

New Jersey Farm Bureau Calls For Dairy Summit

TRENTON, N.J. — The New Jersey Farm Bureau is calling for all members of the New Jersey dairy industry to meet to review the industry's situation and outlook, and to attempt to build some general consensus about what can be done to ensure its survival.

According to a letter sent early this month to all dairy producers in New Jersey, there are to be two meetings held in January — one in the northern region of the state, the other in the south — to "fashion an agenda which all New Jersey dairy farmers can agree upon and can prepare the industry for the 21st century."

The first meeting is to be held Jan. 4 in the northern region of the state at the Tranquility Church, in Tranquility, N.J.

The second meeting is to be held Jan. 6 at the Elmer Grange hall, in Pole Tavern.

The meetings are to run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and lunch is to be provided.

"The dairy industry in New Jersey has experienced significant stress in recent years," according to the letter from Dave Kanach, NJFB Dairy Committee chairman.

"Falling milk prices and increasing costs for inputs, the decreased availability of local services, and the uncertainty of future environmental and milk quality regulations have all combined to make the future direction unclear.

"Furthermore, changes in the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and at the Rutgers' Cooperative Extension Service all indicate that new direction is essential at this time, if the New Jersey dairy industry is to continue

to be viable in the future."

According to Kanach, the decision to hold a summit was made at a recent convention of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. He also stated in the letter, "It is being sponsored by Rutgers' Cooperative Extension, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey Milk Industry Association, and the New Jersey Farm Bureau."

By NJFB's account, "Conditions for dairy producers in New Jersey are creating considerable unrest at the present time.

"During 1993, some 44 dairy men in the state left the dairy business, according to the USDA milk market administrators," states the NJFB in wording presented during its convention.

"There continues to be a chronic milk surplus, placing downward pressure on prices. The FDA approval of BST threatens to cause a drop in Class sales of milk of up to 5 percent nationwide, according to consumer surveys conducted by milk processors. This will depend upon the intensity of negative publicity in the marketplace by those who will oppose the use of BST.

"Any further decline in Class I sales from an adverse consumer reaction to BST would be in addition to a 3 percent drop in sales during the past year in Federal Order 2," according to the statement.

Statistically supported, dairy farming is a significant part of New Jersey agriculture. According to data provided by the Farm Bureau, dairy farms use 116,000 acres with Warren and Salme counties each claiming 95 dairy

farms within their municipal boundaries.

Further, there are 80 farms in Sussex County, 48 in Hunterdon, and 22 in Burlington County.

On average, each farm occupies 345 acres and milks 74 cows. The value of milk products from the farms from 1991 to 1992 was \$49.5 million. Estimates have put the total annual economic value of the dairy production industry at \$500 to \$600 million.

By its own proposal, NJFB "should make the stabilization of the New Jersey dairy industry a priority issue. Emphasis should be placed on improved management skills, better understanding of the business, and more efficiencies in herd management.

"Better coordination between dairymen and milk processors could help farm income, possibly leading to a reduction or elimination of milk hauling fees.

"Farm Bureau could help by seeking state action cutting the cost of electricity and farm building taxes."

A tentative schedule of events for the dairy summit meetings includes a series of 10 to 15-minute presentations from representatives of the Farm Bureau; Rutgers; N.J. Department of Agriculture's Division of Dairy Industry; milk processors; promotion council; and Farm Credit.

At the end of the presentations, a half hour may be used for audience comments, or questions of the

representatives.


Lunch may include remarks by Clyde Rutherford, of Dairylea Cooperative Inc., and Ken Olsen, of AFBF, on the national overview of the dairy industry.

The afternoon is to take a different approach with three, concurrent, break-out sessions scheduled. Each is to last for an hour and a half.

Topics covered include the services of Rutgers Cooperative Extension; issues of concern to processors, DDI, cooperatives and promotion agencies; and credit issues, management, and cost of production.

For more information, contact Charles Miller, dairy and livestock associate with the NJFB, at (609) 393-7163.

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