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## Dairy

# Congressmen urge flexibility in school milk

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

A bipartisan group of 55 members of the U.S. House of Representatives is urging USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to address the under consumption of dairy foods by school-aged children.

Led by Reps. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., and Glenn “GT” Thompson, R-Pa., the lawmakers sent a letter to Vilsack in support of allowing schools to offer low-fat flavored milk.

“One of the best ways to encourage healthy eating is within the federal school meals program under your jurisdiction,” the lawmakers said.

Students who choose school



**A group of U.S. House members wants reduced-fat chocolate milk allowed with school lunches.**

meals are almost three times as likely to have milk with their lunch as their peers who do not, they said, citing the recent School

Nutrition and Meal Cost Study.

Current law requires milk varieties to be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and specifically permits flavored milk.

“Accordingly, we believe schools should continue to have the option to offer low-fat flavored milk,” they said.

“Surveys have shown that students drank less milk when all flavored milk was required to be fat-free,” they said, citing one survey that showed a 10.8% decline.

In turn, consumption rose in 58% of schools surveyed when schools were able to offer low-fat flavored milk under waiver authority, they said.

The lawmakers also cited the

2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee report that found 79% of 9- to 13-year-olds who rely on the school meal programs to meet their nutritional needs are not meeting the recommended intake of dairy foods.

“Both the 2015 and 2020 editions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans amplified this concern, stating that beginning at a young age, average dairy consumption falls short of recommended amounts,” the lawmakers said.

“This is a significant concern,” they said.

While current USDA flexibilities allow schools to offer low-fat flavored milk through the 2021-2022 school year, USDA

has before it a proposed rule that would make them permanent.

Leading dairy groups applauded the lawmakers’ efforts.

“Milk benefits children in many ways — but it can’t benefit them at all if they don’t drink it, and ensuring that they do so requires a wide range of options,” said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of National Milk Producers Federation.

“Milk’s unique nutritional package is of great benefit to the nation’s schoolchildren, and this message to Secretary Vilsack strongly supports the critical goal of boosting consumption of essential nutrients of public health concern, including calcium, potassium and vitamin D,” he said.

# Dairy West hires sustainability chief

Capital Press

Dairy West has hired Marissa Watson as its first vice president of sustainability.

The move underscores the importance of sustainability within the dairy community and all of agriculture.

Agriculture plays a key role in developing sustainable solutions for a climate-smart future and this new focus for Dairy West demonstrates that



**Marissa Watson**

leadership commitment, Karianne Fallow, Dairy West’s CEO, said in a press release.

Most recently the sustainability manager at University of Vermont Dining, Watson brings more than eight years of agriculture experience with a master’s degree in agricultural

economics from the University of Georgia.

“We are thrilled that someone of Marissa’s caliber is joining our growing Dairy West team,” Fallow said.

“Dairy farmers, who are dedicated stewards of our land and animals, continue to make great strides toward reducing their carbon footprint because we know the future of a healthy planet depends upon how we care for its resources. Marissa’s exper-

tise will accelerate our progress in that direction,” she said.

The U.S. dairy community has set a goal of becoming carbon neutral or better by 2050. Watson said getting there requires developing innovative solutions to achieve common goals across all sectors, including agriculture.

“I am very excited to join Dairy West in this important role,” Watson said.

“Having a planet-forward mindset isn’t new

to dairy farmers. Telling their stories, innovating on-farm management practices and working with partners to showcase agriculture’s place in environmental sustainability will help highlight the progress that is being made,” she said.

Established in 2017, Dairy West is a regional dairy promotion organization representing dairy farmers, processors and supply chain partners in Idaho and Utah.

Dairy Markets  
Lee Mielke



# Cheese price fall resumes

By LEE MIELKE  
For the Capital Press

April’s Cold Storage data put the brakes on cheese prices falling last week, but only for a day. After plunging 15.50 cents the previous week, the Cheddar blocks closed the last Friday of May at \$1.53 per pound, down 4 cents on the week, 27 cents below where it was on May 3, and 70 cents below a year ago when they pole vaulted 29.25 cents to \$2.23 per pound.

The barrels entered the Memorial Day Weekend at \$1.57 per pound, down 3.75 cents on the week, down 24.25 cents on the month, 45.25 cents below a year ago when they jumped 13.25 cents, but at an inverted 4 cents above the blocks.

There were 36 cars of block traded last week, 123 for the month of May, up from 85 in April. Barrel sales totaled 33 for the week, 110 for the month, up from 81 in April.

The markets were closed Monday for the Memorial Day holiday but came to life Tuesday with the blocks dropping 2 cents on 10 trades, to \$1.51 per pound, duplicating the Feb. 18, 2021 price, and the lowest it has been since May 12, 2020.

The barrels were up 0.50 cents Tuesday to \$1.5750, on 6 trades, 6.50 cents above the blocks.

Cheese demand remains mixed, according to Dairy Market News. Some retail Cheddar producers say buyer interest is and has been quite busy while other varietal cheesemakers were less busy. Barrel prices topping the blocks is viewed with “a skeptical eye,” says DMN.

# Website showcases U.S. dairy commitment to Southeast Asia

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

The U.S. Dairy Export Council has a new website to highlight its state-of-the-art U.S. Center for Dairy Excellence in Singapore and the U.S. dairy industry’s long-term commitment to Southeast Asia.

The center, which officially opened in October 2020, gives the U.S. dairy industry a bricks-and-mortar physical presence that “puts a stake in the ground” in Southeast Asia, Krysta Harden, the export council’s president and CEO, said in a press release.

“It says to customers in the region we are serious. We are going to be here for the long term,” she said. “You are going to be a focal point. We want to work with you. We want to grow with you. We’re going to help you learn, and we’re going to learn from you.”

The export council has been investing in the region since 1998, and that investment has paid off.

In 2020, Southeast Asia passed Mexico to become the top U.S. dairy export market in volume, buying the equivalent of more than one day of total U.S. milk production per month.



[www.usdairyexcellence.org](http://www.usdairyexcellence.org)

**A screen capture from the new U.S. Dairy Export Council website highlighting the U.S. Center for Dairy Excellence in Singapore.**

The region ranked second for sales in 2020, buying \$1.26 billion in U.S. dairy products and ingredients — a 36% increase over the previous year despite the challenges presented by a global pandemic.

The region encompasses Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Bru-

nei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia and Laos, with a combined population of more than 670 million. That’s more than double the population of the United States.

The U.S. Center for Dairy Excellence was designed to be an education hub and meeting place that inspires innova-

tion and mutual learning between U.S. dairy suppliers and Southeast Asian customers.

The new website includes a link that offers a snapshot of the center’s features and services and a timeline of the U.S. Dairy Export Council’s involvement in Southeast Asia.

It also includes a recipe database by dairy ingredient, nutritional information, video testimonials from customers in the region and an introduction to U.S. dairy farming from dairy farmer

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information go to [www.USdairyexcellence.org](http://www.USdairyexcellence.org)

and DMI Chairperson Marilyn Hershey.

The website also has an events section detailing the export council’s webinars, workshops and other activities in the region, offering companies the chance to engage more closely with the export council and U.S. suppliers.

COVID restrictions in Singapore have made it impossible for the center to launch with the immediate impact it could have had through in-person engagement, so it has been leveraged in virtual programming.

As restrictions ease, the new website will help spread the word, not just to customers but to U.S. member companies.

“Many of our members are very interested in using our test kitchen and using our facilities to bring buyers and potential buyers to a place where they can grow their relationships,” Harden said.

“The center also is giving some of our members an opportunity to think about opening their own offices in Singapore. We are going to see a ripple effect with this center,” she said.



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