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CONTACTS:

Christopher Galen, NMPF: (703) 243-6111
Marti Hogan, IDFA: (202) 220-3535

Dairy Groups Applaud Withdrawal of Tennessee State Raw Milk Bills

(Washington, D.C.) – The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) applauded the withdrawal this week of a series of bills in the Tennessee state legislature that could have increased consumers' risk of foodborne illness by encouraging the use of raw milk.

The Tennessee state senate and its state general assembly each considered adopting a pair of bills meant to increase the availability of raw milk products: SB 1913 and HB 1963 would have removed existing regulations prohibiting the direct sale of raw milk butter; while SB 2104 and HB 2229 would have exempted raw milk and dairy products sold from a home kitchen from licensure, inspection and regulation. The Tennessee general assembly did not approve either bill, effectively killing the effort this year to pass both measures.

The dairy groups earlier this year had advised state lawmakers in Nashville to oppose the proposals, given that passage of the bills likely would have increased the production and consumption of unpasteurized products that have a significantly higher likelihood of spreading disease-causing bacteria.

“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,” said Jim Mulhern, President and CEO of NMPF. “Raw milk is a key vehicle in the transmission of human pathogens, including *E. coli* O157:H7, *Campylobacter*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Salmonella*.”

“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,” said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., IDFA President and CEO. “Legalizing and

regulating the sale of raw milk sends a signal to consumers that drinking unpasteurized milk is safe when, in fact, the opposite is true.”

In correspondence earlier this winter, the two organizations provided Tennessee lawmakers with overwhelming evidence collected by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) linking the increased availability of raw milk products with a rise in serious human illnesses.

In data collected between 2009 and 2014, CDC researchers concluded that unpasteurized milk is 840 times more likely to cause food-borne illness than pasteurized milk, and such illnesses have a hospitalization rate 45 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. The organization recently updated [its consumer website](#) to explain the dangers of consuming raw milk products.

The two national dairy associations noted that there is no benefit or positive health outcome substantiated in any medical literature linked to the consumption of raw milk.

“While choice is an important value, it should not pre-empt consumers’ well-being. To allow the state-wide sale of raw milk or any dairy product when sold from a home kitchen is an unnecessary risk to consumer safety and public health,” Mulhern and Dykes told lawmakers.

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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.

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 nearly 525 companies within 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 nearly 200 dairy processing members operate more than 600 manufacturing facilities and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85 percent of the milk, cultured products, cheese, ice cream and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States. Visit IDFA at www.idfa.org.