

PROGRESSIVE DAIRYMAN

I belong to... Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy Sustainability Council: Steve Graybeal

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Age: My real age is 65, and I am lucky to enjoy excellent health. For the most part, I don't feel any different than I did 20 years ago – except maybe I don't quite have the stamina that I used to have!

Location: Southern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

My dairy's history: This is excellent dairy country, and my dad and mom started the farm in 1942. Ownership transferred to my brother Joe and me in the late '60s. My son, Byron, and daughter, Lisa, run the farm now.

If I wasn't a dairyman, I would be ... I really never gave it much thought. When I left the farm for college, I considered engineering or sales, but neither worked into a career choice for me.

I have been a member of the Innovation Center's Sustainability Council for ... about two years. I joined the council as part of serving on the Innovation Center board for approximately one year. The CEO of my cooperative, the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association, replaced me on the Innovation Center Board, but I have continued serving on the Sustainability Council.

I joined the Sustainability Council because ... it's so important to have farmer input into these industry initiatives and councils. Hopefully, my membership helps both the council and my cooperative. It's important for Maryland and Virginia to be current with progress with the issues of sustainability in the dairy industry.

A little-known fact about the beginnings of the Innovation Center's sustainability effort is ... that farmer leadership was very suspicious about it at the start. I was on the DMI board at the time, and we thought, "We have been sustainable; that's what we do." But as we learned more about it, we came to realize just how important the subject of sustainability is to many of our retailers and customers. One of the main goals of the Sustainability Council is to develop a unified industry approach and message for our customers to understand our excellent practices and

approaches to sustainability.

My favorite Sustainability Council member/friend is ... It's impossible to pick one person. What's interesting is that this is not strictly a dairy farmer effort. The council includes members from the rest of the dairy industry plus outside people like World Wildlife Fund. It's a two-way street: I learn where they are coming from and they get farmer input from me.

What the Sustainability Council does best is ... making sure we have input from all aspects of the industry, because in the end, every segment has an impact on the sustainability of our dairy products.

I feel valued as a member when ... I contribute farmer input. This is important not just with the Sustainability Council but with continuing to tell the dairy story. I continue to be surprised at the general lack of understanding of production agriculture.

An influential person whom I've met through the Innovation Center is ... again it's hard to say just one person, but the person who comes to mind is Tom Gallagher. As a leader along with the DMI board, starting the Innovation Center is a remarkable attempt to get the industry working together, and we are really starting to see what we can accomplish when we work with each other instead of against each other.

The dairy industry's greatest sustainability opportunity is ... telling our story to the consumer. They need to understand how far we have come, how committed we are to continue to improve and that sustainable dairying can be many things when farmers use the knowledge and tools that are right for their operation.

I hope my dairy legacy is ... that the wood pile is a little bigger than the one I started with.

If I were running the Sustainability Council, I would ... continue on the same path. Find opportunities to tell our story using science and data, just like we do when we talk about nutrition.

My advice to all dairymen is ... I'd like them to know that we are working for them. My guess is that some dairymen are suspicious of this because, understandably, they think of it as another regulatory mandate coming down the road, and that is exactly the opposite of what we are trying to do. We are trying to tell their story, to let the consumers, regulators and others know that we are using the latest scientific practices with excellent results and, of course, we will continue striving to do better. *PD*

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