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Dairy

U.S. dairy industry rallies against new Canadian strategy

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. dairy organizations, companies and state departments of agriculture have been intensifying efforts to thwart the imminent implementation

of a national ingredient strategy in Canada, which they say is expressly intended to slash imports from the U.S.

Already implemented in Ontario, the policy establishes a new ingredient milk class priced to undercut imports. It

provides both an incentive to substitute domestic ingredients for foreign products and a subsidy on the production of end products containing those ingredients.

The policy will enable Canada to sell ingredients be-

low cost of production internationally, effectively dumping product in competition with U.S. exports.

The U.S. Dairy Export Council, National Milk Producers Federation and International Dairy Foods Association have raised concern over the policy for the past year.

Those groups — along with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture — urged President Donald Trump to discuss the issue during Monday's meeting with Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau.

They called it "one of the most sensitive and urgent topics complicating the relationship between the two countries," saying the pricing policy would further antagonize industry relationships between the U.S. and Canada.

Implementation of the pricing measure comes at a time when compliance with the letter and spirit of trade agreements is of paramount importance, Jim Mulhern, NMPF president and CEO said in a press release on Monday.

"Despite this, Canada still wants to move ahead with a policy that clearly violates its trade agreements with our country. We hope President Trump will remind Prime Minister Trudeau how important it is that Canada honor its commitments," he said.

The groups had raised the issue of Canada's "protectionist milk pricing policy" with Trump last month before he assumed office, saying the policy violates the country's trade obligations under NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.

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Hard winter tests dairies in Western Washington

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

WHATCOM COUNTY, Wash. — Washington dairy farmers near the British Columbia border are rediscovering the hardships of feeding, milking and protecting cows in freezing temperatures, icy winds and snowdrifts.

"You kind of forget about it after a few mild years," Sumas dairy farmer Dan Heeringa said. "It's been at least 10 years, probably more."

The 2015 drought is long gone. Snowpacks throughout Washington are near or above 100 percent of normal. The state went through its coldest January since 1993, according to the federal National Centers for Environmental Information. Earlier this month, on Super Bowl Sunday, a strong winter storm struck northwest Washington.

The next day, Sumas dairy farmer Doug Visser spotted a barn roof sagging under the weight of the snow.

"Not a fun way to start a Monday," he said.

That weekend, parts of Whatcom County received more than 2 inches of precipitation, according to the National Weather Service. Generally, 1 inch of precipitation translates into 10 inches of snow, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Strong winds blowing south from Canada pushed snow drifts several feet high, dairy farmers said.

"I don't mind plowing snow, but it just got old after a couple days of doing north-



Courtesy of Doug Visser

A pile of snow sits in a barn damaged in a snowstorm this month at a dairy in Sumas, Wash. After several mild winters, dairy farmers in the northwest corner of the state were confronted with protecting herds and getting milk to markets in the snow and cold.

ing but plowing snow," Heeringa said. "I'm enjoying life a lot more now that things are thawing out."

Coldstream Farms, a family owned dairy in Deming, was without electricity for 36 hours. The dairy fired up generators and re-bedded stalls to keep cows from slipping on the ice.

Family member Galen Smith said frozen manure had to be pushed out of barns and toward lagoons. Waiting for the manure to thaw would have been a mess and a health hazard for the animals, he said.

"We spent hours keeping barns clean for the cows," Smith said.

"Fortunately, this time around, we didn't lose any

animals," he said. "They eat a little more groceries and don't produce quite as much milk when it's that cold."

The biggest challenge may have been keeping milk runs on schedule, or at least close to on schedule.

Heeringa had to make a late night foray into the snow to pull a milk truck out of a snowdrift. "That was a long night," he said. "It was kind of a mess."

Visser's dairy went through the same ordeal. "It's something new, something different, but when you're going through it, it isn't much fun to be out in it," he said.

Fortunately, Visser said that he, employees, and drivers were able to stay in communication.

Prices still under pressure

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

Dairy Markets
Lee Mielke



Cheese prices fell the week of Feb. 6. Block cheddar closed at \$1.61 per pound, down 13 cents but still 12 cents above a year ago, and the lowest since Oct. 17.

The barrels finished at \$1.65, down 5 3/4-cents on the week and 17 cents above a year ago. Twenty-five cars of each traded hands on the week.

The blocks lost a penny Monday but gained it back Tuesday, closing at \$1.61. The barrels were unchanged both days, holding at \$1.65, an inverted 4 cents above the blocks.

Cheese exports up

The U.S. Dairy Export Council reported that December cheese exports were up 16 percent from a year ago, the highest monthly volume since March 2015.

FC Stone says, "A lot of the product is thought to have been exported to Southeast Asia, which normally does a lot of business with Australia. With milk production down in Australia, and not looking to rebound soon, the U.S. has been more than happy to fill in the void."

Fluid milk is readily available for Midwestern cheese producers.

Spot butter climbed to \$2.1775 per pound last Wednesday but faltered Friday, dropping 7 1/2-cents, to \$2.1025, down 5 1/2-cents on

the week, three-quarter cents below a year ago.

FMMO advances

The California Department of Food and Agriculture released its 2015 manufacturing cost study and indicated that the 2015 average cost to make nonfat dry milk and cheese inched up by about a half-cent per pound of product over the 2014 study averages.

Current class 4a formula make allowances were set in 2011 so it was expected that processors would ask for an adjustment, and they did via the Dairy Institute of California which filed a hearing petition, requesting changes to the Class 4a & 4b pricing formulas.

The changes, if granted, would mean less money for California dairy producers but they received a gift on Valentine's Day, in the form of a Recommended Decision proposing a Federal Milk Marketing Order for California.

The proposed FMMO incorporates the entire state and would adopt the same dairy product classification and pricing provisions used in the current FMMO system.

The Agricultural Marketing Service's will hold a public meeting Feb. 22 in Clovis to explain how the proposed FMMO would operate.

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