

Busy week for DPAC includes website launch

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Special for Farmshine

EPHRATA, Pa.—Communication efforts by the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) during the past two weeks culminated with the website launch at www.dpac.net on Jan. 12 and a grassroots meeting at the Pennsylvania Farm Show on Jan. 14.

With milk pricing transparency as a core concern on its short-term actions list, DPAC sent a letter of comment to the USDA and Department of Justice (DOJ), on the Dec. 31 deadline, regarding the upcoming joint workshops in 2010. The USDA / DOJ workshop on “concentration, market transparency and vertical integration in the dairy industry” is scheduled for June in Wisconsin.

In that letter of comment, DPAC indicated their interest in participating in the workshop, and voiced concern about market transparency and the need for investigation into marketing practices and changes to the milk pricing structure to ensure a fair and transparent market for U.S. dairy farmers.

On state issues, several DPAC board members attended the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board (PMMB) Jan. 6 sunshine meeting, supporting a petition for a hearing on specific order calculations presented by the PMMB staff and Pa. Department of Agriculture (PDA).

On Jan. 7, DPAC’s professional team followed through on the board’s Dec. 10 vote, sending letters to the offices of Pennsylvania State Attorney General, Tom Corbett, and State Auditor General, Jack Wagner, calling their attention to the public testimony at the Dec. 9 hearing on milk pricing transparency hosted by the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, and asking them to look into the distribution of the state over-order premiums paid by consumers and intended for dairy farmers.

On January 12, vice-chair Daniel Brandt of Brandt-View Farms, Annville, Pa. testified

DPAC Update *‘Controlling your own destiny’*

DPAC launched its website this week. The homepage is pictured below. There, dairy farmers will find frequent updates and other information about the coalition.



on behalf of DPAC at a special hearing on the dairy crisis before members of the Pennsylvania House Republican Policy Committee. The hearing, hosted by Rep. Carl Walker Metzgar in Berlin, Somerset County, Pa., drew nearly 50 dairy producers as well as a dozen representatives from the State House. Testimony was also provided by other interested parties.

In his testimony for DPAC, Brandt noted that while the PMMB raised the over-order premium last year to support the state’s struggling dairy farms, the PDA estimates as much as \$26 million—a significant percentage of the premiums paid by consumers at retail—disappeared in the system between the retail store sales and the farmers’ milk checks in 2009.

DPAC recommended several potential changes to the Pennsylvania Milk Market-

ing Law to improve transparency and capture over-order premiums that may be escaping on milk that is produced in the state, processed out of state and then sold to retail in the state and milk produced and processed in the state, then sold to a redistribution center out of state, before coming back into the state for retail sale.

Pooling of these over-order premiums for more equitable distribution at the farm level, as well as federal dairy market transparency issues, were also discussed.

On Wednesday, Jan. 13, the DPAC executive board met with Pennsylvania State Senator Mike Brubaker, to communicate the concept of the grassroots coalition of dairy producers.

As majority chair of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, Sen. Brubaker hosted the Dec. 9 hearing on milk pricing transparency.

“I have heard from many dairy farmers across the Commonwealth who have expressed frustration with the complex milk pricing structure that lacks transparency,” said Sen. Brubaker, indicating his support of DPAC’s efforts to build consensus for action. “I commend and support the Dairy Policy Action Coalition as an effort of dairy producers—coming together—to bring optimism to their family farm businesses and in working to ensure the future viability of dairy farming in our region.”

On Jan. 14, the DPAC board met and hosted a special informational meeting at the Farm Show Complex. Details will appear in next week’s *Farmshine* and at www.dpac.net.

At the website, producers will find frequent action updates, news, board minutes, and other information about the grassroots coalition. DPAC website visitors can also sign up to receive updates by email. Forms are also available to download, fill out and mail—along with a contribution to the cause. A list of farm service and supply businesses, who have donated thus far, is posted under “Friends of DPAC.”

From Jan. 1 to Jan. 10, DPAC received more than 50 letters and donations from dairy producers. Also, from the agribusiness community, DPAC thanks the following businesses that have donated so far—“Cream of the Crop” sponsors: Morrissey Insurance, Ephrata, Pa.; Sensenig’s Feed Mill, New Holland, Pa.; Lancaster Dairy Farm Automation, Lititz, Pa. and Hagerstown, Md. and Farmshine Newspaper, Brownstown, Pa. “Fortified Skim” sponsors: Farmer Boy Ag, Myerstown, Pa. Other “Friend of DPAC” contributors: King’s AgriSeeds, Ronks, Pa.; White Horse Machine, Gap, Pa.; Petersheim Cow Mattresses, Quarryville, Pa.; Kissling Dairy Consulting, Sinking Spring, Pa.; Douglas Wallick Agency, Camp Hill, Pa.; Richard Mellinger, Lancaster, Pa.; and J&J Silo, Gordonville, Pa.

For more information visit www.dpac.net or call 800.422.8335.