



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.
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Producers
Maryland & Virginia
Milk Producers
Cooperative Association
Michigan Milk
Producers Association
Mid-West
Dairymen'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 Dairymen
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*¹, 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 coverage² 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

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

² <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.³ 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Panko Briczinski".

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

³ 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 for more information.