



National
Milk Producers
Federation

News for Dairy Co-Ops

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Market Prices

Senate Tackles Farm Bill This Week

The 2007 Farm Bill hits the floor of the U.S. Senate this week, where controversies over a variety of issues will create a wild ride for the measure.

The outlook for dairy-related issues is clearer, with the main controversy over whether the Senate version will contain a measure to cover imports under the domestic dairy promotion checkoff, which the House bill contains. The import checkoff item was not part of the Senate bill when it left the Agriculture Committee last month.

Larger points of contention that the Senate is expected to debate will be the extent of payment limits; funding for a new permanent disaster assistance program; the limits of the newly-proposed average crop revenue insurance program; the creation of a single food safety agency; and reductions in the ethanol tax credit.

At press time Monday, Sen. Dianne Feinstein was also expected to offer the AgJobs amendment to the bill in an effort to move that critical piece of immigration reform legislation.

The Senate debate is expected to run through this week and into next week, during NMPF's annual meeting (see story further below).

Bush Nominates Schafer as New Agriculture Secretary

Former North Dakota Governor Edward T. Schafer received President Bush's recommendation at the end of last month to fill the cabinet post of agriculture secretary.

If the Senate votes to confirm his nomination, Schafer would assume control over the Department of Agriculture as it confronts important upcoming issues, such as the new Farm Bill that is up for a final decision in Congress in the next few months.

President Bush stated his confidence in Schafer's leadership on the Farm Bill in a speech he gave on October 31: "With Ed's leadership, we will work with Congress to pass a farm bill that provides farmers with a safety net, protects our lands and the environment and spends federal tax dollars wisely."

As the grandson of farmers, Schafer is familiar with the complexities of agriculture. He served two terms as North Dakota's Governor, where farming and ranching is by far the

biggest economic sector.

Schafer will replace Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Conner, who has been the acting agriculture secretary since former agriculture secretary Mike Johanns stepped down to run in the Senate race in Nebraska.

Pennsylvania Prohibits Hormone-Free Labels on Milk

In the latest salvo over the growing presence of hormone-related absence claims on dairy products, Pennsylvania's state agriculture department announced last month that it is pressing fluid milk processors to drop such labeling language from their products.

Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff announced on October 24 that milk labels could not claim to be free of artificial growth hormones, antibiotics, or pesticides because these kinds of claims are misleading. His office asserted that such milk labels, when professing to be hormone-free, antibiotic-free, or pesticide-free, imply that other milk products that do not have such labels are inferior, an occurrence that the state's website termed "absence labeling."

"Absence labeling" distinguishes one type of milk from another, and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture barred such labeling on the basis that there is no scientific evidence declaring that a difference exists between milk from cows with different production practices. All milk must pass approval before it can reach grocery store shelves, meaning that both types are deemed safe for consumers.

Still, some dairy processors protest the ban, saying that they should have a right to choose which label to provide their consumers, and that consumers should be able to decide which product they want to buy. The state government sent letters to 16 companies selling products in the Keystone state, notifying them they were not in compliance with the new policy.

Dairies that were notified of mislabeled products will have until January 1 to comply with the new rule.

R-CALF Sues USDA To Block Canadian Border From Opening

A lawsuit has been filed to prevent the full resumption of cattle trade Nov. 19 between the U.S. and Canada.

The U.S. rancher group R-CALF, along with several consumer advocacy groups, filed suit last week in South Dakota to block the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from opening the U.S. market to Canadian cattle older than 30 months of age. The plaintiffs contend that reopening the border, after having it shut for more than four years, could risk spreading bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) into the U.S. cattle herd or into our meat supply.

The lawsuit, filed on Oct. 29 in the U.S. District Court for the District of South Dakota, alleges that USDA lacks adequate scientific information to prove Canadian cattle is safe for human consumption, and that it also erred in four other areas with its proposed rule to resume full cattle trade in two weeks.

NMPF will be monitoring the status of the lawsuit as it progresses.

California Governor Schwarzenegger Vetoes Clone Labeling Bill

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill (Senate Bill 63) last month that would have required food labels to list any information about products that come from cloned animals.

Despite pressure from California House and Senate members to pass the bill, the Governor defended his decision. On the California State Senate's website, Schwarzenegger wrote: "While I support access to information that helps inform consumer choices, I cannot sign this bill as it is pre-empted by federal law.... Further, I am concerned that this bill would require tracking and labeling requirements that could be unworkable, costly and unenforceable."

The veto marks a victory for farmers and food processors, as such labeling affects how they market their products and thus determines whether choice-conscious consumers will decide to buy from them.

NMPF Joint Annual Meeting Next Week

NMPF members will be in Orlando next week for the 2007 Joint Annual Meeting with DMI and its members. Here is a link to the program for the meeting, which runs Nov. 11-14.

The NMPF meeting will be preceded by a Cooperatives Working Together Committee meeting on Sunday. [View PDF of booklet here.](#)

NMPF Staff Changes

Sarah Olson has joined the NMPF communications department as the Communications Coordinator. Originally from the small south-central Minnesota town of Montgomery, she graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN, last May, and moved to the Washington, DC area in August with her husband. Sarah will be taking over communications responsibilities for Mary Knigge. Mary will now be the Manager, Government Relations and Trade.

Associate Member Focus: IDEXX Laboratories, Inc.

IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. is a worldwide leader in the development and commercialization of innovative technology-based products and services for veterinary, food and water applications.

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