

March milk totals

(Continued from Page A1)
increase than anyone had anticipated."

The reasons for the dramatic increases in production are hard to trace, and cannot automatically be attributed to the anticipated end of the diversion program, the dairy economists noted.

In other areas of the country, Fraher said, officials were expecting production increases after the end of dairy diversion, because of the high percentage of producers participating.

But, because of the relatively smaller percentage of Northeastern dairymen who participated in the program, the impact should have been much less, he said.

"We have to be looking at far more to explain increases here," he said.

The real reasons, the experts said, involve the favorable feed price to milk price ratio, and the

generally profitable dairy economy.

"The cows are there, the feed's there," said Penn State University ag economist Jack Kirkland. "I don't think there's enough of a price drop to get them to change."

Feed prices are much lower than they've been in quite some time, notes Lackawanna County Extension Director Thomas Jurchak. And thus, because of the relatively good milk prices of late, the milk-price-to-feed-price ratio is 1.64, compared to 1.31 last year. The higher the ratio, the more profitable dairying becomes.

There's also reason to believe that policies that look good from the national perspective may not be very appealing from the standpoint of the individual producer.

An individual dairyman, for instance, sees little opportunity to do anything about the national surplus of milk. He only knows that

the more he produces, the more he's paid, whether prices are high or low.

"If the signals are there, and the economic conditions are good," adds Fraher, "the producers are going to act like any rational businessman and produce more milk."

In addition, the economic pressures may simply be interpreted by individual dairymen as forces encouraging them to make their operations more efficient.

For some, the only way to become more efficient is to increase the amount of milk produced, while decreasing costs, by learning better management techniques, using better feeds, or increasing the size of the herd.

All this means lower price supports and tough sailing for dairy legislation in Congress in late summer.

"It's going to be brutal," says Jurchak. Prices have to go down, he said, adding, "the law of supply and demand has not been repealed."

Most agreed that dairymen face an almost certain 50-cent reduction in dairy price supports on July 1. The reduction is linked to an amount of government purchases that will almost certainly be surpassed at current production levels.

And since new dairy policy will

be charted in the next few months — anticipating the expiration of current legislation in September — the long-range future of prices certainly isn't positive, the experts noted.

"We may really see some depressed prices," added Kirkland.

Much depends on the mood of Congress, he noted, which may well be that, "we have to crack down on this now."

"This increase certainly isn't helping farmers in Congress," he added.

Echoes Jurchak: "If we ball this thing up at this point, it will

determine how stringent a program we will have to work with in the future."

Both Jurchak and Kirkland noted the importance of the Congressional efforts this summer, and pointed out that a consistent approach to dairy policy was desperately needed.

"Dairy policy is very complicated," adds Kirkland. "But hopefully, Congress won't rush in and make changes without thinking them through. We are at a crossroads of sorts. And we need effective, logical policies that consider the long run as well as the short run."

Eastern holds grand opening

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Earl R. Forwood has announced that the grand opening of the Canton warehouse/dairy store complex will be held Saturday, April 27. The warehouse complex is the new headquarters for Eastern's successful Dairy Products Division.

The complex will be open from 10 am to 5 pm for inspection by the public. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11 am to officially open the buildings. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

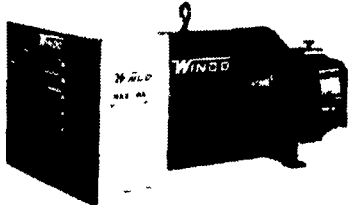
Eastern's Dairy Products Division was started six years ago as a simple "products to producers" program offering only two products to Eastern members.

The operation, managed by Thad Woodward, currently offers over 120 products and achieved over \$6.1 million in gross sales in the 1983-84 fiscal year.

The Dairy Products Division consists now of the warehouse/dairy store complex, retail stores located in Wellsboro, and Newark, N.Y., and a truck distribution system covering a seven-state area.

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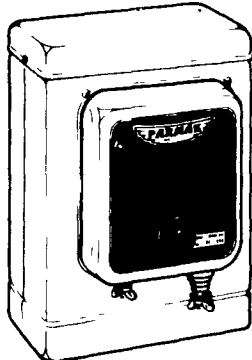
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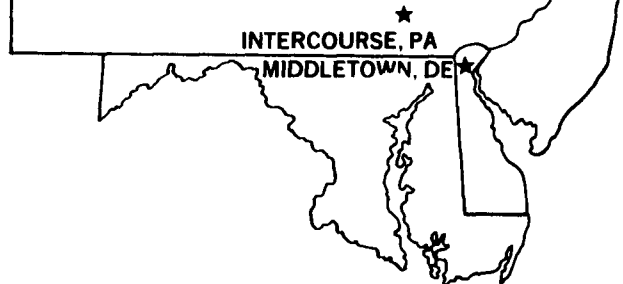
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