



News Release

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"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"

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**Proposal to Reduce Somatic Cells Counts Defeated
by National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments**
Level Will Remain at 750,000

BALTIMORE, MD – The National Milk Producers Federation's proposal to reduce the maximum level of somatic cell counts in milk – a measure of milk quality – was rejected today by the National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS), which has just concluded its biennial meeting here in Baltimore.

NMPF had asked the NCIMS voting delegates – a group of state regulators overseeing milk safety rules – to reduce the maximum threshold of allowable somatic cells in milk at the farm level from the current 750,000 cells/mL, down to 400,000, starting in 2014. But on a vote of 26-25, the voting delegates rejected the proposal, meaning that the status quo threshold of 750,000 cells will remain.

"Since it's been nearly 20 years since the current standard was established, we believed it was time to make changes that improve the nation's milk supply," said Jamie Jonker, NMPF Vice President of Scientific and Regulatory Affairs. "It's regrettable that this approach isn't the one taken by NCIMS. However, we're confident that the trend towards lower Somatic Cell Counts will continue, regardless of the vote today."

Jonker said that legislation to reduce the somatic cell count (SCC) level has been introduced in Congress, and that international buyers are also looking at U.S. SCC levels with greater scrutiny. Those pressures "may result in changes to SCC limits being forced by a process outside of the NCIMS, which would be unfortunate if it results in regulations that are not as workable for dairy farmers."

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 31 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 40,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF's activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.