

California tops in margin insurance sign-ups

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

With California producers leading the way, more than half of the country's dairymen have enrolled more than half of the national milk production in the new Milk Margin Protection Program, provided by the 2014 Farm Bill.

Participation details of the first MMPP sign-up were released Friday by USDA Farm Service Agency.

The new federal insurance program drew 50.4 percent of the nation's 47,273 dairy producers to sign up for basic coverage, guaranteeing a margin of \$4 per hundredweight of milk between a national average milk price and a national average feed cost.

Of those enrolled, 55 percent signed up for higher



Dairy cows feed at this dairy in Twin Falls County, Idaho, on Tuesday, March 25.

Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

coverage to guarantee a margin of between \$4.50 and \$8 per hundredweight of milk.

In total, an estimated 119,467 million pounds of

milk were signed up for the program from the nation's total estimated annual production of 201,816 million pounds.

California led the way in production sign-up, enrolling 28,457 million pounds of milk, 69 percent of its total annual production. Wis-

consin followed with 14,895 million pounds, 54 percent of its production.

Idaho weighed in at third with 8,816 million pounds, 66 percent of its production, followed by Texas, 6,790 million pounds and 71 percent of production; New York, 6,520 million pounds and 48 percent of production; and Minnesota, 6,314 million pounds and 69 percent of production.

Fifth-ranked milk producer Pennsylvania enrolled 3,171 million pound, 30 percent of its production.

The buy-up coverage in those states was 35 percent in California, 55 percent in Wisconsin, 29 percent in Idaho, 54 percent in Texas, 57 percent in New York, 73 percent in Minnesota, and 58 percent in Pennsylvania.

Washington enrolled 4,079 million pounds, 64 percent of

its production, with a buy-up of 58 percent. Oregon enrolled 1,595 million pounds, 63 percent of its production, with a buy-up of 28 percent.

Enrollment numbers could go a bit higher, Kent Politsch, FSA chief of public affairs, said in a phone interview on Friday.

Participation from the extended sign-up deadline of Dec. 19 is still being tabulated. Producers who signed up by that deadline were allowed needed extra time to complete the paperwork, he said.

Earlier in the week, FSA announced that more than 23,000 operations — more than half of all U.S. dairy farms — had enrolled in the margin insurance program.

To view enrollment details: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/mpp_applications_011515.pdf.

Cash cheese crashes, butter up

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

Cash cheese prices crashed the second full week of the New Year.

The Cheddar blocks closed Friday at their lowest price since Feb. 27, 2012, \$1.47 per pound, down 12 cents on the week, 76 cents below a year ago, and 98 cents below their record high hit in September 2014. The markets were closed Monday for the Martin Luther King Day holiday but the blocks inched up a half-cent Tuesday to \$1.4750 per pound.

The Cheddar barrels gained a nickel last Monday, plunged 15 1/4-cents Wednesday, regained 1 3/4-cents Thursday, and then lost a penny Friday to finish at \$1.45, down 9 1/2-cents on the week, 75 1/4-cents below a year ago, and \$1.04 below their September record high. They slipped a half-cent Tuesday, to \$1.4450. Six cars of block traded hands last week and 13 of barrel.

Spot butter closed Friday at \$1.55, up a penny on the week, 30 1/4-cents below a year ago when it jumped almost 18 cents,

Dairy Markets
Lee Mielke



and \$1.51 below its record September 2014 peak. The butter price was unchanged Tuesday. Only one car was sold last week in the cash market.

Cash Grade A nonfat dry milk dropped to 95-cents per pound Friday, down 3 3/4-cents on the week, following a 1 1/4-cent decline the previous week. It inched up a quarter-cent Tuesday, to 95 1/4-cents per pound, the first move to the upside since Dec. 19, but is still at the lowest it has been since Aug. 4, 2009.

Global auction up 1 percent

The second Global Dairy Trade auction of the New Year, event number 132, saw the weighted average for all products inch up 1.0 percent, following the 3.6 percent jump on Jan. 6. It is the third event in a row to see a positive move. However, unlike the last auction, not all of the products offered were up.

The uptick Tuesday was led by whole milk powder, up 3.8 percent. It was up 1.6 percent last time. Rennet casein was next, up 3.3 percent, following a 4.2 percent jump last time. Skim milk powder was up 1.0 percent, following a 2.8 percent jump last time, and butter inched 0.1 percent higher, following a pole vault of 13.2 percent last time.

The biggest decline was in buttermilk powder, down 6.4 percent, following a 10.5 percent jump in the last event. Anhydrous milkfat was next, down 5.0 percent, following a 6.8 percent gain last time, and then came Cheddar cheese, down 4.3 percent, after jumping 3.2 percent last time. Sweet whey powder rounded up the bottom, down 4.1 percent. It was not offered in the last event.

FC Stone reports the average GDT butter price equated to about \$1.6168 per pound U.S., up from \$1.6141 per pound in the Jan. 6 event (\$1.5774/lb. on 80% butterfat, up from \$1.5747/lb.) Contrast that to CME butter, which closed Tuesday at \$1.55 per pound. The GDT Cheddar cheese average was \$1.3433 per pound U.S., down from \$1.4015.

'Vote of confidence'

The Agriculture Department provided more specific information Friday about the extent of coverage chosen by dairy farmers enrolled for 2015 in the new Margin Protection Program, including a state-by-state breakdown of the percentage of farms using the new safety net.

Earlier this week, the USDA announced that more than half of U.S. dairy operations have enrolled in the MPP. Today, USDA provided an estimate that 55 percent of those farms elected to pay additional premiums to purchase a higher level of coverage above the basic \$4 per hundredweight level offered for \$100 per year.

NMPF President and CEO Jim Mulhern said that the enrollment level represents "a vote of confidence in this new program, and highlights the importance of the MPP at a time when farmers need protection as margins will be challenged because of adverse conditions. The debut of the MPP comes during a year when margins will be compressed, making it the right solution at the right time for our farmers."



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Washington Rep. Joel Kretz, an Okanogan County Republican, shown here at a Jan. 13 meeting of the House Agriculture Committee in Olympia, proposes to delist wolves by region.

Washington lawmaker proposes moving wolves

'Social acceptance' vanishing in part of the state

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — A northeast Washington legislator has introduced two bills to hasten wolf recovery and the day the predator no longer is protected by the state's endangered species law.

Rep. Joel Kretz, an Okanogan County Republican, said ranchers can't wait several more years for wolves to spread out before measures are put in place to control their numbers.

He said "social acceptance" of wolves has eroded in his district because his constituents have suffered the consequences of what's purported to be a statewide goal.

"I'm really concerned about the disproportionate distribution more than anything," Kretz said. "I don't want to kill the last wolf, but we have to have more management tools than we've had so far."

House Bill 1224 would authorize the state Department

of Fish and Wildlife to study moving wolves to state or federal lands in regions of the state they have yet to venture.

House Bill 1225 would allow the state to remove wolves from its endangered species list in regions where recovery goals have been met. Regional delisting would open up discussions about whether to regulate wolves as a game animal in some areas.

The state's recovery plan carves the state into three districts, with each region needing at least four breeding pairs. The plan does not limit the wolf population.

The state's wolf recovery plan holds out as an option moving wolves to help the species establish itself throughout the state. WDFW Game Manager Dave Ware said the agency isn't considering it.

At a work session Thursday, Ware told the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee that moving wolves would require studying the environmental impacts. The studies would take years and by the time they were done, wolf recovery objectives would probably have been met, he said.

WDFW projects recovery

could occur as soon as 2021. "Moving a few wolves out of the northeast probably isn't going to solve your problem because those wolves would probably be replaced pretty fast," Ware told Kretz at the work session.

Kretz proposes waiving state environmental review laws in moving wolves. The state would still have to comply with federal laws.

Two years ago, Kretz introduced tongue-in-cheek legislation calling on the Olympic Peninsula and Whidbey Island to "enjoy" the "ecological benefits" of "apex predators." The bill this year has a serious tone, calling on WDFW to look for "suitable (wolf) habitat that is located the farthest from any known and recognized wolf packs and the most unlikely to be populated through the natural dispersion of the species."

The bills have been referred to the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. Hearings on the bills have not been scheduled.

"I think there's more of a recognition we have a real problem in the northeast," Kretz said.

De-listing wolves by region would erase a lot of the frustration, he said.

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Western United Dairymen taps interim CEO

Paul Martin will return to Western United Dairymen to serve as interim CEO as the board continues its search for a permanent

executive, according to a WUD announcement late Friday afternoon.

"The board of directors and the entire staff is truly

excited to welcome Paul back to our team," said WUD President Tom Barcellos.

"He's a familiar face to our members, and is more than capable of leading our organization," Barcellos said.

Martin retired from WUD in 2012 after serving as the long-time director of environmental services. An expert in environmental issues and the California dairy industry, Martin is well regarded both domestically and internationally for his work on air and water-quality issues, WUD stated.

Over the course of his tenure, Martin also built strong relationships with federal and state agencies which is vital to WUD's progress on issues important to the dairy industry and the WUD membership, WUD stated.

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