



Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center Celebrates 25 Years

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The Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center reached a 25-year milestone in 2012, celebrating its first quarter-century during the start of its annual meeting in Roseville, Minn.

The Center, which utilizes dairy producer checkoff funds and partner contributions to conduct research at the University of Minnesota, South Dakota State University and Iowa State University, is among six research centers that operate under the umbrella of the Dairy Research Institute and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy.

"Throughout these 25 years we've had one simple agenda -- sell more milk," said Dr. Vikram Mistry, South Dakota State University professor and the Center's associate director, during a program commemorating the anniversary. "Collectively, the research centers have strengthened the dairy industry," he added.

Mistry and Dr. Lloyd Metzger, the Center's director and a dairy science professor at South Dakota State University, credited dairy producers with supporting research projects that help develop the consumer market. Dave Schwartz, a producer from Slayton, Minn., and a board member of Midwest Dairy, noted that researchers have focused on the region's priorities. "It seems like we get more out of this research all of the time," he said. "We're doing this for one reason -- to make things better for dairy."

More than 30 researchers and nutritionists at the three universities work within the dairy research program, addressing new product development and processes for dairy products and ingredients. Since inception, the staff has authored more than 200 publications, presented more than 500 abstracts and posters at national and international scientific conferences, and awarded nearly 150 graduate degrees -- both master's and doctorates, all in support of dairy foods research.

Both Mistry and Metzger noted the graduates who have worked on the Center's projects represent results that go beyond the research itself. "These students now work for food companies, dairy processors and universities. Think of the impact they've had in those roles," said Metzger. Mistry said the establishment of Dairy Foods Research Centers across the nation injected new enthusiasm for research on milk products and attracted top scientists to dairy foods research over the years.

Metzger also cited the demand for whey as an example of research success. "Twenty-five years ago whey was a waste product from cheese processing," he said. "Today it's a very profitable dairy product. We didn't do all of that through our whey research, but we sure had a role. We helped develop a higher value for milk."

More than \$18 million dollars in checkoff have been allocated to the Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center since its inception, through both Midwest Dairy Association regional funds and from the national level. Industry partner investment and other research grants also support the Center's work.

The Midwest Dairy Foods Research Center is equipped for sensory, flavor and food processing research, and conducts educational workshops and symposia on a regular basis.

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