

# Grassroots momentum builds as DPAC, SEDC work on U.S. Farm Bill dairy policy

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Special for Farmshine

GREENSBORO, N.C. — “The significant problems we face today cannot be overcome with the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” This Albert Einstein quote set the tone for a vigorous discussion on alternative legislation that focuses on areas of dairy policy dairy farmers can agree on.

As details of National Milk Producers Federation’s (NMPF) Foundation for the Future (FFTF) have become more widely known and discussed, rank-and-file dairy producers have many questions and are voicing their concerns, as evidenced by the numerous emails and phone calls received by the Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) recently.

As previously reported, DPAC adopted a resolution in February stating it cannot endorse NMPF’s Foundation for the Future (FFTF) based on the information available at this time and are working on drafting an alternative bill.

A “working group” made up of board and ad hoc members from DPAC, along with members of the Southeast Dairy Coalition (SEDC), convened in Greensboro, North Carolina March 7-8 to begin the process of drafting this alternative legislation.

Involved in this initial “working group” are active dairy producers from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Georgia.

The Greensboro meeting was facilitated by Dennis Wolff, a lifelong dairy producer and former state ag secretary who serves as DPAC’s relations consultant. The group also invited Calvin Covington, a dairy marketing consultant and expert who resides in North Carolina to give a presentation on current dairy policy proposals.

DPAC’s “Cornerstones for Change” served

as the basis for developing the alternative plan. A “discussion draft” bill from 2007 was also used for its legislative categories. By the end of the two days, the DPAC/SEDC “working group” developed a few key points, identified areas needing further information, and outlined a mission for the bill:

- To recognize the global realities of the 21st Century and pursue policies that position U.S. dairy producers for the opportunity to be profitable;

- To recognize the erosion of the dairy producer’s share of the consumer’s dairy dollar and pursue policies that equitably share price risk across all sectors of the industry;

- To recognize the public value of dairy farms in rural communities throughout various milk sheds and pursue policies that decentralize the concentration of market power;

- To reduce government expenditures and pursue policies that replace traditional safety nets with voluntary tools for protecting dairy farm revenue and equity;

- To improve and implement current dairy policies rather than adding new layers of government-mandated supply control;

The alternative bill is being developed to specifically amend the Farm Security & Rural Investment Act of 2008 to: Improve mandatory reporting of dairy commodities; repeal the Dairy Product Price Support Program and enhance the voluntary Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) Dairy tool, and evaluate the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program for modification.

**Other areas of the bill under review** by DPAC and SEDC include: Federal Order Reform or a measure to evaluate and report to Congress on the economic benefits to milk producers of establishing a simplified pricing system; ways to modify the Federal Order pro-



The DPAC/SEDC “working group” met last month and has since followed up by teleconference (l-r) Rob Barley (PA), Roger Jefferson (VA), Ken Wunderlin (WI), Dennis Wolff (PA), Dr. Ben Shelton (NC), Dale Hoffman (PA), Cliff Hawbaker (PA), Dave Forgey (IN), Maury Cox (KY), Jack Fritz (TN), Alan Kozak (OH), John Harrison (TN), Bob Klingenfus (KY). Not pictured is Everett Williams (GA). Photo by S. Bunting

ducer referendum process as it relates to “bloc voting”; ways to develop and actively market U.S. dairy products abroad and to encourage new technologies and product development. A market cow bonus program outline has also been submitted for economic analysis to see if it has value before further discussion.

**Time is of the essence.** Right now, NMPF’s FFTF is the only package of proposals circulating in Washington D.C. NMPF’s highly prescriptive Federal Order Reform piece and the Dairy Market Stabilization piece have both stirred questions and concerns among dairy producers at the grassroots level.

DPAC’s purpose in drafting alternative leg-

islation is to give dairy farmers a voice as the process unfolds ahead of the 2012 Farm Bill.

**An Open Letter from DPAC** to fellow producers, organization boards, and other industry participants appears on page 30 of this week’s *Farmshine*. The letter is also posted at [www.dpac.net](http://www.dpac.net). DPAC’s Open Letter has already received numerous responses from individuals and boards, and more responses are needed to share with members of Congress in the weeks ahead. Dozens of farmers have requested hundreds of congressional packets as they meet individually with their elected officials.

Producers are urged to get involved and stay tuned as these efforts develop.

## Grassroots effort garners Senate cosponsors to amend PA Milk Marketing Law

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Over the past two weeks, dairy producers have actively responded to DPAC’s call-to-action seeking cosponsors for Pennsylvania State Senator Mike Brubaker’s bill to amend the Commonwealth’s Milk Marketing Law. The grassroots response shows the impact of farmers getting involved in the legislative process.

Sen. Brubaker’s bill — a revised version of last year’s Senate Bill 1480 — seeks to more fully collect and equitably distribute the state-mandated over-order premium paid by consumers on all Pennsylvania retail milk sales and intended by law for the dairy farmers.

The bill is expected to be introduced at the end of this week or early next week, and at that time, the bill will be given a number.

DPAC’s Pennsylvania state issues action group has worked tirelessly on this issue for more than a year. The issue was also addressed in PA Farm Bureau policy, and the PFB is reportedly drafting a letter of support.

On page 17 of last week’s *Farmshine*, DPAC provided a list of all PA State Senators, and their contact information, to assist producers in reaching out to their elected State Senators on this issue.

DPAC directors thank fellow dairy farmers for their grassroots response, which needs to continue in order to move this bill forward for consideration by the Pennsylvania Senate.

For more information, visit [www.dpac.net](http://www.dpac.net) or call 800-422-8335 and ask for DPAC or email [agrite@ptd.net](mailto:agrite@ptd.net).