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Dairy Industry Welcomes U.S. Government Work Supporting Breastfeeding, Complementary Dairy Products for Children Around the World

(Washington, D.C. – July 11, 2018) Three national organizations representing dairy farmers and dairy foods companies said that the current and past administrations, as well as the dairy industry, strongly support long-standing recommendations stressing the importance of breastfeeding, while emphasizing the beneficial role that milk and other dairy products play in the healthy diets of young children. Recent news reports on this spring’s World Health Assembly (WHA) have mischaracterized U.S. government actions as anti-breastfeeding and harmful to the health of young children.

U.S. actions at the 2018 assembly, which is the annual meeting of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) governing body, reflect a continuation of the positions the Obama Administration took at the 2016 WHA. The WHO’s 2016 guidance on foods for young children discouraged the consumption of milk by young children up to age 3, in contrast to long-standing U.S. and international nutrition guidance on the benefits of milk and dairy products as complementary foods for toddlers.

The final 2018 WHA resolution mentioned in several press reports received the endorsement of the U.S. government and emphasized that the support for breastfeeding was unanimous among WHO member countries. The approved resolution said, “Reaffirming also that breastfeeding is critical for child survival, nutrition and development, and maternal health” and “Affirming that the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding contributes substantially to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on nutrition and health, and is a core element of quality health care.”

Missing from the public narrative is that the United States worked collaboratively with other countries to address earlier language that would have discouraged the consumption of dairy products by young children and threatened to abandon transparent, inclusive consultations with experts and industry in the development of broader nutrition programs.

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) and the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) today expressed appreciation to U.S. administration officials for their work to ensure that WHO declarations support breastfeeding, while not discouraging the consumption of milk, yogurt and other dairy products by toddlers. The organizations also affirmed their support for the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) recommendation that infants be breastfed — if possible — until age 1.

“We strongly supported the work of both the current and previous administrations to foster an approach within the WHO that both promotes breastfeeding and recognizes that dairy foods also play an important role in the nutrition of young children past the infant stage,” said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of NMPF.

“America’s dairy farmers continue to be staunch supporters of the AAP’s recommendations on breastfeeding and agree with the administration’s continuation of bipartisan efforts initiated in 2016 to ensure that global guidance best supports solid nutrition outcomes for young children,” said Tom Vilsack, president and CEO of USDEC. “We remain committed to working with parents, health care providers, governments, the World Health Organization and all stakeholders to ensure children have the best nutrition, including from dairy products. This is a bipartisan priority and one our industry shares.”

“The proposed changes to the WHA resolution were counter to the American Heart Association’s and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s recommendations that 2-3 year olds should get at least 2-3 servings (2-3 cups) of milk per day by labeling ALL milk products as ‘breast milk substitutes’ for this age group,” said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., IDFA president and CEO. “IDFA strongly disagrees with this ‘one-size-fits-all’ directive as it may not be appropriate and improperly diminishes the positive health benefits of dairy for young children.”

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About USDEC

The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) is a non-profit, independent membership organization that represents the global trade interests of U.S. dairy producers, proprietary processors and cooperatives, ingredient suppliers and export traders. Its mission is to enhance U.S. global competitiveness and assist the U.S. industry to increase its global dairy ingredient sales and exports of U.S. dairy products. USDEC accomplishes this through programs in market development that build global demand for U.S. dairy products, resolve market access barriers and advance industry trade policy goals. USDEC is supported by staff across the United States and overseas in Mexico, South America, Asia, Middle East and Europe.

About NMPF

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.

About IDFA

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, D.C., represents the nation’s dairy manufacturing and marketing industry, which supports nearly 3 million jobs, generates more than \$39 billion in direct wages and has an overall economic impact of more than \$628 billion. IDFA is the umbrella organization for the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA’s members range from large multinational 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 and sold throughout the world. The diverse membership includes numerous food retailers, suppliers and companies that offer infant formula and a wide variety of milk-derived ingredients.