



Dairy Products Commission names new general manager

Janet Leister
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LYNNWOOD - Janet Leister is the new general manager of the Washington Dairy Products Commission.

She replaces Steve Matzen, who accepted a position earlier this year with the Northwest Dairy Association, the dairy farmers' cooperative that owns Darigold.

"I'm excited to be working with Washington's dairy farm families and building on the excellent work that has been done in dairy promotion, nutrition education in schools and community service," said Leister.

For the past 15 years she has served as international marketing manager for the Washington State Department of Agriculture in Olympia. Her efforts are said to have generated more than \$930 million in export sales for hundreds of Washington state businesses.



"Dairy, Washington's second largest agricultural commodity, is vital to the state's economy," said Leister.

She said, "There are on-farm jobs, equipment suppliers, processors and retailers who depend on our dairy farmers to produce wholesome and nutritious products every day."

Leister has led efforts to introduce state products to global markets and has developed agricultural and food export strategic plans.

"I had the opportunity to work with Darigold on several export missions and dairy will continue to be a major Washington export," she added.

Leister has partnered with commissions, producers and food companies to grow sales in China, Southeast Asia, Russia, the Middle East, India and other countries.

In addition to her international successes while at the WSDA, Leister established domestic programs, including establishment of the state's first "buy-local" marketing campaign - Heart of Washington. She also managed the WSDA's first domestic marketing program to help small farms sell products directly to consumers. In that capacity, Leister was able to observe the commitment dairy farmers, whether on a large dairy or a small one, bring to animal care and the environment.

"That two Washington dairies were nominated for this year's inaugural U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards, and one, the Werkhoven Dairy in Monroe, received the Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability Award speaks volumes about dairy farmers' dedication to environmental stewardship," she stated.

Prior to her leadership role with the WSDA, Leister was with the State of Hawaii's Department of Agriculture, where she successfully overcame trade barriers to realize increased sales and revenue of local products.

Leister attended George Washington University in Washington D.C., where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in international affairs.

She also earned a Master's of business administration, as well a Master's of Arts in English as a second language from the University of Hawaii in Honolulu.

Leister has served as president of the World Trade Club in Seattle; is past president of the MBA Alumni of the University of Hawaii; and she is a past member of the board of directors of the Protection and Advocacy Agency in Honolulu.

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