

Dairy Checkoff Strengthens Demand for Dairy Products

By **Elwood Kirkpatrick**
President



A couple of months ago, I read a disturbing “letter to the editor” in a national dairy publication. The letter was from a producer who complained that he had paid 15 cents/cwt. to the checkoff for the past 20 years and was still receiving the same milk price.

On the surface, it sounds like he may have an argument against the checkoff. That is, until you look at the facts. American dairy farmers are producing nearly 25 billion more pounds of milk than we did 20 years ago. In contrast, commercial disappearance of Class I milk has dropped more than 10 percent in the same time span.

Without the dairy checkoff program generating demand for dairy products, I believe there would have been an even greater drop in Class I disappearance. Due to the checkoff, we are able to maintain a fair price for our milk.

“Investing in a Better Future” was the theme of the recent joint annual meeting of the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board (NDB), National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA). That’s exactly what American dairy farmers have done through the dairy checkoff.

In the past year, checkoff-sponsored programs have increased demand for dairy products today and in the future, by

finding ways to make dairy products more appealing to children and adults.

At last year’s joint annual meeting, we learned some encouraging information about a checkoff-funded test market selling white and chocolate milk in plastic resealable bottles at Wendy’s restaurants. This summer, Wendy’s rolled out the program nationwide and has already increased their milk sales from 65,000 units a week to 1.8 million units.

Not to be left behind, McDonald’s also introduced white and chocolate milk in plastic resealable bottles this summer. Their milk sales have risen from 625,000 units a week to 4.25 million units.

The role of 3-A-Day of Dairy in weight management is another example of quick success through the checkoff program. A little over a year ago, checkoff-funded nutrition research concluded that consuming three or more servings of dairy in combination with a low calorie diet may help people reduce more weight, particularly around the mid-section.

Today, dairy product manufacturers, stores and restaurants are eagerly placing the 3-A-Day of Dairy logo on their products and advertising. Even more exciting is the stamp of approval 3-A-Day of Dairy is getting through endorsements from leading health professional organizations like the American Dietetic Association, Na-

tional Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Government agencies like the U.S. Surgeon General’s office and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are also acknowledging the importance of three servings of dairy a day, both increasing their recommendations from two to three servings of dairy for adults ages 18-54.

Not all milk produced in the U.S. is being consumed in America. The checkoff-funded U.S. Dairy Export Council continues to expand international demand for American dairy products, accounting for a billion dollars in dairy exports for the fourth year in a row.

Without the dairy checkoff, few – if any – of these demand-generating programs would exist. As a dairy producer, I gladly contribute to the checkoff program, knowing that my 15 cent/cwt. contribution helps fund programs that increase demand for the milk produced on my farm.

If you have any questions regarding the checkoff, please contact me in the Novi office. Information on checkoff-funded programs is available at www.dairycheckoff.com.

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