updates to the DMC program, which will have to wait until next year. But in other ways, it is encouraging because the Farm Bill leaders agreed to include a DMC production history update in the package, based on the structure of the Supplemental DMC program that is set to expire at the end of 2023. Essentially, this means that for dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds of DMC production history (which is based on the operation’s highest production from 2011, 2012, or 2013), they will again be allowed to receive a supplemental DMC payment based on their 2019 production, as they were able to do in 2021, 2022, and 2023. However, one caveat continues to be that their Supplemental DMC payment is prorated by 75 percent.”

On November 17th, National Milk Producers Federation put out a statement from President & CEO Jim Mulhern stating, “We commend House and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairs Glenn Thompson and Debbie Stabenow, as well as Ranking Members David Scott and John Boozman, for their bipartisan work to finalize this farm bill extension as part of the congressional spending agreement President Biden signed today.

“Along with continuing critical programs for dairy farmers, the legislation allows the Dairy Margin Coverage program to continue operating without the uncertainty of a potential disruption. DMC is an important and effective safety net for dairy farmers nationwide. This legislation includes the 2019 production history update as part of the program, and we look forward to 2024 DMC sign-up in the coming weeks. 🇺🇸”

Overweight Transport Permit Bill Approved

In November, the Wisconsin State Senate’s unanimously approved Senate Bill 431. This bill will boost dairy hauling capacity. Senator Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) as well as Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) authored the bill. SB 431 extends a current allowance for milk hauling of 98,000 pounds over six axles to all liquid dairy products. This permit program would help address the ongoing shortage of truck drivers. It will also increase efficiency for the industry and reduce overall road maintenance costs for taxpayers.

In October, FarmFirst General Manager, Jeff Lyon, provided written testimony to the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government in support of this bill. FarmFirst is appreciative of the work done on SB 431 by Senators Ballweg and Kurtz, and applauds its approval. 🇺🇸



Paul Bleiberg, NMPF Lobbyist to Present at Virtual Policy Meeting December 12th


Virtual Policy Meeting

Join us Tuesday, December 12th at 12pm for our Virtual Policy Development Meeting. Paul Bleiberg, NMPF Executive VP Government Relations, will present a political and dairy policy update for participants, and we will have a discussion on FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative's Public Policy. Please register at www.FarmFirstDairyCooperative.com


Resolutions

Members are also encouraged to submit resolutions to be considered for the Districting & Resolutions (D&R) Committee. The D&R Committee will meet in early January to review all submitted resolutions and prepare final resolutions to be presented for delegates to vote on at the 2024 Annual Meeting.

How to submit a resolution:

 By email - send your resolutions to jlyon@farmfirstcoop.com. Include 'Resolutions' in the email subject line.

 By mail - send your written resolutions to the FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative office at 4001 Nakoosa Trail, Suite 100, Madison, WI 53714.

All resolutions need to be sent by December 31st. 

Partnership with Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW)

2023-2024 Educational Programs & Event Calendar



JULY 2023

5,6 The Dairy Signal®
11,12,13 The Dairy Signal®
13 Water Tours
18,19,20 The Dairy Signal®
25,26,27 The Dairy Signal®
26 Accelerate™

AUGUST

1,2,3 The Dairy Signal®
8,9,10 The Dairy Signal®
15,16,17 The Dairy Signal®
22,23,24 The Dairy Signal®
23-24 Wisconsin Farm Tours
28,29,30,31 Agricultural Community Engagement® (ACE) Twilight Meetings

SEPTEMBER

5,6,7 The Dairy Signal®
12,13,14 The Dairy Signal®
19,20,21 The Dairy Signal®
23 Stride™
26,27,28 The Dairy Signal®

OCTOBER

3,4,5 The Dairy Signal®
10,11,12 The Dairy Signal®
11,12 Herdsperson Workshop*
17,18,19 Calf Care Connection®*
17,18,19 The Dairy Signal®
24,25,26 The Dairy Signal®
26 Wisconsin Processors Tour
31 The Dairy Signal®

NOVEMBER

1,2 The Dairy Signal®
7,8,9 The Dairy Signal®
8-9 Financial Literacy, Level 1, part I
14,15,16 The Dairy Signal®
21,22,23 The Dairy Signal®
28 Dairy Insights
28,29,30 The Dairy Signal®

DECEMBER

5,6,7 The Dairy Signal®
6-7 Financial Literacy, Level 1, part II
12-13 Dairy Managers Institute® (Tier I, II, III)*
12,13,14 The Dairy Signal®
19,20,21 The Dairy Signal®
26,27,28 The Dairy Signal®

*Indicates program will be simultaneously translated in Spanish

JANUARY 2024

2,3,4 The Dairy Signal®
9-11 Managers Academy for Dairy Professionals®
9,10,11 The Dairy Signal®
16,17,18 The Dairy Signal®
17-18 Financial Literacy Level 2, part I
23,24,25 The Dairy Signal®
30 Environmental Conference
30,31 The Dairy Signal®

FEBRUARY

1 The Dairy Signal®
6,7 Dairy Wellbeing Workshop
6,7,8 The Dairy Signal®
7-8 Financial Literacy Level 2, part II
12-17 California Tour
13,14,15 The Dairy Signal®
20,21,22 The Dairy Signal®
27,28,29 The Dairy Signal®
28-29 Financial Literacy Level 2, part III

MARCH

5,6,7 The Dairy Signal®
12 Cornerstone Dairy Academy®**
13-14 Business Conference*
19,20,21 The Dairy Signal®
20-21 Financial Literacy Level 3
26,27,28 The Dairy Signal®

APRIL

2,3,4 The Dairy Signal®
9,10,11 The Dairy Signal®
9,16,23 Dairy's Visible Voice®
16,17,18 The Dairy Signal®
23,24,25 The Dairy Signal®
30 The Dairy Signal®

MAY

1,2 The Dairy Signal®
7,8,9 The Dairy Signal®
14,15,16 The Dairy Signal®
21,22,23 The Dairy Signal®
28,29,30 The Dairy Signal®

JUNE

4,11,18 Hoof Health Workshop*
4,5,6 The Dairy Signal®
11,12,13 The Dairy Signal®
18,19,20 The Dairy Signal®
25,26,27 The Dairy Signal®

FarmFirst is a proud sponsor of Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW). As part of our sponsorship, we are able to sponsor registration for PDPW educational programming for our members. If you have interest in attending any PDPW events, please contact your member services representative or give our office a call to find out about registration sponsorship through FarmFirst.

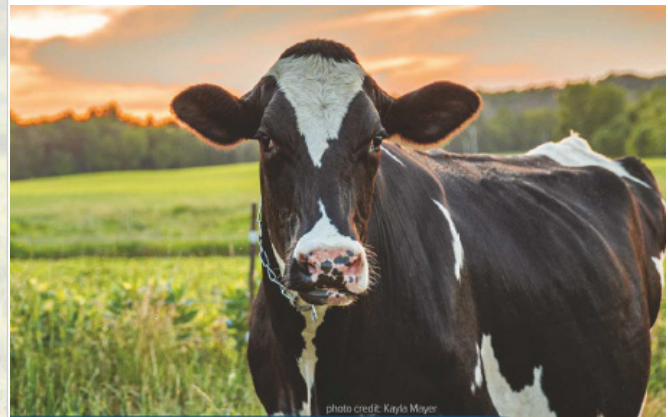


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For additional programs and updates,
contact us: 800.947.7379 www.pdpw.org

Scan here for our
digital calendar



OCTOBER 2023

	UPPER MIDWEST	CENTRAL	MIDEAST
Order Name and Number	Order 30	Order 32	Order 33
Producer Milk (lbs.)	2,661,721,630	1,272,178,043	1,500,283,619
Producer Price Differential @ base zone	\$ 0.44	\$ 2.19	\$ 2.82
Statistical Uniform Price/cwt @ 3.5% BF*	\$ 17.28	\$ 19.03	\$ 19.66
Class I Price/cwt	\$ 21.27	\$ 21.47	\$ 21.47
Class II Price/cwt	\$ 21.95	\$ 21.95	\$ 21.95
Class III Price/cwt	\$ 16.84	\$ 16.84	\$ 16.84
Class IV Price/cwt	\$ 21.49	\$ 21.49	\$ 21.49
Component Prices & Test Avg. % aves			
Butterfat/lb.	\$ 3.7144	4.22%	4.18%
Protein/lb.	\$ 1.0468	3.27%	3.33%
Other Solids/lb.	\$ 0.1243	5.79%	5.78%
SCC Adjust Rate/1000	\$ 0.00087		
Producer Milk Classified %			
Class I	6.30%	29.74%	39.58%
Class II	0.90%	6.67%	11.58%
Class III	92.40%	53.15%	45.43%
Class IV	0.40%	10.44%	3.41%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%



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FARM FIRST Young Cooperators

YOUNG COOPERATOR MEETING AND BOWLING EVENT

We are ramping up our Young Cooperator program and want your input and ideas!
Join us to discuss the program and provide your input.
Bring your family and enjoy a fun afternoon of free bowling and pizza!

December 27, 2023
11:30 am - 3:00 pm
Rustic Lanes
109 E. Chippewa St.
Cadott, WI 54727

Our Young Cooperator program is for members between the age of 18 and 45, interested in becoming more involved in the cooperative and industry through social, educational and leadership events.

Please RSVP to Betty Lund at 715-491-9119 by December 20th