

Dairy petition outlines labeling solution for non-dairy imitators

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

National Milk Producers Federation has submitted a citizen petition to the Food and Drug Administration outlining how and why the agency should use its existing regulations to guide the use of dairy terms for plant-based products.

The petition is a roadmap for the next step the FDA should take in ending the violation of its standard of identity rules in the labeling of plant-based dairy alternatives, Alan Bjerga, NMPF senior vice president of communications, said in a conference call on the issue.

For years, drinks made from soybeans and other plant materials have been labeled “milk.”

NMPF has been vocal about the problem for decades regardless of food-consumption trends or food fads, he said.

“What’s different now is the FDA’s serious engagement on the issue,” he said.

The agency recently closed a public comment period on the matter, drawing more than 13,000 comments.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File

Soy milk and almond milk are two of the several hundred plant-based products labeled and marketed using dairy terms. Dairy men have sought enforcement action FDA labeling rules.

“The public interest in this issue alone, to us, illustrates further that the FDA needs to act,” he said.

There is anecdotal and survey evidence of consumer confusion over the nutritional content of dairy alternatives and concerns of adverse health effects in children as

outlined by the American Academy of Pediatrics and others, he said.

The petition “is meant to both aid and encourage the FDA to find a practical solution to the dairy labeling problem, one that is grounded in current law and addresses contemporary concerns,” he said.

FDA’s call for comment provided NMPF with another chance to explain the compelling need to provide resolution to the issue, Tom Balmer, NMPF executive vice president, said.

“We believe a comprehensive fix has been available all along. But FDA’s decades-long inaction has allowed marketplace chaos to grow exponentially,” he said.

NMPF has publicly stated many times that it is not trying to keep dairy imitators out of the marketplace but insists that those food products follow the law, he said.

“We believe it’s possible to use existing regulations and with some modification produce common-sense labeling that will provide everyone with truthful, transparent and reasonable options,” he said.

For non-dairy foods using standardized dairy terms but are nutri-

tionally inferior to the dairy foods they reference, NMPF is urging FDA to immediately enforce existing imitation labeling regulations.

An imitation food could avoid being labeled as such simply by not using any standardized dairy term. It could also avoid the imitation labeling by stating on the label that it is inferior to the referenced product, he said.

For non-dairy substitutes that are not inferior to the referenced product, NMPF is urging FDA to immediately enforce existing rules that the product be labeled as a substitute or an alternative, such as “non-dairy yogurt.”

The petition also addresses the issue of plant-based companies’ First Amendment rights in using dairy terms, citing relevant case law that supports FDA enforcement of existing regulations based on the federal government’s interest in consumer health and market-based transparency.

“It’s important to note our approach does not advocate for any so-called ban. It simply relies on proper disclosure that allows for appropriate, truthful, non-misleading messaging,” Balmer said.

Idaho Farm Bureau commits \$100,000 to CAFE

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation announced on Thursday that it will contribute \$100,000 to the University of Idaho’s Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (CAFE).

The commitment followed quickly on the heels of the Idaho State Board of Education’s approval of the university’s purchase of land in Rupert to build a research dairy that will serve as the foundation of the CAFE project.

The university and Idaho Dairy men’s Association are jointly purchasing an initial



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

University of Idaho officials say they have bought the “perfect” site for a research dairy. The Idaho Farm Bureau Federation has pledged \$100,000 to the project.

540 acres for the research dairy for \$4.5 million.

The research dairy is set to be the largest in the country and the only one address-

ing milk production in an arid climate. The research will focus on environmental issues, including water quality and efficiency, nutrient

management and soil health.

The broader \$45 million CAFE project will also have a strong outreach and education component, as well as a food processing component to reinforce vocational training to support regional processing.

“This CAFE project is going to be an incredible center, and the university’s vision for it is exciting,” Bryan Searle, IFBF president said in a press release announcing the organization’s financial pledge.

“It’s a privilege for Idaho Farm Bureau to be a part of it,” he said.

CAFE is projected to be the largest integrated

research facility focused on dairy and allied industry in the U.S. and will enhance a national and international reputation that will reflect the size, quality and importance of the industry it represents, he said in a letter of support for the project.

CAFE will “strengthen Idaho’s position on the map as a center for agricultural and food innovation and technology,” he said.

Idaho Farm Bureau “recognizes the impact CAFE will have across our entire agricultural industry and the value that will provide to our members and all Idaho producers,” he said.

Prices looking for direction

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

DAIRY
MARKETS
Lee
Mielke



Dairy prices were mixed in the shortened President’s Day holiday week. Cheddar block cheese closed Friday at \$1.5950 per pound, up 1 1/2-cents on the week and 10 cents above a year ago.

The barrels saw a Friday close at \$1.4050, 3 cents lower on the week and 5 1/2-cents below a year ago. 3 cars of block traded hands last week at the CME and 23 of barrel.

Monday’s block price inched a quarter-cent higher, then added a penny and a quarter Tuesday, hitting \$1.61, highest CME price since Oct. 16.

The barrels were up a half-cent Monday and stayed there Tuesday at \$1.41, an unsustainable 20 cents below the blocks.

Dairy Market News says pizza cheesemakers report sales were a little ahead of expectations while curd and barrel cheese producers are

hopeful for some summer demand increases before production increases will be scheduled.

Milk remains plentiful and nearly all Class III spot loads were reported at flat to \$2 under Class. Rural area cheesemakers remain concerned about smaller farms staying in business, stating that closures are not a matter of if, but when, for a growing number of sub-100 cow herds.

Western cheesemakers report strong domestic demand and in select international markets. Others say cheese interest is adequate but not great. There is plenty of milk to be made into cheese and vats are running at or near full capacity. Stocks are heavy so manufacturers do not want to build inventory, according

to DMN. Cash butter closed Friday at \$2.26 per pound, up a penny on the week and 8 3/4-cents above a year ago, with 26 cars sold last week.

Monday’s spot price was up three-quarters but it gave back a quarter-cent Tuesday, slipping to \$2.2650.

Butter analysts continue to point out the range-bound nature of the market since, and throughout much of, 2018. Demand is steady, while production continues actively to pack away inventories. Cream supplies are plentiful, reports DMN.

Western butter output is solid despite the cold weather. Milkfats and other milk components have decreased in the affected zones but cream is still readily available. Bulk butter stocks continue to build but are not overwhelming.

Grade A nonfat dry milk closed Friday at 99 3/4-cents per pound, up a penny on the week and 32 1/2-cents above a year ago with only 4 cars sold on the week.

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George, Dora and Jana McClelland
Photo Credit: ©David Nevala for Organic Valley

By Ashley Rood,
Rogue Farm Corps

“We are constantly asking ourselves—how can we do our best?” says Jana McClelland. Constant evolution, learning, and care for the land are at the heart of success for McClelland Dairy. It is reflected in daily operations, as well as the transition of the farm from

father to daughter through partnership.

Jana is the third generation of McClellands farming in Sonoma County, California—her Dad’s parents bought the farm in the 1960s. Today, Jana runs the farm in close partnership with her parents, George and Dora. Jana takes the lead on milking and managing the cows, and

Farming Better Through Partnership A CHANGING HANDS STORY

team management. While George leads on the silage, pasture management and compost. Jana says, “my parents are not ready to retire, this is a good thing. I am forever learning more from them and we balance each other out.”

Jana knew she wanted to go back to the farm since high school, when she did a Future Farmers of America project on creek restoration. When Jana returned home from Cal Poly, she jumped right in, “No break! Not even one day,” says Jana. Looking back, she would consider working someplace else before coming back to the farm, Jana says, “to gain

new perspectives.”

Her parents transition started with increasing cow numbers so there were options for both Jana and her brother. Jana’s brother got set up with his own ranch nearby. And they worked with a family planner, an attorney and an accountant to set up a plan. Jana recommends, “Put it all on paper—even if you talk a lot, there’s a difference to putting it down.”

Jana’s family knows that a successful future for the farm is about more than the plans on paper—it is about caring for the land. In 2011, they joined Organic Valley

Cooperative. “We really started seeing that healthier soil meant healthier cows,” says Jana.

“Farmers love the land, it’s time to quantify the benefits they provide,” Jana says. These benefits are starting to be recognized through California’s Healthy Soils Initiative. Working with Organic Valley, the McClellands received funds from the program for new creek restoration plantings and compost application on pastures. These are considered “carbon farming” practices, because they increase carbon storage in the soil and reduce

greenhouse gas emissions.

As Jessica Luhning, Organic Valley sustainability manager, says, “We see firsthand the benefits carbon farming brings to soil health, water quality and quantity, on-farm biodiversity and long-term farm viability. Organic livestock farmers are natural leaders in the carbon farming movement and believe in being part of the solution.”

As Jana says, “We all need to do our part for the planet. They don’t make any more land, and if you take care of it, it takes care of you.”

More of this story online.

For resources on farm transfer visit: <https://www.roguefarmcorps.org/resources>