



News Release

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"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"

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NMPF President Commemorates Organization's Centennial with Insights on how Past Achievements Set Path for Future

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – As the National Milk Producers Federation begins its second century, the organization is redoubling its efforts to advocate forcefully on behalf of its members in areas including economic opportunities for farmers and the role of dairy products in the diet, said President and CEO Jim Mulhern.

[Speaking](#) in front of more than 800 dairy industry stakeholders at the organization's annual meeting in Nashville, Mulhern commemorated the centennial of one of Washington's leading agriculture policy groups by ensuring that its commitments have not altered, and that NMPF plans to continue its aggressive dedication to issues like animal care, economics, trade and nutrition.

"We will speak out, we will push back, when those who don't necessarily have your interests at heart push their agenda at our expense," he said.

The dairy farming landscape – and the world outside of it – have changed considerably, Mulhern began. The numbers of farms have shrunk, the world marketplace has become more competitive, and consumers are becoming increasingly interested in how their food is produced.

"But these differences – these hurdles – will not be a deterrent for us," he said. "We remain focused on our strategic priorities."

Mulhern said the Margin Protection Program, created in the 2014 Farm Bill, is still the right program for the dairy industry's future, even though it has yet to "live up to its intended potential" amid a struggling dairy economy. He said NMPF is committed to determining the necessary adjustments – such as restoring the margin feed cost adjuster to the level NMPF originally intended – and having Congress pass them at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to calling for immigration reform – a polarizing issue in this year's election season – Mulhern also discussed National Milk's pledge to seek opportunities for dairy all over the world. This includes pushing for passage of free trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership,

strengthening export assistance programs like Cooperatives Working Together, and holding other countries accountable for their protectionist behavior. Most recently, Canada is in the process of implementing a pricing policy that would block American milk product exports.

Mulhern spoke in depth about National Milk's decision two weeks ago to join other prominent farm groups in challenging Dannon USA's pledge to only source its milk from non-GMO cows, what he called a "fear-based marketing tactic."

The issue of sustainable agriculture production is broader than dairy, Mulhern added. The farming community must continue to project a unified voice as it dispels false marketing claims about biotechnology and other claims like "hormone-free" and "antibiotic-free."

In the latter half of his presentation, Mulhern discussed the growing momentum that is changing consumer perceptions on the role of fat in a healthy diet. He said there is increasing evidence that current dietary advice unfairly discriminates against dairy fat.

Another area Mulhern said will be an organizational focus is the National Dairy FARM Program, the dairy industry's animal care verification program. In the last year, FARM has since expanded to also focus on antibiotic resistance and environmental stewardship. Today, more than 98 percent of the nation's milk supply is now covered under the program.

"It is precisely through efforts like this that we will keep customers from trying to dictate farm practices – by demonstrating our high standards and our commitment to continuous improvement," said Mulhern.

When facing these customers, Mulhern said the dairy industry must remain continuously united, which means continuing strong relationships with promotional organizations Dairy Management Inc. and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, as well as the U.S. Dairy Export Council.

National Milk and the dairy industry as a whole are much different today, Mulhern concluded. Fortunately, NMPF has changed to fit increasingly challenging political, environmental and consumer environments.

"National Milk has, and always will be focused on establishing policies that protect and promote your interests," he said. "We're always looking around those dark corners, holding others to their commitments as we're held to ours, and fighting to protect your social license to operate while working to build trust.

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The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.