

Association looks out for Oregon farmers' interests

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

The Oregon Dairy Farmers Association keeps an eye on issues ranging from state and federal regulations to foreign trade policy.

It's an all-consuming task.

"We absolutely need to be at the table," said ODFA Executive Director Tami Kerr. "We have to be very diligent in all areas to keep regulations fair for our producers. We want to prevent having them add one more thing to their plate."

The association has a staff of two — Kerr and Tammy Dennee, the legislative director, who is "very engaged at the state level and with Oregon's congressional representatives," Kerr said.

USDA, ODA, FSA, NRCS, ODFW, EPA, DEQ, OWEB, OSU — the list of state and federal agencies and associations



ODFA leadership meets with U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., during a recent trip to Washington, D.C. From left are Tami Kerr, Chris Eggert, Bobbi Frost, Walden, Adrienne Allen and Tammy Dennee. Seated is Chad Allen, ODFA board president.

ODFA works with goes on. Kerr said they are grateful for the support of the nine-member board that includes eight dairy producers and the many producers who provide testimony

to the legislature and make time to participate in events such as Dairy Day at the Capitol.

ODFA also has a program to help develop industry leaders. It will graduate its fourth class

this summer.

"They're meeting people who impact our dairy industry, and it's been a great investment of time and resources," Kerr said. "I'm proud of the

program, and seeing the roles they take on after graduating is rewarding."

In April, three board members accompanied Kerr and Dennee to Washington, D.C., where they met with Oregon's congressional delegation.

They also had meetings with the National Milk Producers Federation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Farm Bureau Federation and the Environmental Protection Agency; participated in a trade meeting at USDA; and met with William Northey, under secretary of agriculture for farm and foreign agricultural services.

"We were there to talk about the farm bill. Specifically, some of the conservation programs that are marked up in it, the need for immigration reforms, and of course trade," Kerr said.

Oregon sells about 75 percent of its dairy products out of

state. About 17 percent is exported. A serious threat to trade looms up north, she said.

"Our current challenge is Canada's Class 7 pricing and the need for a trade agreement," Kerr said. "This is not an Oregon problem; it's a federal problem."

Dairy in Oregon is a big business.

"Raw fluid milk is Oregon's No. 4 commodity," she said. "When you add processing into yogurt, cheese and so many other products, we're well over a billion dollars."

ODFA also offers grants for research on many areas of the industry. High quality products and technical advancements are the farmers' primary defense against things over which they have little control, especially low prices on both conventional and organic milk and finding and maintaining a skilled workforce.

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