



Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania

*Seeking to Advance the Dairy Industry in Pennsylvania
Through Improved Productivity and Profitability.*

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Dear Editor,

While there has been much in the news lately about the safety of food Americans purchase and feed to our families, consumers in the United States don't have to question the quality and safety of the dairy products they buy. Government regulations require that every drop of milk produced on every farm in the United States goes through rigorous testing, both on the farm and at the processing level, to ensure that the consumer is getting the highest quality, most wholesome product available.

Our nation is also very fortunate to have a very affordable food supply, and milk is no exception. While residents in some countries spend as much as 50 percent of their disposable income on food, consumers in the U.S. spend 6 percent on food prepared at home. Safe, proven technology in the dairy industry and throughout agriculture has made it possible for farmers like the members of the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania (PDMP) to provide consumers with an abundant, affordable food supply.

That is why PDMP is writing to support the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's recent actions enforcing existing regulations on the use of misleading labels on milk and dairy products. The labels they cited are based on deception, with claims the PDA found to be "inaccurate or that cannot be verified." Some companies are using this type of labeling to make their product appear superior, when in reality there is no difference between these "specialty" products and what people have been buying for generations.

We believe in straight-talk and words like "antibiotic-free" or "no artificial hormones added" are clearly meant to deceive the consumer and are eroding the wholesome image many consumers have of dairy products. The truth is that all milk and dairy products are very safe. Milk is tested many times to make sure there are no antibiotics or any other harmful substances found in it. Claims that a particular milk is hormone free can't be substantiated because all milk contains some level of naturally occurring hormones since it is produced by a living being – the cow.

The hormone bST, found naturally in all milk, is supplemented to some cows to aide in milk production. It is a protein hormone, not a steroid, and was approved by the Food and Drug Administration only after being found completely safe on three levels – to the consumer buying the milk produced by the cow, to the cow herself and to the environment. In fact, countless studies have proven that milk from cows receiving the supplement is absolutely no different than milk produced by cows that don't receive it.

This supplement is one of many technologies that have allowed dairy producers like the members of PDMP to keep milk pricing within the means of the consumer by producing more milk with fewer cows. Since 1950, our nation has increased total milk production in the nation by 50 percent with 90 percent

fewer farms and 62 percent fewer cows. Decreasing the number of cows has decreased the amount of water, feed, land and fuel it takes to supply our nation with dairy products. Fewer cows also means less manure and greenhouse gas production, helping us take better care of the environment.

The milk the state's dairy farmers produce is one of the most naturally nutrient-dense products available on the marketplace today. It provides calcium and eight other essential nutrients, and it has been found to combat many diseases, including osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and colon cancer. Should any mother be forced to decide if she can afford to give her children what is currently one of the least expensive sources of nutrition available?

Pennsylvania's dairy farmers have a well-earned reputation for integrity in product delivery and for honesty in our dealings, whether it is in relationships, business, or milk labeling. The labels in question and others that imply that some milk is "safer" than others are disingenuous and mislead the consumer. They contradict values for which generations of dairy producers have stood strong.

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania and our entire membership of dairy producers and industry suppliers, we commend Secretary Dennis Wolff and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for their decision to stop the deception and prohibit misleading milk labeling.

Sincerely,

Logan Bower
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Blain, PA

Alan Novak
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