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Dairy

Dairy exports break volume record

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

U.S. dairy exports in 2020 set a record by volume, shipping nearly 2.1 million pounds of milk solids overseas, an increase of 12.9% year over year.

The exports were worth nearly \$6.6 billion, the highest value year since nearly \$7.2 billion in sales in 2014.

Export achievements in 2020 were in spite of the pandemic, shipping issues and historic price volatility in the cheese market, analysts at U.S. Dairy Export Council said in their latest report.

Exports of nonfat dry milk and skim milk powder increased 16% year over year to 812,683 metric tons.

Powder exports surged to Southeast Asia with regional buyers ensur-



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File

Agropur's Jerome, Idaho, plant. U.S. dairy exports set a record by volume last year.

ing they had adequate supplies on hand. In addition, the European Union worked through intervention stocks of skim milk powder in 2019 and U.S. powders were competitively priced, the analysts said.

U.S. powder exports were up 194% to China, 68% to Japan and 44% to Southeast Asia as U.S. sup-

pliers have enjoyed a price advantage over major competitors since mid-2020.

Rising skim milk powder prices despite readily available supply suggests strong global demand, and the price differential should continue to spur U.S. sales, the analysts said.

U.S. powder shipments were down in November and December, however, suggesting problems at West Coast ports, and that could continue into 2021.

"Shipping issues created by the pandemic have been affecting ports for nearly a year. Those issues intensified at the end of 2020 with heightened port congestion and equipment shortages and moves by ocean carriers to ship empty containers back to Asia at the expense of outbound U.S. agricultural products, including dairy," the analysts said.

They exports for the year were up 24% to 554,980 metric tons.

Those exports "benefited immensely from China's market reopening following the Phase 1 agreement and an exemption for permeate combined with a booming demand as China rebuilt its swine herd," the analysts said.

Cooperative pioneers satellite technology in dairy pasture

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

MONMOUTH, Ore. — A farmer-owned organic dairy cooperative is experimenting with satellite technology to improve rotational pasture grazing.

Farmers will use the technology to make management decisions and improve the health of their dairy herds, pastures and the environment — all while saving them time.

Satellite photography is gaining popularity in other farm sectors, including row crops. Its use in dairy management, however, is rare, and Organic Valley cooperative members involved in the pilot project say they're excited to be early adopters.

"I've tested satellite imagery designed for corn and soybeans on my pastures, and already it's been pretty darn helpful. Now we're going to fine-tune it for grazing," said Jon Bansen, an Organic Valley dairy farmer in Monmouth, Ore.

Bansen is one of 22 farmers across the nation who



Courtesy of Organic Valley

Jon Bansen's pastures as seen from satellite.

signed up for the co-op's pilot project.

Farmers divide their perennial pastures into smaller portions, called paddocks, and move their herds frequently — a method known as "intensive rotational grazing." Rotational grazing is time- and labor-intensive.

One goal of the project, its leaders say, is to save farmers time. The satellite will deliver photos showing the amount of forage in

each paddock to the farmer's phone or computer, which should ease some of the burden of on-the-ground surveying.

For example, Bansen said in his early tests he could tell from satellite images what parts of his field were not as fertile and could use more manure-rich lagoon water. He could also tell where irrigation lines had missed spots.

Organic Valley's senior director of farm resources,



Courtesy of Organic Valley

Juli Bansen, left, and husband Jon Bansen own Double J Jerseys in Monmouth, Ore.

Wade Miller, is leading the project. Miller described his department of the co-op as "sort of like a private extension service."

Miller said the co-op was inspired to do this project because of a study at Michigan State University, which found dairy farmers using satellite technology got at least 20% more use out of each pasture.

Miller said the farmers in the pilot project will help fine-tune, or calibrate, the satellite devices by taking on-the-ground measurements of pastures daily and submitting the data to the co-op's technology experts, who will adjust the

satellites to better "read" pastures.

Through the 2021 to 2022 grazing season, Bansen, the farmer, said he'll be taking measurements with a meter every day — at about 20 reference points per field.

"I'll be doing quite a bit of meandering," he said. "I better get a podcast to listen to."

But Bansen said he expects his work on the front end will pay off long-term.

"If you don't take part in your own industry and own co-op, what's the point? You get out of stuff what you put into it," he said.

When the pilot period has ended, Miller said Organic Valley will offer access to satellites for free to the co-op's 1,800 farmers.

Money for the project came from Organic Valley's grant program, Farmers Advocating for Organic, funded by annual, voluntary contributions from the co-op's farmers: five cents per hundredweight of milk.

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Dairy promotion leaders elected

Capital Press

Leaders of Dairy Management Inc., the National Dairy Promotion and Research Board and the United Dairy Industry Association have announced election results for officers to lead national Dairy Checkoff strategies and programs.

Dairy Management Inc., which manages the national checkoff program, is co-funded by National Dairy Board and United Dairy Industry Association.

Marilyn Hershey, a farmer from Cochraville, Pa., was re-elected chair of Dairy Management Inc.

"I'm honored to join fellow farmers and importers nationwide as we work together to create a successful future for the dairy industry," she said in a press release.

"The board and elected officers represent our partnership to fund, govern and lead the Dairy Checkoff program," she said.

In addition to Hershey, other Dairy Management Inc. officers elected were: Steve Maddox, Riverdale, Calif., vice chairman; Skip Hardie, Groton, N.Y., secretary; and deb Vander Koi, Worthington, Minn., treasurer.

The National Dairy Board elected: Alex Peterson, Trenton, Mo., chairman; Connie Seefeldt, Coleman, Wis., vice chairman; Arlene Vander Eyk, Tulare, Calif., secretary; and Jennifer Heitzel, Martinsburg, Pa., treasurer.

The 37-member National Dairy Board carries out coordinated promotion and research programs to help build demand, and expand domestic and international markets for dairy products.

United Dairy Industry Association elected: Neil Hoff, Windthorst, Texas, chairman; Allen Merrill, Parker, S.D., first vice chairman; Rick Podtburg, Greeley, Colo., second vice chairman; Tom Woods, Gage, Okla., American Dairy Association, second vice chairman; Audrey Donahoe, Clayville, N.Y., National Dairy Council, second vice chairman; Charles Krause, Buffalo, Minn., secretary; and John Brubaker, Buhl, Idaho, treasurer.

The United Dairy Industry Association is a federation of state and regional dairy promotion organizations that provide marketing programs developed and implemented in coordination with its members.

American Dairy Association officers elected: Tom Woods, Gage, Okla., chairman; Glen Easter, Laurens, S.C., vice chairman; Lowell Mueller, Hooper, Neb., secretary; and Corby Werth, Alpena, Mich., treasurer.

Farmers and co-ops founded the American Dairy Association to promote U.S. dairy to consumers through advertising and retail promotions. The association also fosters coordination of local promotion organizations.

National Dairy Council officers elected were: Audrey Donahoe, Clayville, N.Y., chairman; Chase Fullmer, Sigurd, Utah, vice chairman; Harold Howrigan, Sheldon, Vt., secretary; and Kevin Moore, Wauchula, Fla., treasurer.

National Dairy Council is a nonprofit organization founded by dairy farmers and funded through the national Dairy Checkoff program. It is committed to providing science-based education about the nutrition and health benefits of dairy foods.