



National  
Milk Producers  
Federation

# News for Dairy Co-Ops

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## Market Prices

### Current Farm Law Extended Until April

With the 2002 Farm Bill set to expire on March 15 and no new law ready to take its place, Congress voted last month to grant a one-month extension of the current law until April 18. Lawmakers hoped that the extension would give them adequate time to get the working version of the new Farm Bill to President Bush's desk for his signature.

Lead negotiators in both the House and the Senate still need to work through specific details in the Farm Bill, including the amount of funding above the long-term budget baseline that will be acceptable to all parties. The related issue is where funding will come from to pay for various budget items. President Bush has threatened a veto if Congress presents a Farm Bill with a price tag that's too high.

If a new Farm Bill cannot be passed by the April 18 deadline, the Bush administration has said it supports a year-long extension of current law, although several members of Congress are opposed to that idea, and instead would prefer that farm policy revert back to the permanent 1938 and 1949 farm laws.

NMPF will continue to push Congress and the administration to settle their differences and pass the 2008 Farm Bill before the extension expires.

### Comments Sought on H-2A Immigration Program

NMPF has prepared draft comments in response to requests by the Department of Labor and the Department of Homeland Security to submit comments on the H-2A seasonal worker visa system.

NMPF's comments call attention to the fact that dairy producers have no access to the H-2A program, and will ask the Labor Department to reconsider their position on this issue and include dairy workers in the H-2A program.

The H-2A program establishes a means for agricultural employers who anticipate a shortage of domestic workers to bring nonimmigrant foreign workers to the U.S. to perform agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature. The seasonal nature aspects of H-2A has left dairy with no options for using the program.

In addition, NMPF's comments focused on the need for the H-2A program to become as user-friendly as other visa program are (e.g. H-1B). The H-2A program visa is the most underutilized visa program in the country due to its layers of bureaucratic red tape and the

difficulty to comply with its costly requirements. NMPF's comments address details of the proposed changes to the H-2A program such as the duration requirement, length of stay requirement, housing requirements and electronic filing issues.

In its comments, NMPF also explains how dairy farmers struggle to find local workers, but most local people are simply not interested in performing the duties on dairy farms today.

The final comments will be posted on the NMPF website after we have received feedback from our members on the draft comments. Questions may be directed to [Jaime Castaneda](#).

### **NMPF's Animal Health Committee Works on Producer Education Materials**

At a meeting last month at the NMPF offices, the Animal Health Committee agreed that dairy producers would benefit from having some basic, easily-accessible tips and techniques concerning animal care. The sharing and adoption of such information within the industry will be crucial in light of the controversy generated by the treatment of dairy animals at the Hallmark meat processing plant in Chino, CA, and the implications for how dairy beef may be priced and marketed in the future.

NMPF's regulatory staff is now working with the committee to develop animal care and handling information that can then be sent out generally across the dairy industry. The information will focus on culling guidelines, animal handling, and appropriate animal care practices. The goal is to produce and distribute the information later this spring.

### **CERCLA/EPCRA Comments Submitted to EPA on Animal Waste Exemption Proposal**

Last week, NMPF and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) submitted joint comments to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regarding EPA's proposal to exempt animal waste from the CERCLA and EPCRA reporting requirements on air emissions.

In the comments, NMPF and NCFC expressed strong support for the exemption, stating that it would be superfluous to make livestock producers, such as dairy farmers, report emissions when there is no precise way to do so. Even if farms would still be required to report animal waste emissions, NMPF and NCFC could foresee no scenario when government emergency response teams would need to act as a result of the statistics reported.

Information about what occurs on farms, or even more simply, where the farms are located, is available to the public if they should be interested in learning about the operations. NMPF and NCFC pointed out the redundancy of putting more regulations on an industry that is already heavily regulated.

The exemption of animal waste from CERCLA/EPCRA will not diminish the EPA's control over air emissions issues. EPA will still have its ability and authority to take enforcement action against producers who require it, if the situation ever arises.

A document of the full comments is available on the [NMPF website](#).

## **CWT continues monitoring of economic benchmarks**

While attending NMPF member annual meetings, one of the most common questions asked of NMPF staff is: "When will CWT conduct the next herd retirement program?"

Each month, NMPF staff members involved with CWT review a number of economic benchmarks, including but not limited to change in cow numbers, milk production, monthly culling of dairy cows, milk prices and the cash costs of producing milk. The staff reviews those benchmarks for their implications on dairy producer economics.

The primary concern staff has is getting the timing right. This means letting the marketplace work to a certain extent. Should CWT act too soon, the dollars that dairy farmers producing nearly 70% of the nation's milk have invested in CWT will not have the maximum positive impact on producers' bottom line. If CWT takes action too late, producers may have been too negatively impacted by the time the herd retirement takes affect.

Dairy farmers can rest assured that CWT is well aware of the economic pressures they face. However, producers must also remember that CWT is a national program and must take action on that basis.

For more information on the CWT program, visit the [CWT website](#).

## **NMPF Hosts Productive Board of Directors Meeting**

The status of the new Farm Bill, immigration reform, skyrocketing production costs, and animal well-being issues: these were just a sample of the discussion topics at NMPF's Board of Directors meeting that took place on March 10-11 in Arlington, VA.

The meeting began with PAC and Dues & Budget committee meetings, followed by the NMPF Officers meeting, where priority issues included current major legislative efforts, such as the Farm Bill and new developments with the Federal Order Task Force. The officers also took time to converse about implications for the dairy industry regarding the recent Hallmark animal abuse case.

NMPF's full Board of Directors met the following day, and the agenda was filled with current affairs issues and projected forecasts for what member producers will be facing in the coming months.

U.S. Representative Collin Peterson (D-MN), Chairman of the House Ag Committee, spoke to the group in the morning about his efforts to push the Farm Bill through Congress and get President Bush to sign it.

To top off the day, newly appointed Secretary Ed Schafer of the USDA visited during lunch, personally introducing himself and explaining how he will work for the interests of the dairy industry while he is in office.

Board members will meet together again this summer on June 10-11 in Alexandria, VA.

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## **Associate Member Focus: Western United Dairymen**

Western United Dairymen (WUD) is a voluntary membership organization representing more than 60% of the milk produced in California.

WUD's mission is to promote sound legislative and administrative policies and programs for the profitability of the industry and the welfare of the consumers by striving always to develop concepts for the general welfare and longevity of dairy producers, while maintaining the strong, positive public image of the dairy farmers.

WUD's contact is Michael March, Chief Executive Officer, who can be reached at 209-527-6453 or by [email](#). To learn more about WUD, please [visit their website](#).

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