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Dairy/Livestock

Bill would amend federal dairy safety net

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

A bill supported by three Northeast congressmen would amend the Margin Protection Program for dairy established by the 2014 Farm Bill to better reflect feed costs in different regions of the country.

The program allows farmers to insure the margin between milk prices and feed costs.

Introduced by Rep. Chris Gibson, R-N.Y., and Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., April 11 with co-sponsor Peter Welch, D-Vt., the bill would require USDA to use data from each state to calculate average feed costs and actual dairy production margins.

In that feed cost calculation, USDA would be required to take into consideration energy, transportation and labor costs, which the congressman said is necessary to accurately calculate average feed cost.

The current margin protection program is harmful to New York and New England dairy farms because it uses feed costs calculations that are heavily weighted toward Midwest farming operations, where energy, labor and transportation are a lot cheaper, the legislators contend.



Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Feed is a major cost for any dairy operation. A group of members of Congress from the Northeast want to change the way feed costs are calculated for the Margin Protection Program.

The bill cites a recent analysis by Farm Credit East that showed the average price of feed in the Northeast could be 20 percent higher than the national average used in MPP calculations.

The proposed legislation would require USDA to replace the national average proxy used in MPP calculations with state-by-state feed costs, meaning different

calculations for each state, Courtney's staff said in a written response to Capital Press.

The bill, HR 4896, does not address the national average all-milk price calculation, which is the other half of the equation in determining production margins and insurance payouts. Nor does it address the current national premium framework.

California producer orga-

nizations welcome a discussion on adjustments to the program, having long contended the margin protection program reflects neither actual feed costs nor milk prices in California.

"It's something that we've been concerned about ... it needs to be reformed," said Lynne McBride, executive director of California Dairy Campaign.

With much higher feed costs than the Midwest and some of the lowest milk prices in the country, which run about \$2 below the national average, California has been at a disadvantage in the program from the start, she said.

It doesn't provide the intended safety net because it doesn't reflect actual costs and income, she said.

Participation in the subsidized, no-premium portion of the program — which protects a \$4 margin between the national average feed cost and all-milk price — is strong. But participation in buy-up coverage is low.

In 2016, 1,137 of California's 1,438 dairies are participating at the basic coverage level, but only 38 signed up for additional coverage, McBride said.

Because MPP calculations were made in statute, Congress would have to open up the farm bill to make the change. That would take some heavy lifting, said Rick Naerabout, director of operations for Idaho Dairyman's Association.

The political reality is legislators are not going to open up the farm bill mid-stream to look at only one commodity, he said.

Managing early season grazing

By **DOUG WARNOCK**
For the Capital Press

One of the many challenges that graziers face this time of year is managing the lush spring growth of forage grasses.

The cool season type grasses that we have in the Northwest experience their fastest growth in the first two to three months of the growing season. When temperatures rise as spring turns to summer, the grass rate of growth slows down. As the temperature increases, the legumes, such as alfalfa and clover, produce more growth.

The early season grass growth is, of course, dependent on having adequate soil moisture, and we've had good moisture so far this year.

With faster grass growth in the early season, it is more difficult to graze all parts of the pasture before the grass plants mature. Once the grass plants mature and begin to produce a seed-head, they become coarser, have more fiber, are lower in nutritive value and are less palatable to livestock. We prefer to graze when the grass is still in its vegetative stage of development with higher nutritive value.

This is the time of year to move livestock faster from one pasture or paddock to the next. The rule of thumb is, "faster growth — faster moves" and "slower growth — slower moves." The idea is to move animals faster and get some grazing in each pasture unit and get through as many of the units as possible to minimize the maturing of the plants.

Even when moving faster, it is common to have the grasses in some pastures become too mature during this period. There are ways to adjust during this time of faster growth.

One of the best ways to adjust is to use a larger number of animals during this fast growing phase, knowing that the forage base will not support this higher number for the entire season.

This works best when grazing stocker cattle or yearling sheep that can be marketed as the summer temperatures slow the rate of growth. Graziers that have mainly breeding herds or flocks find it more difficult to adjust animal numbers during this time.

Another way to adjust is to mow part of the pasture and use the clipped forage for hay or silage. This feed can be used to supplement pasture later in the season or for winter feed.

Still another way is to stockpile forage. This is achieved by not grazing an area and letting it mature for later use. It is like having standing hay that can be used later in the grazing season or early in the off-season when other forage supplies run short.

Using a planned and adaptive approach to management allows the grazer to be creative and to use any of the tools needed to achieve the goals set for that grassland.

Even though we employ a thorough and written grazing plan, we must be ready to adjust when monitoring indicates we are getting off track.

Regular monitoring of both the plants and animals tells us what is happening. When we know the current circumstances, we are able to change, adapt or modify, as needed, to make the best use of the forage and animal resources to meet our goals.

Doug Warnock, Retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley where he writes about and teaches grazing management. He can be contacted at dwarnockgreenerpastures@gmail.com.



Greener Pastures
Doug Warnock

Dairy groups urge challenge of WHO proposal

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press

U.S. milk producers and processors are speaking out against guidelines from the World Health Organization urging the prohibition of the promotion and marketing of milk products for infants and toddlers.

The guidelines take aim at breast milk substitutes, including milk and other milk products, and rises from concerns that the "inappropriate promotion of those products has been undermining progress in optimal infant and young child feeding."

The National Milk Producers Federation and the International Dairy Foods Association are urging Congress to insist U.S. officials at the Department of Health and Human Services request a more thorough analysis of the WHO proposal before it proceeds further.

The groups' concern is that WHO is lumping in a prohibition of dairy products with its promotion of breast feeding, said Chris Galen, National Milk's director of communications.

"They're going beyond just encouraging breast feeding in infants and discouraging any milk consumption under the age of 3," he said.

"The reality is most kids aren't going to be breastfed up to 2 and 3 years old," he said.

Dairy products, such as milk, cheese and yogurt, are a "very important" part of children's diets, and there's no reason that the nutritional information of those products should be shunned or hidden from parents, as WHO is proposing, he said.

The WHO guidance document is a "de facto criticism of all milk consumption by toddlers," National Milk's president and CEO Jim Mulhern said in a press release.

"This flies in the face of all credible, international nutrition research and would confuse consumers across the globe," he said.

The guidance should be focusing on how to encourage the serving of nutrient-dense foods for young children and toddlers, International Dairy Foods' president and CEO Connie Tipton said in the press release.

"It should not restrict the flow of important information regarding the nutritional benefits of dairy foods for young children to parents, caregivers and healthcare providers," she said.

In a letter to congressional members urging U.S. intervention, the groups said, if adopted, the document could have dire consequences for children worldwide who benefit from milk and milk products, as recommended by nutrition experts

around the globe.

"Despite the overwhelming evidence that the Draft Guidance is unfounded, the WHO Secretariat intends to push the World Health Assembly to adopt it during its annual meeting next month, without conducting a full and transparent assessment of the evidence and an impact analysis," the letter states.

The U.S. dairy groups don't know who specifically is driving the proposal or what agenda

might be at play, Galen said.

But they want to make sure an international, non-government agency doesn't dictate policy that contradicts decades of U.S. federal nutrition policy and scientific evidence, Galen said.

The U.S. is a WHO member, and the proposal contravenes U.S. government advice in the recently updated Dairy Guidelines for Americans and the inclusion of dairy products in federal nutrition programs, he said.



Oregon Aglink

Take a new look at an old friend.



Abisha Dunivin
VP of Operations for the Marion-Polk Food Share and a Member of the Oregon Aglink Board of Directors

Abisha Dunivin, VP of operations for Marion-Polk Food Share, found her way into the food industry in 2006 when she began working for Truitt Bros., Inc. in Salem. Her time with Truitt provided exposure to national branded companies, worldwide suppliers and local growers. It was here that

her love of food and respect for local agriculture grew substantially. In 2013, she concentrated that passion for food and people by joining Marion-Polk Food Share as the Vice President of Operations. This position has allowed her, "to build deeper relationships with local growers, processors and retailers as we work together to find solutions to hunger" she said. She is an advocate for supporting our agricultural economy and promoting sustainable land use and food systems. She is a food enthusiast, an avid reader and a novice runner.

Oregon Aglink plays a key role in connecting people to the food they eat by making that direct link between agriculture and food supply. By educating the community (especially our children) about agriculture, the importance of responsible land management and where their food comes from, we are taking large strides toward ensuring the health, vitality and longevity of our local food supply. In short, educated consumers are empowered consumers.

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Butter love affair helps price

By **LEE MIELKE**
For the Capital Press

America's love affair with butter added strength to the CME cash price which, after jumping 16 cents the previous week, hit the highest level last Monday — \$2.17 per pound — since Feb. 5.

It then plunged 10 cents Tuesday and closed Friday at \$2.07, down a nickel on the week but 26 1/4-cents above a year ago and well above global levels.

Nineteen cars traded hands last week at the CME.

The spot price was unchanged Monday and Tuesday, as traders anticipated Tuesday's Global Dairy Trade auction, Wednesday's March Milk Production report and Friday's March Cold Storage report.

Butter production is active in the Central region, reports Dairy Market News, and bulk inventories are building ahead of the summer and fall seasons. Many industry participants are confused by the sustained strength of the butter price at the CME.

Western butter makers report cream supplies are more than adequate for current needs, and "processors say stocks have grown to the point that they do not want to increase inventories any further."

Cash cheese is under pressure from heavy flush milk production, growing inventory and lagging exports. The

Dairy Markets

Lee Mielke



block Cheddar closed Friday at \$1.4275 per pound, up three-quarter cents on the week but 14 3/4-cents below a year ago, while the barrels ended three-quarter cents lower, at \$1.41, 21 1/2-cents below a year ago. Four cars of block were sold on the week and 17 of barrel.

The blocks were unchanged Monday and Tuesday while the barrels ticked up a penny Monday to \$1.42 per pound, but were unchanged Tuesday.

Cheese production in the Midwest continues to be very active as many manufacturers are running full schedules, according to DMN. Processors say milk intakes are up, but not quite at spring flush levels. Domestic cheese demand has been good; however, a few cheesemakers say sales are down slightly over the past few weeks. Some Midwest plants report comfortable inventory, but others suggest stocks may be heavy in secondary markets and third-party warehouses.

Western cheese production is steady to higher as milk intakes continue to rise seasonally. Some manufacturers say milk supplies are in fairly good balance with processing needs.