

Dairy Policy Action Coalition Update
‘Controlling your own destiny’
DPAC prepares for next steps

By SHERRY BUNTING
Special for Farmshine

EPHRATA, Pa.—After last week’s report about the newly formed Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC), dairymen have engaged with questions and support. DPAC is a grassroots coalition of producers with a single purpose: To actively participate in dairy policy that affects milk pricing.

In his conversations with fellow farmers, chairman Cliff Hawbaker, a Franklin County, Pa. dairy producer, learned that dairymen want to receive brief updates, often. Frequent updates will be found in the pages of Farmshine, and the flow of information will eventually spread to include other communication tools as DPAC gears up for action.

In addition, all DPAC meeting minutes and updates are also sent by email or broadcast fax to U.S. Senate and House Ag Committee members as well as Pennsylvania House and Senate Ag Committee members.

Chairman Hawbaker met with the executive committee—Rob Barley, Lancaster County dairy producer, and Daniel Brandt, Lebanon County dairy producer—in Ephrata, Pa. this week to prepare for DPAC’s next meeting.

They spent Tuesday afternoon drafting proposed bylaws, discussing organizational flow, drafting letters to be distributed for their financial support, and preparing the agenda for the second meeting of the DPAC charter board next week.

The agenda will include action items on proposed bylaws, discussion of the organizational vision, a brief report from Barley on the executive committee meeting, a brief report from Brandt on the upcoming Pa. Senate Ag Committee hearing on milk prices, and old business, before moving into the ‘meat’ of the meeting where Dennis Wolff, Versant Strategies, will lead the discussion about strategies for action on immediate issues.

The front-burner issues, which DPAC voted on Nov. 19 to immediately pursue, are: 1) Federal daily mandatory price reporting to include more dairy products—like fresh Italian cheeses and yogurt—and to decrease the lag time of the weekly NASS Survey; 2) Federal mandatory reporting and auditing of the NASS Cold Storage survey of dairy product inventories; 3) Market concentration and anti-competitive issues in relation to the 2010 workshops USDA and Department of Justice (DOJ) will use to gather information from the field.

DPAC will also begin identifying action groups to work on other policies and issues affecting milk pricing.

“Information plus knowledge times experience equals power and performance,” said Hawbaker. “This coalition is the concept of producers coming together to represent the greater community of dairy farmers at the grassroots. DPAC is not ‘another dairy organization,’ and it does not replace what other organizations are doing. It is being

formed to specifically target policies and issues that affect milk prices, which affects all producers and the businesses that serve them.”

“This is something a little outside the box,” added Barley.

The DPAC executive committee also appointed Brandt to be ready for the possibility of testifying at the upcoming Pa. Senate Ag Committee hearing on milk prices. Because DPAC is broader than one state, the board had previously appointed Brandt—along with producers Zack Meck and Nelson Troutman—to lead an action group carrying the ball on Pennsylvania-specific issues relating to the Milk Marketing Board. Dennis Wolff will join Hawbaker, Brandt, Meck, Troutman, and Bernie Morrissey at the Pa. Senate Ag Committee hearing on Dec. 9.

Active grassroots participation in dairy policy requires time and money, so donations are needed for this effort to improve the future of the dairy industry for its milk producers. However, DPAC does not intend to operate as a dues-paying membership or assessment organization. Instead, dairy producers are the community of members, and they will be asked to donate. Producer donation letters will be finalized for distribution after DPAC’s meeting next week.

DPAC is also counting on donations from agribusinesses to help it achieve active participation in dairy policy that affects the future of family dairy farm businesses. Bernard C. Morrissey Insurance has already pledged startup funds of \$6,000 to cover the first month of operations for the services of the professional team DPAC has hired, which includes Dennis Wolff and Versant Strategies as well as the writing services of freelancer Sherry Bunting.

Agribusiness sponsorships range from “Cream of the Crop” at \$5000, “Whole Milk” sponsorships at \$2,500, and “Fortified Skim” sponsorships at \$1000.

Donations are payable to Dairy Policy Action Coalition (DPAC) at 890 North Reading Road, Ephrata, PA 17522. For more information, call toll free at 800-422-8335.

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