



Bob Cropp, left, and Mark Stephenson, University of Wisconsin economists.

# Milk prices expected to rise

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

The futures market is estimating Class III milk prices will hit \$18 a hundredweight by May or June and stay in that range for several months.

“That’s a price that probably a lot of producers would normally be able to live with. But I would also say that margins are tightening a lot,” said Mark Stephenson, a dairy economist at the University of Wisconsin.

Grain futures have been on the rise. The corn price seems to have plateaued, but soybeans have still been up, he said during the latest “Dairy Situation and Outlook” podcast.

Corn prices are \$2 a bushel higher than last year, and soybeans are \$5 to \$6 a bushel higher, Bob Cropp, a fellow dairy economist at the university, said.

Given those feed costs, a Class III price of \$18 or in the high \$17s is a range that will just about get

a producer’s nose above water, Stephenson said.

Cropp thinks an \$18 Class III price might be a little optimistic unless milk production slows. USDA is forecasting an average Class III price of \$16.90 for the year, he said.

USDA revised January milk production to a year-over-year increase of 2.4%. February’s milk production was up 2%, and there have been some major herd expansions in some states, Cropp said.

“There’s a lot of milk coming on here, which puts some downward pressure on prices,” he said.

A 2% increase year over year is a lot of milk, and exports would have to be really strong to clear products. Foodservice demand is picking up in the U.S., but the level of government purchases won’t be as high as last year, he said.

Domestic demand isn’t going to take care of the increase in dairy products. On the positive side, U.S. export prices are really competitive, he said.

# Senator’s cap-and-trade claim mystifies farm groups

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — A Seattle Democrat called agriculture an “enthusiastic supporter” of cap-and-trade, a claim disputed by several farm groups that say they still oppose the policy because it would raise energy costs.

At a recent committee meeting, Sen. Reuven Carlyle said agriculture was once “one of the strongest opponents,” but now backs cap-and-trade “because they’re receiving funding for reforestation programs.”

The Washington Farm Bureau’s position hasn’t changed; it opposes cap-and-trade, director of government relations Tom Davis said Monday.

“I’m not aware of any agriculture organization that has been supportive,” he said. “It (Carlyle’s remark) misrepresents what has been said in



Washington Sen. Reuven Carlyle

the public domain.”

Carlyle’s spokesman said the senator was too busy Monday to comment. His staff did not provide any information to support

his statement.

Carlyle, chairman of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee, has led the charge to adopt cap-and-trade, a pillar of Gov. Jay Inslee’s climate agenda.

Manufacturers and fuel refineries would bid for a declining number of permits to emit carbon. The auctions are expected to initially raise roughly \$500 million a year for government spending.

Traditionally known as cap-and-trade, the policy is now called “cap-and-

invest” by Democrats.

“I would suggest that many years ago the agriculture community was one of the strongest opponents to a cap-and-invest program and now they’re (an) enthusiastic supporter,” Carlyle said March 22.

Cap-and-trade potentially pushes up the cost of electricity, transportation fuels and other products. Several agricultural groups, such as the Washington Association of Wheat Growers and Food Northwest, have testified against cap-and-trade this session.

No farm group has signed in to support the policy, according to a Senate report.

Agriculture lobbyist Ben Buchholz said he was unaware of any Washington farm group that supports cap-and-trade.

“I don’t know where Sen. Carlyle came up with that,” said Buchholz, executive director of the Northwest Agricultural Cooperative Council. “We do not

support cap-and-trade.”

The cap-and-trade legislation, Senate Bill 5126, has passed two Senate committees, but has yet to be voted on by the full Senate. If passed by the Senate, it would go to the House for hearings.

“We’ll be opposing it,” said Mark Streuli, who lobbies for the Washington Cattlemen’s Association and trade groups representing potato and onion farmers.

If SB 5126 becomes law, the state would distribute some of the money raised at emission-permit auctions for “natural climate resilience solutions.”

The bill suggests farmers could get grants for fuel-efficient equipment and to hold carbon in the ground. To get money, a farmer must pay “family sustaining wages” and pensions, and provide paid family leave and “career development opportunities.”

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