



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2019

WFU Communications, Danielle Endvick, 715-471-0398 or dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

NFO Communications, Rachel Riesgraf, 952-529-8526 or rriesgraf@nfo.org

Farm groups collaborate on proposals to address dairy crisis at upcoming Dairy Together events

CHIPPEWA FALLS, WI – Farm organizations across the country are banding together to advocate on several proposals to stabilize dairy prices and slow the loss of family farms. The Dairy Together Road Show will educate dairy farmers and industry stakeholders about several potential pathways toward market stabilization.

The events are being organized by the National Farmers Organization and Farmers Union organizations from Wisconsin, New England, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, California, and the Rocky Mountain region, with support from the National Farmers Union and Holstein Association USA.

“To effect any meaningful change, it’s going to take a strong coalition of farm groups and other industry stakeholders,” said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden. “We’re pulling together farm organizations, agricultural lenders, equipment dealers, cooperative leaders and all who are being impacted by the current dairy crisis. This is a collaborative effort aimed at providing relief to struggling dairy farmers – and that relief can’t come soon enough.”

The groups will present research on plans that consider federal milk order system reform via a structured dairy pricing program as well as avenues of oversupply management through an updated version of the Dairy Market Stabilization Program that was considered in the lead-up to the 2014 Farm Bill. Recognizing the urgency of the situation dairy farmers are facing, they also plan to unveil plans for short-term emergency relief.

Farm Income Analysis



Last winter, WFU enlisted dairy economists Mark Stephenson from the University of Wisconsin and Chuck Nicholson from Cornell to conduct an Analysis of Selected Dairy Programs to Reduce Volatility in Milk Prices and Farm Income. The Roadshow will share the researchers' data on several potential programs' impacts on net farm operating income, farm numbers, domestic demand and cost to the government versus the current Margin Protection Program.

"The bottom line on what we found was generally pretty positive in terms of thinking of what these programs could do," Nicholson said. "We saw reduced variation in prices and also some price enhancement, increased net farm operating incomes, reduction in the rate of farm exits across farms of all sizes, and a reduction in government expenditures on dairy programs."

A Structured Dairy Pricing Program

USDA data shows that production costs are higher for family-sized dairies than for very large dairies. To overcome this cost imbalance, National Farmers Organization proposes modifying the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) by recognizing the differences in costs to produce milk on differing farm sizes. The policy would change the way money pooled on the FMMO would be distributed, allocating funds to dairy farmers at two tiers based on milk marketing volume.

"The marketing orders were originally created in the 1930s to level the dairy farmer playing field and improve prices paid to producers. But now, the order system no longer achieves its original goals." said National Farmers Organization Dairy Sales Director Dick Bylsma. "If milk marketing orders can recognize differing product values, it can also recognize different production costs on various farm sizes."

Collaborating for Change

"Given the dire state of the U.S. dairy economy, it is crucial that dairy farmers bring along processors and consumers to find workable solutions to this crisis, said National Farmers Union Vice President Patty Edelburg. "Structural change can only be accomplished with a strong set of supporters. We're excited to expand this campaign to reach a broader group of stakeholders and better understand the unique needs of dairy farmers in different regions."

The family farm organizations stressed that with many more family farms on the brink of closure, now is the time to enact bold solutions to halt the loss of dairy farms.

"We are focused on policy changes that align with our organizations' core values of family farming, fair economic policies, and thriving rural communities," Von Ruden said. "We're looking beyond milk labeling, increasing exports, and dairy insurance plans to actual long-term solutions."

Sign up for updates, register for events, view a video analysis of the dairy research, and learn more at www.dairytogether.com.



Locations will include:

NORTHEAST

- **Cortland, New York:** March 28, 11am-2pm, New York State Grange Building, 100 Grange Place. Includes lunch. RSVP at DairyTogether.com, or by calling the NFO Cortland office at 844-378-4169 or local 607-543-4169.
- **Brattleboro, Vermont:** April 3rd, 11am-2pm, Holstein Association USA Headquarters, Brattleboro, VT. Includes lunch. RSVP at DairyTogether.com, or by calling Roger Noonan, New England Farmers Union, 603-487-2540. Handicapped parking available at the meeting location: 1 Holstein Pl. All others can park in the nearby municipal parking center: 77 Flat Street.

WISCONSIN

- **Oshkosh, Wisconsin:** March 27, 10am-noon, WPS Farm Show, EAA Grounds (Hospitality Room inside Hangar A), 1001 Waukau Ave. Free for WPS Farm Show attendees but you must pay \$3 per vehicle to park.
 - **Eau Claire, Wisconsin:** April 2, 11am-2pm, 29 Pines, 5872 33rd Ave. Includes lunch.
 - **Platteville, Wisconsin:** April 4, 12-2:30pm, UW-Platteville Pioneer Farm, 29200 College Farm Rd. Includes lunch.
- RSVP for the Wisconsin event of your choosing at dairytogether.com, or by calling WFU at 715-723-5561.

MICHIGAN

- **St. Johns, Michigan:** April 9, 10:30am-2:30pm, Agroliquid Headquarters, 3055 M-21. Includes lunch. RSVP at dairytogether.com or to Jackie McAlvey at 989-285-2547.

MINNESOTA

- **Greenwald, Minnesota:** April 16, 10am-12pm, Greenwald Pub, 310 1st Ave. N. Lunch to follow. RSVP at dairytogether.com or to Bruce Miller at 651-288-4064.

CALIFORNIA

- **Modesto, California:** April 29, 12-2:30pm, Stanislaus County Agricultural Center, 3022 Service Rd. RSVP at www.DairyTogether.com or by calling Lynne McBride at 925-385-0217.

NEW MEXICO

- **Clovis, New Mexico:** May 2, 11am-2pm, Curry County Extension Building, 1900 East Brady Avenue. Includes lunch. RSVP at DairyTogether.com, or to Nick Levendofsky at 303-283-3528.