



WMMB members monitor dairy check-off funds on national level

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Several Wisconsin dairy producers who are directors on the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB) also have the opportunity to attend meetings to monitor what is happening with the dairy check-off funds on the national level.

Cambridge dairy producer Tina Hinchley represents dairy producers in Jefferson and Dane counties on the WMMB.

Hinchley attended a joint meeting of the National Dairy Board, National Milk Producers Federation and UDIA, held in San Diego, CA earlier this winter.

She comments, "I was very impressed with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. The priorities are consumer confidence, food safety, globalization, health and wellness and research and insights. I was happy to see they are focusing on the same concerns I have."

As a result, Hinchley will be watching for new products to be marketed throughout the U.S. and she expects to see cheese and powder demand to grow globally, too.

At the meeting she also heard from Tom Gallagher, CEO of Dairy Management Inc., who spoke of partnering with big food companies to develop and market dairy through products that will impact dairy sales, demand and image.

Hinchley says, "Checkoff dollars are being used to work with McDonalds, Domino's, Pizza Hut and others to develop new products. The Dairy Research Institute is working on product development and the Fuel Up to Play 60 program will help to promote nutritional benefits of dairy."

National issues

discussed

Sharon Laubscher, a dairy producer from Wonec who represents producers in several southwestern Wisconsin counties, was equally impressed with the national joint meeting.

She attended a town hall session where she learned about national issues including the Dairy Security Act. She said the key improvements include basic margin protection coverage that was extended to 80 percent.

Market stabilization is not mandatory; producers have a clear choice as to whether to subject themselves to production reduction requirement. All money collected is to go toward purchase of product.

Regarding the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), she said she learned that the success in dairy policy reform is working together to get something better than before.

"Producers have to rally together, stop fighting and worrying about themselves, put the dairy industry as a whole," she observed.

There was also discussion about changes in the somatic cell count regulations, drug residue, reforming immigration policy, tax policy and exemptions for milk storage by the Environmental Protection Agency.

She said she also learned about trade agreements and issues.

Global competitiveness

Another speaker, Larry Jensen, the president of Leprina Foods, shared ideas on company growth and sustainability, noting the importance of delivering on emerging needs of consumers by providing dairy products in a way that is economically viable, environmentally sound and socially responsible.

Jensen talked about consumer trends toward foods that are healthy and wholesome.

He also talked about the dairy industry's global competitiveness and its importance in expanding exports.

Jensen stressed the importance of communicating the industry's commitment to high quality, safe, nutritious and sustainable products and ingredients.

Another representative of Leprino Foods told the dairy producer delegates that the strategy for cheese marketing is clearly working, targeting developed markets and investing in growing markets.

Laubscher points out that this is important to producers because selling more pizza means selling more milk.

She said it is obvious that national and state efforts to help encourage those who sell pizza to develop new product offerings on their menu using more cheese are definitely paying off.

A speaker representing the large cooperative, Land O'Lakes, told delegates dairy used to be about providing a good product but now the dairy industry has other issues to drive their business including health and wellness, food safety, animal care and sustainability.

Companies and dairy producers must work together to build trust and confidence in dairy by accurately defining their industry with consumers versus having the industry be defined by others.

More food will be needed in coming years

Connie Seefeldt, a Coleman dairy producer representing farmers in northeastern Wisconsin, recently attended the International Dairy Deli Foods Association meeting in California.

She said the purpose of the meeting was to network with dairy industry players, listen and learn. The conference was intended for processors, cooperatives and those that supply them.

Among the speakers who left an impression on the WMMB director was Tim Hunt, a global dairy strategist who talked about the importance of dairy ingredient development and how it changed in the past decade.

He also talked about whey and the strong demand that has been developed over the last decade for this

product that at one time was a waste by-product of the cheese industry.

Since 90 percent of Wisconsin milk goes into cheese, development of whey markets adds value to Wisconsin milk.

She also learned about various innovations in packaging.

She commented, "The message we heard over and over again is that by 2050 we will need 100 percent more food and 70 percent of that must come from efficiencies and improving technology. By 2055 emerging economies will account for 50 percent of global economies."

She illustrates, "Africa is the largest question universally. China is buying land and investing in Africa. Only 12 percent of the land in the world is available to produce food."

After pointing out the many things she learned at the conference, Seefeldt also asked WMMB directors to consider WMMB's reason for sending directors to distant meetings of other dairy organizations.

She said the meeting was very informative but questions, "Is it our place as a producer organization, with no products to sell, the place to be. On the other hand, information gathered by directors and staff can be used to develop programs and plans, more specifically the Center for Dairy Research and processor communications."

WMMB does consider these things each time they are asked to send a representative to a meeting. They will continue these evaluations in the future.