

MILKLINE

NEWSLETTER

FARM FIRST
DAIRY COOPERATIVE

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Connecting the Dots with Consumers



June is here, and we all know what that means: June Dairy Month! What began in 1937 as a means for grocer organizations to promote milk consumption during the summer months has evolved into a celebration that honors dairy farmers and the entire dairy industry for their dedication to producing the nutritious dairy foods we enjoy. June Dairy Month activities also provide farmers with the opportunity to “tell their dairy story” and connect with consumers. But what does that really mean, and what is the best way for farmers to share their story with the people who need to hear it?

Why Share the Dairy Story?

When farmers share their stories, it promotes transparency, builds trust, and fosters appreciation. Consumers today are more interested than ever in knowing where their food comes from and how

it is produced. By opening up about the realities of dairy farming—the challenges, innovations, and everyday triumphs—farmers can dispel myths and provide a truthful narrative about the dairy industry.

What Are Consumers Looking For?

Consumers want peace of mind, reassurance that food is safe for their families, knowledge that their food is produced in an environmentally friendly way, and confidence that the animals their food comes from are well cared for. These are things you already do daily. The key is to educate the public from your perspective in a way that resonates with them. For instance, you can hold farm tours to show attendees the daily work on your farm and how it operates. But also be sure to explain how your work ensures good animal care and stewardship of your land. Explaining the “why” behind what you do on your farm can connect what you do on your operation with what consumers are looking for from the industry.

Engaging with the Community

Engagement can take many forms beyond farm tours. Social media is a powerful tool for reaching a wider audience. Posting videos and photos of daily farm activities, sharing stories about your cows, or explaining the technology and science behind modern dairy farming can make a significant impact. People love behind-the-scenes content, and this approach can humanize your farm, making it more relatable.

If social media isn't your forte, educational outreach in schools is another option. Invite local schools to tour your farm. Interactive activities like milking demonstrations can be fun and informative for children and their parents. By educating the younger generation, you're building future consumers who understand and appreciate the dairy industry and are spreading the word through them to their families.

Collaborating with local media can further amplify your message. Organizations such as Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Professional Dairy Producers work with farmers to train them in media communication. FarmFirst recently sent field staff and interested members to media training with PDP and Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin to learn how to effectively share the stories that need to be conveyed to consumers. Media outlets are often looking for positive and informative stories, and the hard work of dairy farmers is a perfect fit.

Continual Learning and Adapting

Remember the importance of continual learning and adapting. Stay informed about consumer concerns and trends within the food industry. By addressing these proactively, you can better communicate how your farm meets these evolving standards, enhancing credibility and the trust consumers place in your products.

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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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A Word from our General Manager



I am honored and excited to write this message to you as the new General Manager of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative. My journey with this organization began in 2019 when I joined as the Director of Milk Marketing for the Family Dairies USA division. During this time, I have had the privilege of working closely with many of our Family Dairies patrons, and now look forward to collaborating with all members across the cooperative.

In my new position, I will continue to lead the milk marketing efforts for Family Dairies USA while taking on the broader responsibilities of managing our cooperative's various divisions and programs. I am excited about fostering a collaborative environment where every member's input matters. Your engagement is crucial as we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead. At the heart of our mission is a commitment to putting our members first. We are here to serve you, and will continue to pursue initiatives that can help our members be successful.

Moving forward, I also want to ensure that the diversity of our cooperative is utilized, and that each division is given opportunities to succeed and grow. We will continue to foster strong relationships within the industry, monitor policy issues that affect you and your operations and advocate for you, continue to evaluate the programs and services that we offer and build upon them, and ensure that we maintain the exceptional level of staff that we have here across all divisions of our cooperative.

I am committed to leading FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative with integrity and dedication. Together, we will build on our strong foundation and strive for new heights of success.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to working closely with all of you and achieving great things together.



Mick Homb
General Manager



Farm Bill Update



The process for the 2024 Farm Bill has recently taken significant steps forward, with the House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn “GT” Thompson unveiling the \$1.5 trillion “Farm, Food, and National Security Act

of 2024.” This comprehensive package addresses several critical areas, including farm safety nets, trade promotion, and nutrition programs.

Key developments include increased support for farm safety net programs to help farmers manage risks amidst ongoing economic challenges. The bill also allocates substantial funds for trade promotion to develop new markets for U.S. agricultural products and enhances funding for specialty crop programs and energy cost reduction initiatives for farmers and rural businesses.

However, the bill has sparked partisan debates, particularly over provisions affecting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). While the House version aims to limit future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, potentially restricting future

increases in SNAP benefits, it also expands immediate access to SNAP and removes the lifetime ban on benefits for individuals with prior felony drug convictions. These measures have received mixed reactions from lawmakers and advocacy groups.

In the Senate, Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow introduced the Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act, which has received praise for its focus on sustainability, nutrition, and support for underserved communities. This version includes significant funding for conservation programs, organic market development, and provisions aimed at addressing climate change impacts on agriculture.

The differing approaches between the House and Senate versions indicate a challenging negotiation process ahead, with both sides needing to reconcile their priorities to pass a unified farm bill before the current extension expires in September 2024.

For dairy farmers, the proposed enhancements to safety net programs and the emphasis on trade promotion and market development could provide essential support. However, staying informed and engaged with the legislative process will be crucial as the final details of the farm bill are negotiated.

USDA Offers H5N1 Support for Dairy Farmers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has expanded its support to help dairy producers combat the spread of H5N1 bird flu in cattle, following two reported human cases involving individuals who worked near cows.

The USDA's increased support includes up to \$1,500 per premises for biosecurity measures and up to \$2,000 per premises for veterinary costs related to H5N1 testing. Additionally, the USDA will offset costs for influenza A testing at National Animal Health Laboratory Network labs, capping at \$50 per shipment twice a month per premises.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported the second human case of bird flu in Michigan, following the first in Texas. Both cases resulted in eye conditions similar to conjunctivitis.

Since detecting H5N1 in dairy cattle in March, the USDA has worked to assess and contain the virus. A forthcoming rule will provide compensation to producers with positive herds who suffer milk production losses. The USDA emphasized that while infected dairy cows typically recover well, the disease significantly reduces

milk production, causing economic losses.

The USDA and federal government are urgently addressing the bird flu situation, ensuring it remains non-transmissible between humans despite possible cases in people with direct animal contact.

In April, the USDA confirmed no changes in the H5N1 virus that would facilitate human-to-human transmission.



How Many Households are Buying Dairy?

We know the dedication it takes to run a dairy farm. Long hours, early mornings, and a deep connection to your animals and land – it's a way of life. But beyond the hard work, there's a reason you do what you do: you wake every day to feed the world with dairy, a nutritional powerhouse that America's families love.

Last year, more than 96% of U.S. households purchased real dairy products. When comparing retail purchases of dairy to plant-based alternatives, real dairy sales were 21 times larger.

But consumers want to know more about dairy and how it is produced. Here are some ways your checkoff is expanding consumers' knowledge of dairy farming and nutrition:

Product Innovation: Consumers' tastes and preferences are always changing, which means dairy products need to evolve to stay relevant in the marketplace. By now, most farmers have heard of Fairlife, an ultra-filtered milk that has less lactose and more protein compared to regular milk. These value-added milk products have grown in popularity with retail sales being 27% larger than plant-based alternatives in this category. Additionally, you may have noticed GoodSport on your local grocery store shelves. This is a new sports drink that features upcycled milk permeate and has more electrolytes and less sugar than traditional sports drinks.

Influencers and Thought Leaders: Traditional advertising is no longer as effective with younger generations of shoppers. This is why the checkoff has adopted a digital-focused strategy. Partnerships with social media influencers and thought leaders help dairy's story reach a wider audience through trusted, authentic voices. Nationally, the dairy checkoff has engaged with online influencers such as MrBeast (jump to the 4:30 mark) and local checkoffs are also partnering with online influencers and e-sports participants.

See Dairy Differently Campaign: This effort is reaching consumers with messages on dairy farmers' commitment to sustainability. We're featuring farmers from across the country to drive home the message that today's dairy farms are modern businesses using technology to care for their land and cattle. This campaign has seen more than 200,000 clicks to articles and landing page content. Here is an example of an


in-depth story about dairy's responsible water use. The check-off team driving the campaign has a vision that goes beyond sustainability to explore topics like nutrition, animal care and more to keep the content fresh and relevant.

Your checkoff also is working locally through state and regional organizations that are building sales and trust close to home. All local checkoffs are coordinating impressive programs, and here are a few examples from around the country:

American Dairy Association North East uses e-commerce platforms to drive dairy sales through informational messaging for dairy products. These messages focus on cross-merchandising, nutritional benefits and dairy-centric campaigns. The advertising focused on different dairy products throughout the year, such as lactose-free milk, smoothies and cheese. In one year, this campaign helped generate nearly \$4.5 million in dairy sales with the ads being seen more than 22 million times.

The Dairy Alliance began a program aimed at driving new dairy product innovation. The Dairy Alliance team members who support this program identify and support high-potential dairy startups within the region to attract investment in innovative dairy products that are relevant to today's consumers. This program was launched in 2024 and The Dairy Alliance is working with two companies on five new products with plans to be in market this year.

American Dairy Association Mideast was part of a check-off-led pilot in Cincinnati schools that offered lactose-free chocolate milk increased consumption and reached students who weren't drinking milk because of real or perceived lactose intolerance. Key findings of the pilot were that when students have the option to choose lactose-free milk, both milk selection and meal participation increase overall. Compared to the rest of the Cincinnati district, the pilot schools experienced a 16% increase in milk consumption and 7% higher meal participation.

For more information on DMI and the Dairy Checkoff, visit usdairy.com 



Connecting the Dots with Consumers

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Telling your dairy story during June Dairy Month and beyond is about more than just sharing your daily routine. It's about building a bridge between the farm and the consumer, fostering trust, and ensuring that the public understands and appreciates the dedication behind every glass of milk and slice of cheese. Through transparency, engagement, and education, dairy farmers can interact with consumers in meaningful ways, connecting the dots between the farm and the table. 🐄

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

Fox Valley Quality Control Lab - A Division of FarmFirst

One of the divisions of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative is Fox Valley Quality Control Lab (FVQCL). The lab is located in Kaukauna, Wisconsin and has been in business since 1995. FVQCL provides innovative milk analysis testing and blood-based diagnostic testing for dairy producers to ensure that they are being paid properly and to assist in the management of their operations. Testing services at the lab include:

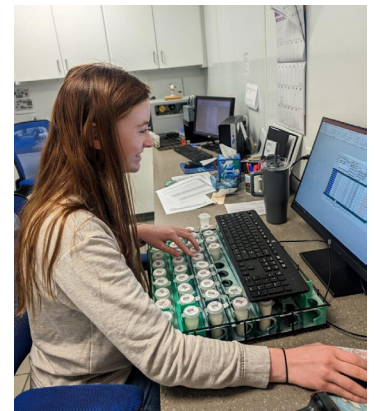
Milk Analysis Testing

- Components (Fat, Protein, Other Solids, Lactose, OSCC)
- MUN (Milk Urea Nitrogen)
- Bacteria (Plate Aerobic Loop Count, CFU, SPC)
- LPC (Lab Pasteurized Count)
- PI (Preliminary Incubation Count)
- Coliform
- Sediments
- Freeze Point Depression
- Drug Residue Testing (Charm SL, Charm SL3, Delvo P5 Pak)
- DMSCC (Sheep and Goat Certified)
- Coliform Water - MPN
- Coliform Water - Colisure
- E. Coli Water - Colisure

Diagnostic Testing

- Pregnancy Analysis
- Johne's Analysis
- Mastitis Detection
- A1/A2
- Leukosis
- BVD

We have a dedicated team at Fox Valley QC Lab, led by Cheryl Harrmann, Director of Lab Services, that provide these services quickly and accurately in a consistent and reliable manner. The team prides themselves on a commitment to quality and customer support. For more information on the lab and services provided, visit www.foxvalleyqclab.com 🐄



2024 Hoof Management Workshop

Thur. June 20
Waukaee, WI

simultaneously translated into Spanish

Designed for nutritionists, veterinarians, hoof trimmers and those managing cows on farm

register now

Registration fee: \$130

Registration fee covers workshop, materials and lunch. To register, scan QR code, visit pdpw.org/programs or call PDP at 800-947-7379.

THUR. JUNE 20

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2024 Hoof Management Workshop

Ask us about sponsorship of member registration for PDP programming!

Proud sponsor of PDP

APRIL 2024

Order Name and Number	UPPER MIDWEST	CENTRAL	MIDEAST
	Order 30	Order 32	Order 33
Producer Milk (lbs.)	2,700,916,616	1,246,485,953	1,336,139,273
Producer Price Differential @ base zone	\$ 0.45	\$ 2.20	\$ 2.77
Statistical Uniform Price/cwt @ 3.5% BF*	\$ 15.95	\$ 17.70	\$ 18.27
Class I Price/cwt	\$ 20.98	\$ 21.18	\$ 21.18
Class II Price/cwt	\$ 21.23	\$ 21.23	\$ 21.23
Class III Price/cwt	\$ 15.50	\$ 15.50	\$ 15.50
Class IV Price/cwt	\$ 20.11	\$ 20.11	\$ 20.11
Component Prices & Test Avg. % aves			
Butterfat/lb.	\$ 3.3309	4.29%	4.23%
Protein/lb.	\$ 0.8345	3.29%	3.34%
Other Solids/lb.	\$ 0.2367	5.78%	5.79%
SCC Adjust Rate/1000	\$ 0.00077		
Producer Milk Classified %			
Class I	6.00%	29.02%	39.78%
Class II	1.10%	6.82%	7.66%
Class III	92.30%	55.62%	50.52%
Class IV	0.60%	8.54%	2.04%
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%



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JUNE DAIRY MONTH

Check out the event calendar online from Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin to find June Dairy Month events near you!



<https://www.wisconsin dairy.org/june-dairy-month/Dairy-Breakfasts>