

Pennsylvania's Role In The Global Dairy Industry

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Americans may not be hearing the message that they are not getting enough calcium in their diets. They don't know that milk is a medicinal food, that is it good for you. The problem is that consumers that do hear this message may be turning to other forms of calcium supplements instead of milk and dairy products. That contribute to lower demand for milk.

In a recent press release, Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman attempted to get the right message to young families,

Our challenge is to keep reinforcing the health message. But with milk in particular, we need to recognize that different kids have different needs. A child from a family that has trouble putting food on the table gets a significant part of his or her daily food at school. These kids need the calories and fat in whole milk. But kids from more economically secure homes are the ones with the fast food and other high-fat snacks more readily available. So the lower fat milk is the healthier choice.⁵

Most adult American consumers are clearly more worried about being over weight than getting enough calcium. Milk has gotten a bad wrap as a contributor to obesity. This despite the fact that the percentage of Americans considered overweight continues to increase each year while per capital consumption of milk declines.

We are just finding out that other factors may be the reason for this obesity--soda

consumption and foods rich in sweets and carbohydrates. A recent diet book by Dr. Bob Arnot, a CBS medical correspondent and practicing physician, sheds new light on our American diet. He concludes that foods with high levels of starch or refined sugar lead inexorably to weight gain.

Could it be that soda is not really that good for you? We in the dairy industry could learn something from soft drink companies regarding their tenacity for expanding market share.⁶

Futures Markets:

One big trend that really hasn't happened yet is the development of futures markets. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange and the New York Coffee, Sugar and Cocoa Exchange are battling for the future of the dairy futures industry. These markets see an intense amount of market uncertainty of the part of dairy farmers, cooperatives and processors, anyone involved in the dairy industry.

⁴ Source <http://www.nih.gov/nchd/html/MILK/MILK.HTM>

⁵ Remarks of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, USDA Symposium on Childhood Obesity: Causes And Prevention, Jefferson Auditorium -- October 27, 1998 <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/1998/10/0445>

⁶ For insights read Greising's book on the late Roberto Goizueta, former CEO of Coca-Cola Co.

There are three reasons why the futures markets have not taken off as previously expected. First, the dairy industry is very complicated. It's difficult to explain to a commodities broker in an afternoon how federal orders interact with cash markets. Second, there isn't a readily identified cash market for milk like in grains or other

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