



# National Milk Producers Federation

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Agri-Mark, Inc.  
Associated Milk Producers Inc.  
Bongards' Creameries  
Cooperative Milk Producers Association  
Cortland Bulk Milk Producers Cooperative  
Dairy Farmers of America, Inc.  
Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery  
FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative  
First District Assoc.  
Foremost Farms USA  
Land O'Lakes, Inc.  
Lone Star Milk Producers  
Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association  
Michigan Milk Producers Association  
Mid-West Dairyman's Company  
Mount Joy Farmers Cooperative Association  
Northwest Dairy Assoc.  
Oneida-Madison Milk Producers Cooperative Association  
Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.  
Premier Milk Inc.  
Scioto County Cooperative Milk Producers' Association  
Select Milk Producers, Inc.  
Southeast Milk, Inc.  
St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, Inc.  
Tillamook County Creamery Association  
United Dairyman of Arizona  
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.  
Zia Milk Producers, Inc.

February 6, 2018

Vijaya Raghavan, Professor  
Department of Bioresource Engineering  
Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences  
McGill University  
Macdonald-Stewart Building, MS1-098  
Ste.-Anne-de-Bellevue, Québec, Canada, H9X 3V9

Dear Dr. Raghavan,

We write in response to your review article with Sai Kranthi Vanga, "How well do plant based alternatives fare nutritionally compared to cow's milk?" in the recent issue of the *Journal of Food Science and Technology*<sup>1</sup>, and the subsequent press release the university distributed on January 29, 2018, "Nutritionally-speaking, soy milk is best plant-based milk."

We were pleased to see research that supported the natural nutritional benefits of real dairy milk, which cannot be duplicated by imitation dairy beverages. Unfortunately, we were both disappointed and concerned to see statements in the original journal article and in the press release that suggested a food safety risk was associated with cow's milk, statements which were subsequently echoed in the popular press coverage<sup>2</sup> of the research.

Our organization and our industry have firmly supported protection of public health and advancing dairy food safety. Current statistics estimate only 1-2% of foodborne outbreaks are attributed to dairy products. We take great pride in the strides we have made and the food safety record of our dairy industry, which is unmatched in excellence.

In contrast, scientific evidence has repeatedly identified raw milk as a demonstrated public health risk, which is why our organization has fought against the direct sale of raw milk to consumers. Raw milk is a key vehicle in the transmission of human pathogens like *E. coli* O157:H7, *Campylobacter*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Salmonella*. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reported that over 70% of foodborne outbreaks involving dairy are attributed to raw milk and inappropriately-aged raw milk cheeses.

Compared to pasteurized milk, raw milk is 840 times more likely to cause food-borne illness, and its consumption is far less common. It is inappropriate and misleading to

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<sup>1</sup> Review article: How well do plant based alternatives fare nutritionally compared to cow's milk? *J Food Sci Technol* 2018; 55(1):10-20.

<sup>2</sup> <http://time.com/5125580/soy-milk-healthiest-plant-based/>;  
<https://gizmodo.com/almond-milk-comes-dead-last-in-new-ranking-of-milky-flu-1822590965>.

characterize the entire dairy category by the risks of such a small segment of the industry – one which is illegal in Canada and in many U.S. states.

We note that your conclusion about the safety of fluid milk consumption cited a 2009 research paper by Oliver et al.<sup>3</sup> However, this research does not support your statement that milk “has been associated to cause wide spread disease outbreaks around the world”. The Oliver review is entirely about raw milk – prevalence of pathogens in raw milk and disease outbreaks linked to raw milk – and specifically within the United States, including a review of raw milk regulations in the U.S.

In some parts of the world, where pasteurization, refrigeration, and proper food safety protocols are less common, milk is associated with foodborne illness. However, your research article focused on non-dairy beverages that are commercially available or where nutritional information was contained in the USDA National Nutrient Database. If you had wanted to make a general statement related to the safety of milk in less-developed parts of the world, those same food safety concerns would also extend to the other beverages reviewed which are produced under similar conditions.

In summary, there is no basis for your statement linking milk consumption to worldwide foodborne outbreaks. Such a comment has the potential to do incredible, unjustified harm to our industry and has the potential to cause fear in consumers who are seeking nutrient-dense and safe products for themselves and their families.

We hope that you make an immediate effort to correct this inaccurate and unsubstantiated statement by revising your press release and by seeking an erratum to your journal article. If we can be of assistance in providing you with accurate information about the high nutritional quality of our products or with information about the food safety progresses and advances we have made as an industry, please let us know.

Respectfully,



Beth Panko Briczinski, PhD  
Vice President, Dairy Foods & Nutrition

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<sup>3</sup> Oliver SP, et al. Food safety hazards associated with consumption of raw milk. Foodborne Path Dis 2009; 6(7):793-806.

Cc: Sai Kranthi Vanga  
Dr. Valerie Orsat, Chair, Bioresource Engineering  
Dr. Anja Geitmann, Dean, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences  
Katherine Gombay, Media Relations  
Dr. Narpinder Singh, Journal of Food Science and Technology

*The National Milk Producers Federation, 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. Visit [www.nmpf.org](http://www.nmpf.org) for more information.*