

Agency Farmers Rally To Get Majority Support

MEDINA, Ohio — "Just ten months ago consumers were paying prices for dairy products that returned nearly \$16 per cwt to dairy farmers in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

Since then, the demand for dairy products has remained strong, but because our (dairy farmers) milk price is determined on national marketing conditions, it has already dropped more than \$3 per cwt from last year. Looking at 1991, it is expected that blend

prices in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania will average between \$11.25 and \$11.75 per hundredweight (cwt)," said Lowell Friedline, dairy farmer from Somerset County Pennsylvania.

Friedline, also a director for the Producers' Equalization Agency (Agency) added, "We produce a nutritious products, spend money advertising it and have created a strong demand, but this is self defeating because we do not have a mechanism to price our product.

This is particularly disturbing since just a few months ago, consumers locally were paying prices for dairy products which yielded us a reasonable milk price."

"In order to have a healthy dairy industry in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, we (dairy farmers) need to establish a mechanism to price our product. This can only be done if the vast majority of dairy farmers agree to price their milk through a pricing agency. Although this may seem difficult since dairy farmers by nature are independent, it can be done if an organization was designed in a manner that was acceptable to both independent

dairy farmers and dairy farmers who ship their milk through a cooperative. I feel the Agency is this type of organization, but to become operational the vast majority of dairy farmers in eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania need to sign an agreement to mutually price their milk," said Jim Woods, independent dairy farmer from Mercer County Pennsylvania.

Woods added, "The Agency is a dairy farmers' organization with a goal to price milk at a level that will return to dairy farmers at least

a \$1 over-order premium. Dairy farmers can achieve this goal by gaining the acceptance from the vast majority of dairy farmers in this market to mutually price their milk so local milk processors will not be disadvantaged.

"If dairy farmers want a better price, they need to become involved by pricing their milk. So do something about your future, become involved and attend the next Agency meeting in your area or call 1-800-875-2250," Woods said.

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