

Continuing the momentum for unified change

By SHERRY BUNTING
Special for Farmshine

EPHRATA, Pa. — “Thanks for your effort to improve our industry. We need leadership!” wrote one dairyman to the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) via website this week.

“I’m totally for this coalition you have formed, and I only wish I could show more financial support, even though, if you need more funds I think you’ll find farmers willing to do what they can. Put all the pressure on that you have the authority to. There are serious changes that need to be addressed. Thank you very much for your efforts and we all hope for results,” said another in a handwritten note.

These are just two of the many letters and emails that have been sent since the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) formed a few months ago to actively participate in policies and issues affecting milk pricing. In three months, the email list has grown to over 400, and in two weeks’ time, nearly 200 dairy farmers from 14 states have so far completed DPAC’s Dairy Producer Survey by mail or online at the coalition’s website.

The survey appeared on page 32 in the February 12, 2010 edition of Farmshine and can be filled out automatically at www.dpac.net. The deadline for responses was set as March 5, 2010 in order for a report to be compiled before the coalition’s March board meeting, which will also be a full day milk pricing workshop.

However, farmers who have not yet filled out their surveys will have a few extra days to do so and still have their responses counted in this important preliminary report.

Producers are urged to visit the coalition’s website at www.dpac.net to enter their survey responses by Monday night, March 8 to be included in the report to the board. A follow up report will re-evaluate the survey data to account for responses received by mail through March 15, and the online version of the survey will remain on the DPAC website until March 15.

A full report and analysis of the survey results will be published later this month, and DPAC’s milk pricing action group and supply management action group will use the information to prioritize their efforts to bring the industry together around a unified plan.

The survey is just part of the preparations underway for the DPAC board’s important milk pricing workshop next week, where directors will bring together resource people and the

DPAC Update *‘Controlling your own destiny’*

authors and supporters of various pricing and supply management plans in order to find solid ground and a unified direction for future dairy policy.

Dairy farmers from New York, New England, Southeast, Midwest, and California have been in contact with DPAC to bring their perspectives to the March board meeting as well.

DPAC receives letters and donations daily from dairy farmers, and the comments and suggestions that have been sent in will also be compiled in the survey report.

Hiring Dennis Wolff as the coalition’s lobbyist allows DPAC to keep up continued communication with key lawmakers on short term action items and long term policy.

The biggest push right now is for implementation of electronic price reporting by USDA as authorized in section 1510 of the 2007 Farm Bill dairy title. This will require funding by Congress, which begins with obtaining a budget cost from USDA to implement this reporting.

Electronic reporting is a key to reducing and ultimately eliminating the influence of the thinly-traded cheese, powder and butter markets on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, promoting in its place the USDA-reporting of daily negotiated trades for traditional commodities and eventually the addition of more products for a more transparent and complete view of milk’s value in the marketplace.

USDA may need to be persuaded to see the importance of this key element of marketplace transparency in order to get electronic reporting moving. Since market transparency is a cornerstone of DPAC’s advocacy efforts, electronic reporting is obviously a key focus for the DPAC in the short term.

The coalition has also been vocal with lawmakers in opposing expansion of dairy trade with New Zealand. The Trans Pacific Partnership free trade agreement negotiations begin this month. DPAC joined other organizations in sending letters to the U.S. Trade Representative at the Office of the President detailing concerns about the impact of expanded dairy trade with New Zealand on U.S. milk prices at the farm level and a sustainable, safe, local milk supply for consumers.

As DPAC moves forward on short term actions and long term policy, the coalition is also successfully spreading the word to dairy producers throughout the U.S.

After introducing DPAC more fully to Ohio dairy producers on Feb. 22 at the Mt. Hope sale barn, Dennis Wolff will join other panelists for a Dairy Forum on March 30 planned by the Ohio Dairy Producers Association.

Fundraising is critical to DPAC’s efforts in lobbying on important actions to improve milk market transparency and to chart a new course for milk pricing in the U.S. This work cannot continue without the support of producers along with the agribusinesses that have a shared stake in securing a sustainable future for dairy farm families.

As of February 26, 2010, more than 130 dairy producers have sent in contributions and 27 agribusinesses have donated.

DPAC thanks the following agribusinesses for standing with dairy producers in this unprecedented time for change:

‘Cream of the Crop’ sponsors (\$5000): Morrissey Insurance, Ephrata, PA; Sensenig’s Feed Mill, New Holland, PA; Lancaster Dairy Farm Automation, based in PA and MD.

‘Whole Milk’ sponsors (\$2500): Farmshine Newspaper, Brownstown, PA.

‘Fortified Skim’ sponsors (\$1000): Farmer Boy Ag, Myerstown, PA; Mark Hershey Farms, Lebanon, PA; Judsons, Inc., Columbia Crossroads, PA; Hooper, Inc., Intercourse, PA.

Other ‘Friend of DPAC’ contributors (\$500 or less): King’s AgriSeeds Inc., Ronks, PA; White Horse Machine, Gap, PA; Petersheim Cow Mattresses, Quarryville, PA; Kissling Dairy Consulting, Sinking Spring, PA; Prevent Distributors, Peach Bottom, PA; Martin’s Elevators Inc., Hagerstown, MD; The Employees of Mark Hershey Farms, Lebanon, PA; FM Brown’s Sons Inc., Birdsboro, PA; Udder Comfort, Ontario; Ruhl Insurance, Manheim, PA; Bradford County Holstein Assn., New Albany, PA; Douglas Wallick Agency, Camp Hill, PA; Gehman Feed Mill, Inc., Denver, PA; Fulton Bank Ag, Lebanon, PA; Metzler Bros. Inc., Martinsburg, PA; Metzler Bros. Tank, Truck, Trailer, Martinsburg, PA; Taurus Service Inc., Mehoopany, PA; Richard Mellinger, Select Sires, Lancaster, PA; J&J Silo, Gordonville, PA; Middletown Grange #684, Penns Park, PA.

To learn more about DPAC, call 800.422.8335 or visit www.dpac.net.