

# Dairy Leader Urges Unification

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — The Northeast's dairy industry "must get its act together" or face loss of markets in the next few years according to Clyde E. Rutherford, President of Dairylea Cooperative Inc. He was speaking recently to a luncheon meeting of the Northeastern Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

"Time is running out on the Northeast," said Rutherford. "Other regions have built legislative and marketing muscle. They have set in motion inter-regional forces which, if we do not move decisively, will take over more of the dairy market here in the Northeast corridors."

Rutherford, a dairyman from Otego, N.Y., is chairman of the Commissioner's (N.Y.) Dairy Advisory Council and an executive committee member of the National Milk Producers Federation.

He told the audience of secretaries and commissioners of agriculture and their aides that the midwest dairy industry already has a substantial share of the East coast market for manufactured dairy products and is targeting the area for additional market share.

"What I am talking about is not individual co-ops or companies engaged in competition. I am talking about regions acting in a unified and purposeful manner. They are engaged in programs aimed at their regional self-betterment. I cannot fault them for that" said the dairy co-op president.

"My point is that this region must get its act together. Our state governments, our cooperatives, our independent farmers, our support organizations and companies and our milk processors...all of us are facing stronger challenges for our markets than we have ever experienced before."

Rutherford urged a consolidation of dairy cooperative organizations within the region through mergers and business ventures.

"Cooperation works," he declared. "But the Northeast, as a region, is dragging its collective heels in the area of inter-cooperative relationships. Things have improved, but they have a long way to go."

When I last looked, we had almost as many dairy cooperatives serving less than half as many farmers as we did 20 years ago. The midwest and southeast have moved together while we continue to duplicate each others activities and compete for both members and markets. That did not make sense when there were 100,000 dairymen in the region and it does not make sense now that there are only 30,000 dairymen, with the number slated to drop even further."

Commenting that the various committees councils and other groups have greatly helped to build region-wide support for common goals in legislation and market order changes, Rutherford urged

that the next step needs to be taken, a concerted, unified effort to improve the dairy farmer's "bottom line."

He called for regionwide support for a program of over-order

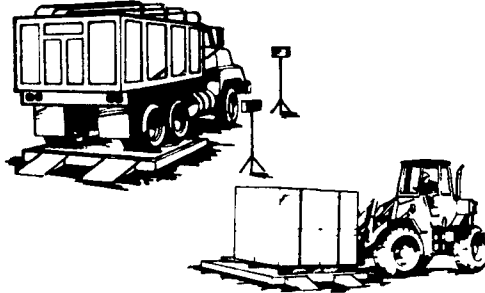
pricing. (Over-order pricing is a legally authorized system under which farmers and their co-ops can get together through a Marketing Agency in Common to determine a price for their milk.)

Rutherford said that such an Agency now exists: the Regional Cooperative Marketing Agency

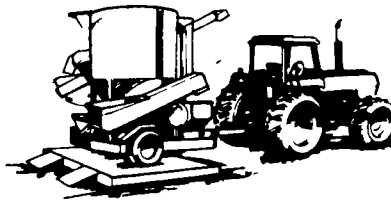
(RCMA). He said that its bylaws have been amended to provide for membership of both cooperatives and individual dairy farmers and that, as of the present date, about

53 percent of the region's dairymen are enrolled.

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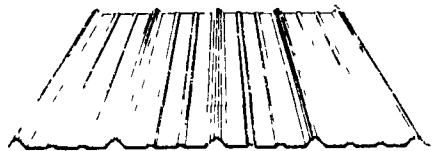
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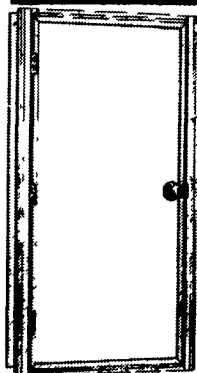
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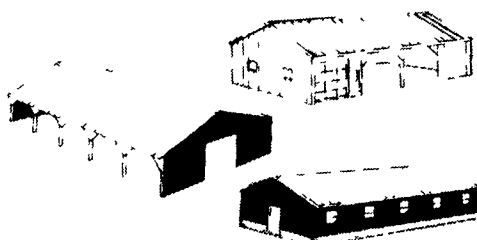
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