

Dairy Co-Op Backs Pizza Promotion As Way To Increase Milk Use

SYRACUSE — The U.S. government has one answer to the nation's milk surplus — encourage farmers to go out of business — but there is another solution that now may be more viable, according to the head of a major East Coast dairy cooperative.

"We have the opportunity to increase consumption of dairy products," said Michael Donovan, general manager of Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative.

"It's a solution that appears more viable than ever," Donovan added, "now that a major pizza chain has approached the National Dairy Board for help in promoting extra cheese on pizza."

Just adding two ounces of mozzarella cheese to pizzas across the nation would absorb an additional 2 billion pounds of milk per year, he said. That would help reduce the surplus to below the 5-billion-pound ceiling set in the 1985 Farm Bill, he said, which would keep the Secretary of Agriculture from cutting the price paid to dairy farmers another 50 cents per hundredweight next January and save additional farmers from leaving the dairy industry.

With dairy farmers and pizza makers pooling efforts and advertising dollars, Donovan said, projections given to the dairy board show mozzarella consumption could nearly triple in just 10 years, thereby utilizing an additional 17.8 billion pounds of milk from the nation's dairy farms.

Earl Forwood, the farmer-president of Eastern's board of directors, echoed Donovan's support of a proposal that national and regional dairy promotion boards, which are funded by assessments on the milk that

farmers produce, work with pizza makers.

Forwood noted that the nearly 3,800 member farmers of Eastern have a stake in cheese production. He said a majority of the 2 billion-plus pounds of milk that the co-op handles annually supplies cheese manufacturing throughout the Northeast — including Eastern's own mozzarella plants in Waverly and Horseheads.

Donovan said the co-op "recognized the growing potential of mozzarella cheese" in the late 1970s when it decided to spend \$24 million to build the plants. "Eastern's dairy farmers staked part of their future on mozzarella cheese, and it's paying off," Donovan said. He cited the "in-

creasing popularity of Italian cheeses" among consumers.

In New York State, Donovan said, Italian cheese production jumped from 95.3 million pounds in 1975 to 260.1 million pounds in 1985. Likewise, he said, mozzarella production nearly tripled — from 56.6 million pounds in 1975 to 158 million pounds in 1985. The Eastern mozzarella plants, he explained, accounted for more than 70 million pounds of that 158-million-pound output, which placed New York third in the nation for mozzarella, and second for Italian cheeses.

Nationally, he added, mozzarella production more than doubled during those same 10 years, totaling about 1.05 billion pounds in

1985. Donovan went on to cite the impact of just one pizza maker on the nation's milk supply.

"In 1981, this large chain of pizza restaurants decided to add 4 ounces of cheese to their pizzas," he said. "In three years, their sales grew 71 percent, and the amount of milk that had to be produced to make their cheese went from 460 million pounds to a whopping 1.3 billion pounds." That is an increase of 860 million pounds of milk, he said — "860 million pounds not in the surplus, and all because of the action of just one pizza chain."

Now the pizza chain wants to launch a nation-wide promotion to get consumers to ask for extra

cheese, Donovan said. "Eastern is all for this," he said, "because it will not only divert more milk for cheese production for that company, but it will also put pressure on other pizza makers to use more real mozzarella cheese."

Whether national and regional dairy boards will support such a promotion remains to be seen, Donovan added, "but dairy farmers and pizza makers getting together in this way will make a good marriage."

"Everyone benefits," he said. "Consumers will buy a tasty, nutritious product, and at the same time help dairy farmers who have been hit hard with lower net prices for their raw milk."

Bill To Aid Extension Introduced

HARRISBURG — A \$5 million supplemental appropriation for agricultural research and the Cooperative Extension Service would be authorized under legislation sponsored by State Rep. Samuel Morris, D-Chester County.

Morris, chairman of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, said the appropriation would help offset shortfalls caused by federal budget cutbacks. Legislation (H.B. 63) allocating the additional funds was introduced recently by Morris and House Minority Whip Samuel E. Hayes Jr., R-Huntingdon. The legislation has more than 40 co-sponsors.

The supplemental appropriation would go to the College of Agriculture at Pennsylvania State University, where it would be used to fund extension services and agricultural research during the remaining months of the current fiscal year.

Morris said Federal funds have traditionally financed 60 percent of extension personnel and 40 percent of research personnel at the university. He said federal funds have already been cut by approximately \$11 million on an annual basis; additional federal budget cuts are anticipated in fiscal year 1987.

"The \$5 million we are seeking would finance important agriculture-related programs until the new state budget is approved this summer," Morris said.

Morris said the supplemental appropriation bill should be seen as part of a statewide effort to encourage economic development. "Agriculture is Pennsylvania's number one industry," he said. "The state's economy depends on agriculture, and agriculture depends on the research and cooperative extension programs at Penn State."

Morris said the money sought by his legislation would finance livestock and crop research, food science and business management programs, 4-H Clubs and a variety of educational programs.

"We are seeking a modest amount of money which will provide important services to our state's leading industry," Morris said.

Morris said the supplemental appropriation bill is also intended to make the legislature more aware of the need for agricultural research and extension services. Hearings on the state's 1987-88 budget will begin in March, and Morris said funding for those services will probably be a key element of Penn State's budget request.

Milk Marketing Specialist

To Speak In Maryland

BEL AIR, Md. — Local dairymen from Harford and Cecil Counties will have an opportunity to hear the latest information concerning the dairy situation and government policy Feb. 2, 1987 at 7:30 p.m. in the Southhampton Middle School.

According to Brenda Schucker, Agricultural Extension Agent, Dr. Robert Jacobson from Ohio State University will discuss "The Dairy Situation, Outlook and Policy" with particular emphasis on the supply management issue.

Schucker noted that Jacobson is recognized as an authority in the area of milk marketing and has been a speaker at milk marketing seminars across the country.

A panel discussion will follow Jacobson's address and further investigate the issue of supply management. Panel members will include Dr. Jack Wysong, from the University of Maryland, and a representative of Dairymen, Inc., Interstate Milk Producers and Maryland-Virginia Milk Producers.

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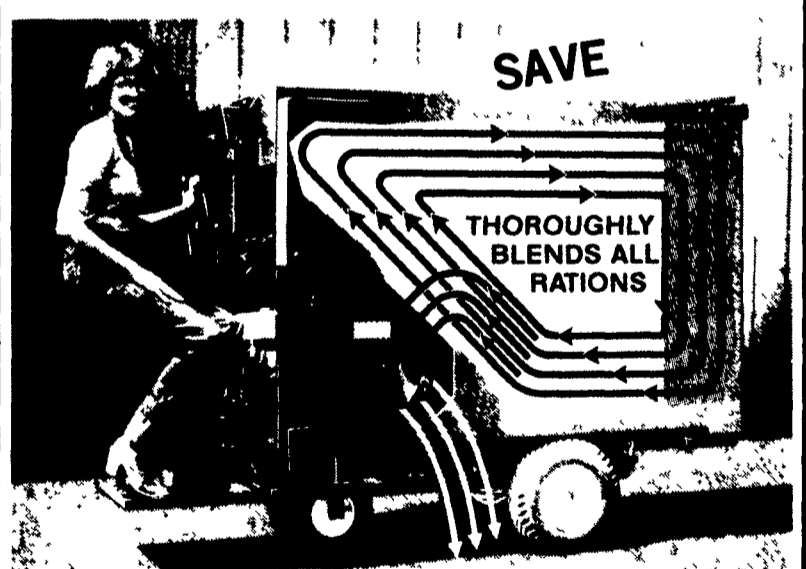
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