



Legislative Watch

Issues important to today's dairy farmers

Michigan Legislators Tour MMPA's Ovid Plant and Green Meadow Farms

A group of Michigan Legislators and their staff members got the chance to witness first-hand how milk is produced and processed October 8 during back-to-back tours of Michigan Milk Producers Association's (MMPA) Ovid, Mich. manufacturing plant and Green Meadow Farms in Elsie.

Michigan Legislators and staff members of Legislators who serve on the Senate and House Agriculture Committees and Energy and Technology Committees toured the MMPA manufacturing plant in Ovid, where they observed various types of milk processing. The Legislators learned the MMPA Ovid plant processes 3 million pounds of milk each day, from which it makes a variety of manufactured products, including: cream, sweetened and unsweetened condensed milks, powdered milks, butter and other dairy ingredients.

"While you are dealing with budget constraints, please do not cut base funding at the Michigan Department of Agriculture," MMPA President Ken Nobis said

as he addressed the legislative group in the Ovid plant's powder warehouse. "We really need to increase funding in the TB program in order to eradicate the disease."

The legislators then traveled to Elsie, Mich., where they toured Green Meadow Farms, and had the opportunity to see first hand the farm's recently installed methane digester designed to generate electricity. The group also saw the farm's manure management system, which consists of a sand separation system water treatment and composting program.

"Nearly every CAFO is a family farm operation – I think that is something we fail to get across to the public," MMPA Member and Treasurer Velmar Green told the group of legislators and staff members as he welcomed them to Green Meadow Farms. "We positively impact the community because we buy products and services from our local community."

Michigan's dairy industry



General Manager John Dilland talks with Rep. Jeff Mayes, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee while visiting Green Meadow Farms.

is the top ranking segment of Michigan's second leading industry – agriculture. From employment opportunities to income generation, Michigan's dairy industry has an over \$5 billion impact on Michigan's economy.

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to showcase the dairy industry and discuss issues facing our industry with state lawmakers,"

Ken said. "These types of meetings and tours have become increasingly important as new Representatives and Senators enter the Michigan Legislature due to term limits."



Legislators and staff members had the chance to tour the Ovid plant and see the processing facility.

MMPA OYDCs Return to Capitol Hill to Lobby for Immigration Reform

NMPF conducted its second Young Cooperator Fly-in of 2007 in September, when dairy producers from 19 different states and 10 different co-ops left their mark on Capitol Hill. MMPA 2006 OYDCs Tom and Dianne Cook, of Westphalia, represented MMPA at the session.

“It was good to further establish the relationship with our legislators,” Tom says. “If we can keep that line of communication open, hopefully dairy will get something out of it. It was also another great experience to connect with other dairy farmers throughout the country.”

The hot issues this fall, as they were earlier in the summer during the first YC meeting in Washington, were immigration and the farm bill.

“It is critical, especially as the Senate is developing its farm bill, and when immigration policies could have a devastating impact on dairy operations, that contact is made with Congress by our members,” said Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of NMPF.


The dairy producers who took part in the lobbying effort “really put a face and a name on the broader policy issues that we deal with on a regular basis,” Kozak said. “Constituent contact has a powerful impact with Congress.”

Johanns Resigns From USDA, Conner Named Acting Secretary

Chuck Conner, the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture the past two years, was named Acting Secretary in September following the resignation of Mike Johanns. Johanns, who came to Washington to head the USDA in early 2005, is returning to Nebraska, where he is expected to run for Senate next year.

After being named Acting Secretary on Sept. 20, Conner told reporters that passing a farm bill remains a key priority for him and the Bush Administration.

“I was involved in every aspect of the formation of the Administration’s Farm Bill proposal, from hosting Farm Bill Forums to testifying before Congress. I personally attended virtually every subcommittee and committee markup in the House of Representatives. I can assure you that we are going to continue to work with the Senate to advocate for policies that put the American farmer and rancher on a strong competitive footing while ensuring a very strong income safety net,” Conner said.




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