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Banding together to inform, improve and defend

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BELLEFONTE, Pa.—“For dairy producers, it’s important to band together through a professional trade organization, like PDMP, to become informed and to inform others, to improve practices that can and should be improved and at the same time, defend practices that should be defended,” notes PDMP executive director Alan Novak. “What is concerning about this (PEW Commission) report, from my point of view, is it has not taken into account how food production will feed the growing world population, given the recommendations to turn back the clock on housing systems and technologies.”

An example is the Commission’s recommendation to phase out non-therapeutic antimicrobials as well as other technologies.

“Some of these recommendations do not directly affect the dairy industry,” adds Novak. “But the broad-brush approach of these recommendations certainly does.”

The Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania is a producer-led trade organization made up of dairy producers and allied industry members. Its mission is “seeking to advance the dairy industry in Pennsylvania through improved productivity and profitability.”

The size of member dairy farms ranges from just under 50 cows to more than 2,000, but it’s not the size of the farm that’s important, but rather the quality of the farm and the progressive attitude of the dairyman, Novak explains. “Larger operations that some view unfavorably as ‘industrial’ are in reality multi-generational family farm businesses, deriving income for several families. Like any family business, sustainability equates to profitability.”

Asked why they joined, members often reply as did Dave Hileman of Tyrone: “The benefit of PDMP for me has always been staying in touch with what’s going on and observing and learning from other progressive dairymen.”

Or as Bill England, of Williamsburg, puts it: “I belong to PDMP partly to support it, because I believe they are doing a good job. It’s also an educational help, and they sure do keep us abreast of the issues we are facing.”

Consider the PEW Commission's recommendations (www.npcifap.org). Think over the implications: Do any of these policy initiatives have the potential to affect my dairy farm? Does being a member of a professional organization of my peers add confidence for the future of my dairy farm business and the family and heritage sustained by it?

There are issues at hand, and PDMP has been active on several fronts—ranging from the environment to animal well-being—affecting positive change by helping to develop proactive solutions and making sure the position of dairy farm family businesses is not overlooked. If producers don't collectively step up, another entity with less understanding of what it is dairy farms do every day, will clamp down.

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