

## Statement for the Record

Wisconsin Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Rural Issues

Public Hearing on Senate Bill 236

Submitted by

National Milk Producers Federation and International Dairy Foods Association

September 16, 2013



Dear Chairman Schultz:

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of the nation's dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. NMPF's member cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the policy voice of more than 32,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies.

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C., represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies representing a \$125-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA's 220 dairy processing members run more than 600 plant operations, and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85% of the milk, cultured products, cheese and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States.

Due to the significant public health risks associated with the consumption of raw milk, NMPF and IDFA respectfully urge that you **oppose legislation** to legalize the sale of unpasteurized milk in Wisconsin. Senate Bill No. 236 would allow the state-wide direct sale of raw milk, consumption of which has been opposed by every major health organization in the United States, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Consumption of raw milk is a demonstrated public health risk. The link between raw milk and foodborne illness has been well-documented in the scientific literature, with evidence spanning nearly 100 years. Raw milk is a key vehicle in the transmission of human pathogens, including *E. coli* O157:H7, *Campylobacter*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Salmonella*.

Based on a 2012 report<sup>1</sup> from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 1993 and 2006, unpasteurized dairy products resulted in 73 known outbreaks – causing 1,571 cases of foodborne illness, 202 hospitalizations, and 2 deaths. The CDC also concluded that unpasteurized milk was 150 times more likely to cause food-borne illness outbreaks than pasteurized milk, and such outbreaks had a hospitalization rate 13 times higher than those involving pasteurized dairy products.

The CDC has reported nearly 75% of raw milk-associated outbreaks have occurred in states where sale of raw milk was legal. Legalizing the state-wide sale of raw milk in Wisconsin increases the risk to public health, opening up the state's consumers to the inevitable consequence of falling victim to a foodborne illness. No matter how carefully it is produced, raw milk is inherently dangerous. Americans have become ill after consuming raw milk obtained from farms of varying sizes, from cow-share programs, and from licensed, permitted, or certified raw milk producers.

Nearly two-thirds of all outbreaks associated with raw-milk or raw-milk products involve children. For example, in 2011, five children in California were infected with *E. coli* O157:H7 after drinking raw milk; three required hospitalization with hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a serious condition that may lead to kidney failure. In Wisconsin, also in 2011, at a school event, sixteen fourth grade students and adults who drank raw milk donated by a parent later suffered from diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, and vomiting from *Campylobacter* infections. It is the responsibility of Wisconsin's leaders to make decisions to protect the health of the public, most especially those who are minors and are unable to make fully informed decisions that could have profound consequences for the rest of their lives.

One critical aspect of this high-profile issue is the tremendous amount of misinformation that has been disseminated regarding the supposed health benefits of raw milk. It is important to emphasize that no claim related to the purported health benefits of consuming raw milk has been substantiated in any of the medical literature. The scientific consensus is that raw milk can cause serious illnesses and hospitalizations, as well as can result in life-long negative health complications and death.

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<sup>1</sup> Langer, AJ, et al. Non-pasteurized dairy products, disease outbreaks, and state laws – United States, 1993-2006. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. 2012; 18(3):385.

Wisconsin's dairy industry is a very important contributor to the state economy. The state's commercial family dairy farmers and dairy processors sell over \$17.5 billion each year in goods and services. This has a multiplied impact on the Wisconsin economy of \$50 billion in output and nearly 250,000 jobs. Wisconsin's milk production is about 14% of the nation's total, and its dairy processors produce about 18% of the nation's finished dairy products, making the dairy industry the number one contributor to the state economy.

Nationally, our dairy industry benefits from a very high degree of consumer confidence – confidence built in large part due to the excellent food safety record of milk and dairy products. In fact, current statistics estimate only 1-2% of reported foodborne outbreaks are attributed to dairy products. However, of those, over 70% have been attributed to raw milk and inappropriately-aged raw milk cheeses. A single case of illness – even one caused by a well-intentioned dairy farmer – that is attributed to raw milk or raw dairy products in Wisconsin would likely have an adverse effect on consumer confidence in and consumption of all healthful, nutrient-rich dairy foods like milk, yogurt, and cheese.

While choice is an important value, it should not pre-empt consumers' well-being. Legalizing the state-wide sale of raw milk is an unnecessary risk to consumer safety. Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 236.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Jim Mulhern  
Chief Operating Officer  
National Milk Producers Federation



Connie Tipton  
President and CEO  
International Dairy Foods Association