

Not following the party line

Dairy group opposes Foundation for the Future plan

By Jim Massey

Editor

OSHKOSH — Sherry Bunting says more than a few dairy organizations have concerns about the National Milk Producers Federation's Foundation for the Future plan, but many are afraid to formally oppose it because they fear momentum for



Bunting

reform will be lost. Bunting, correspondence secretary for a Pennsylvania-based organization known as the Dairy Policy Action Coalition, was in Wisconsin last week to explain DPAC's proposals to farmers and build support for alternatives to the Foundation for the Future plan. DPAC officials describe their organization as a "coalition of grassroots dairy producers actively participating with a unified voice on policies and issues affecting milk prices."

Bunting said DPAC formed in late 2009 when farmers met throughout Pennsylvania and Ohio to discuss the milk-price depression and what could be done to prevent it from happening again.

Dairy farmers from the two states eventually formed DPAC and hired former Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff to lobby on behalf of the group. The group's board of directors now includes dairy farmers from other parts of the country, including Sue Schultz of Chilton.

Bunting said the farmer members decided to come up with a "bullet strategy instead of a shotgun approach," picking issues that producers could agree on and coming up with proposals for change.

"You have to have a solution, not just talk about the problem," Bunting said.

Among DPAC's "cornerstones for change" are proposals to improve market transparency and dilute the Chicago Mercantile Exchange influence on

cheese prices; reduce the number of milk classes from four to two; and eliminate the dairy product price support program; and adopt federal pricing policies that help U.S. dairy farmers become consistent suppliers of dairy products in the world market.

Bunting said DPAC is one of the only organizations that has expressed opposition to the Foundation for the Future plan. The plan would reform the federal milk marketing order system, create a dairy producer margin protection program, and establish a dairy market stabilization program to help address periodic imbalances in milk production and demand.

"Some other dairy organization boards have been reluctant to sign on to DPAC until they feel they've had their last-ditch effort to influence National Milk," Bunting said. "They're afraid of breaking up the perception of unity and getting nothing. Until they're convinced the something is worse than nothing, we're probably

going to get the something." Bunting said DPAC is the only organization she knows of that has gone on record in opposition to the Foundation for the Future plan.

"We need to slow down the fast track and tell our congressmen that farmers don't understand it and are uncomfortable with the details once they learn about it," she said. "We'd better at least make sure the so-called unity is for real before this something comes down the pike."

In a March 21 letter to policymakers and dairy industry officials, the 21-member DPAC board of directors said they could not endorse Foundation for the Future and are working on an alternative plan.

"If NMPF's FFTF plan becomes law, producers will be forced to deal with a centralized, one-size-fits-all supply control program for the next six years tied to a scalable national insurance plan, with no opportunity for a true producer referendum and a reduced opportunity to make the changes that are

For more information, call 800-422-8335 or visit www.DPAC.net.

most necessary," the letter states. "We are asking Congress to represent the dairy farmers and the communities who depend on them by bringing transparency to this process of determining future dairy policy."

David Cooper, general manager of Madison-based Family Dairies USA, said Family Dairies has been talking with DPAC officials since last summer. He said Schultz is a Family Dairies member but is serving on the DPAC board as a dairy farmer and not as a Family Dairies representative.

"Family Dairies wants to reach out and work with as many organizations as we can to find solutions to help dairy farmers," Cooper said. "The reality is there are some things within the National Milk plan that are positive, but some things that need to be looked at a little closer."

"DPAC is looking at things from a different angle, talking about price discovery and transparency

and more reporting (of product prices and volumes). On the surface it feels like these are good things to be looking at."

Cooper said one of the big challenges will be educating producers about all of the proposals and engaging them in the process.

"Do producers support this? That's the biggest struggle," he said.

Bunting said the next step for DPAC organizers is to come up with a plan and let members of Congress know about it.

"We're letting congressmen know we're working on this and that we're looking for a champion," she said. "And over the next few weeks we need to get feedback from producers."

"Producers are going to have to stay attuned," Cooper said. "They will have to reach out to their congressional leaders and let them know what they want. Otherwise they will only hear from a small group of people."

Domtar biomass plant nears final approval

By Sara Bredesen

Regional Editor

A proposed \$250 million biomass-fired power plant at the Domtar Corp. paper mill in the village of Rothschild is only one permit away from final approval, but a local residents' group opposing the plant is looking to Gov. Scott Walker for a reprieve.

Concerned village residents attended an informational meeting March 29 and were presented with material documenting hazards associated with air quality from similar plants, according to village resident Laurel Rouse.

She said copies were forwarded to Walker and other government officials in hopes they would hold up the final permit, which is pending with the state's Public Service Commission. "We're hopeful that perhaps because Gov. Walker suggested that the biomass plant on the campus in Madison should not be approved, that perhaps the same will happen to us up here," Rouse said.

Rouse said the meeting organized by Save Our Air Resource, a local citizens' group, may have come too late. The Department of Natural Resources ruled in favor of a required air permit March 28.

The biomass plant is a joint project of We Energies and Domtar Paper and is designed to burn wood, waste wood and sawdust to generate heat and electricity for Domtar, Lignotech USA and We Energies.

About 400 construction jobs and 150 permanent jobs are

expected to result from the project, according to We Energies.

At hearings before the PSC in November, the overwhelming majority of testimony was in favor of the plant. Most focused on job security for paper mill workers.

Rouse said jobs aren't really secure. She referred to the Port Edwards paper mill that Domtar bought and then closed in 2008.

"The concern here is that if We Energies is permitted to build this power plant, and Domtar decides they are going to close the mill, we are stuck with this huge plant that we don't really want," she said.

Newly appointed PSC commissioner Phil Montgomery began work April 4, which may have slowed the final permit, said We Energies spokesman Brian Manthey.

"It's a matter of when the new commissioner and the others are comfortable with the record and knowing everything that's in there," Manthey said. "Obviously, there's a lot in this record for the new commissioner to read up on to be able to make a determination."

If the PSC gives its approval, construction could start in late spring or early summer, Manthey said.

If approval comes, the fight will be over for those who oppose it, Rouse said.

"The plant will be built, and those of us who are concerned will remain concerned but powerless," she said.

Sara Bredesen can be reached at 715-360-7253 or sbrede@gmail.com

In brief

Rude won't seek reappointment

Brian Rude, a Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Board member since 2004, has announced he will not seek reappointment when his term expires May 1, 2011.

Rude, vice president of external and member relations at Dairyland Power in La Crosse, sent a letter to Gov. Scott Walker on March 31 announcing his intentions.

"The board requires a time commitment that is difficult for me to meet given my work and personal obligations," Rude said. "Also, I believe it is healthy to have rotation of the citizen positions on various boards and believe it would be good to give someone else the opportunity to join the board and work on the many challenges facing Wisconsin agriculture and Wisconsin's consumers."

Two other board members' terms also expire May 1. Mike Krutza, from Wausau, announced earlier this year that he won't seek reappointment. Andy Diercks, from Coloma, is board chairman but hasn't announced his intentions.

Digester operator training slated

FOND DU LAC — In response to an increased use of digesters in the U.S., an anaerobic digester operator training program will be April 13-15 in Fond du Lac to provide design, process and safety information for digester operation.

The training program will highlight design options and optimization of system operation with a focus on safety, including an on-farm safety assessment and walk-through. Detailed operational and trouble-shooting information will include system start-up, process control and monitoring to provide a framework to maintain operator safety while achieving consistent biogas production.

A panel of industrial, municipal and on-farm digester operators will provide real-world experience and expertise for digester operation and management. Biogas and digestate end use, regulations and permits, and environmental issues will complete the training.

The program will be at UW-Extension Fond du Lac County, 400 University Drive, Room UC 113/114, Fond du Lac. For more information, visit <http://fyi.uwex.edu/digesteroperatorprogram>.

Phosphorus rule could be delayed

MADISON (AP) — Gov. Scott Walker now wants to delay putting the state's new phosphorus pollution limits into effect rather than scaling them back.

Walker's original budget proposal called for ratcheting back the standards so they were no more restrictive than other states' limits. But Department of Natural Resources Secretary Cathy Stepp told the Legislature's budget committee April 4 that Walker's top aide now wants to modify the plan to delay the standards for two years rather than bringing them in line with other states.

Stepp said communities can't afford to comply with the new limits right now. A two-year wait would provide more time to develop more flexible implementation options and for other states to bring their standards up to Wisconsin's, leveling the playing field for businesses.

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JD 2800, 4X, auto variable... \$3,500

JD 2700, 5X, auto adj..... \$2,995

White 588, 5x18 auto adj... \$3,250

IH 720, 4x18, auto..... \$2,250

IH 710, 5x18, trip..... \$750

IH 700, 5x16 trip..... \$500

JD 1450, 4x18, trip..... \$750

JD 1450, 5x16, trip..... \$750

JD 1450, 5x18, trip..... \$850

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JD 2800, 4X, auto variable... \$3,500

JD 2700, 5X, auto adj..... \$2,995

White 588, 5x18 auto adj... \$3,250

IH 720, 4x18, auto..... \$2,250

IH 710, 5x18, trip..... \$750

IH 700, 5x16 trip..... \$500

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