

## North Dakota Dairy Promotion Commission

### Oral Report

### Dairy Checkoff Activities and Priorities

2018 - 2020

Good Morning Chairman (Representative) Johnson and Chairman (Senator) Luick, Committee members and special guests. I'm Sue Kleingartner, a dairy farmer from Gackle, and chairman of the North Dakota Dairy Promotion Commission Board of Directors. I'm here today to share just a few examples of how our dairy checkoff is helping bring dairy to life to build trust and sales. **I would encourage you to read the full Biennium report and visit the Midwest Dairy website to learn more about our dairy checkoff programs.**

The North Dakota Dairy Promotion Commission was established by the North Dakota Century Code to be responsible for the funding of research, education programs and market development efforts to increase sales and consumption of dairy products.

**Every dairy farmer in North Dakota invests 15 cents per hundredweight of milk sold** to support the marketing of our products. A nickel of this amount goes directly to the national program, while the remaining dime goes through the North Dakota Dairy Promotion Commission to [Midwest Dairy](#) for regional and local activities.

Throughout this biennium, we have helped **inspire consumer trust in dairy by offering excellent dairy experiences** at a wide variety of projects and events in North Dakota.

The presence of COVID-19 brought uncertainty to Midwest Dairy's strategic plan, but with quick pivots, Midwest Dairy was able to provide virtual dairy experiences for key leaders and consumers and online resources for teachers. We continued to support our partners in school foodservice, food banks, and at retail to ensure dairy was not only available for students and families, but properly stored and cared for.

For example: To support North Dakota schools Midwest Dairy distributed more than 1500 portable insulated coolers to school nutrition departments throughout the region. These coolers helped ensure cold milk was served through curbside or bus-delivered meals used when remote learning was in effect for all schools.

Food banks across the region saw unprecedented need as a result of the pandemic. To provide more dairy products to those facing food insecurity, Midwest Dairy donated \$500,000 to food banks in the 10 states it represents. This included a donation to the

Great Plains Food Bank who partnered with a local supplier to secure and distribute an additional 4700 gallons of milk to North Dakota food pantries.

Additionally, dairy farmers had the opportunity to apply for Midwest Dairy's Community Relief Grants which supplied local food pantries with a new refrigeration unit. Eight food pantries in North Dakota received coolers to be used to store dairy products and other perishable foods.

During the last two years we have continued to support school breakfast as a great opportunity to grow dairy demand. In 2019, Midwest Dairy awarded more than \$8,000 to North Dakota schools to help start or enhance breakfast outside the cafeteria through a Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab and Go service. Additionally, nearly \$15,000 was awarded to Bismarck Public Schools to purchase equipment to support alternative breakfast programs in the district. Not only do these programs increase breakfast participation but have increased dairy sales across the district.

In 2019, Midwest Dairy staff, Dairy Ambassadors and North Dakota dairy farmers reached thousands of consumers at a variety of events. Consumers of all ages enjoyed dairy treats at the Milkshakes and More Wagon at the North Dakota State Fair and had a chance to see firsthand how dairy farmers take great care of their animals while visiting the dairy barn. The dairy display at the Red River Valley Fair helped tell the farm-to-table story and the importance of dairy in a healthy diet.

In 2020, we shifted from in-person events to virtual experiences to continue to tell the dairy story. A virtual Moo and Brew event was held featuring a North Dakota dairy farmer, a brewer and a cheese expert to learn more about dairy's sustainability practices while enjoying regional beer and cheeses. Virtual farm tours and online curriculum featuring dairy farm resources were offered to teachers throughout North Dakota to share with their students.

Looking ahead to 2021, Midwest Dairy will be implementing a newly developed three-year strategic plan for 2021-2023.

The **Vision being "Bring Dairy to Life for a Better World!"** and

**the Mission being "Work with Others to Give Consumers an Excellent Dairy Experience."**

During this timeframe, Midwest Dairy will focus on several objectives such as.

- **Increase dairy sales** by working with retailers, school and foodservice partners.
- **Grow trust in dairy** by sharing dairy's environmental sustainability and wellness messaging.

- **Advance research in dairy** by sharing dairy checkoff's research and insights to increase trust and sales of dairy with processors and sales partners.
- **Create dairy checkoff advocates** by continuing to communicate checkoff activities with dairy farmers, processors and other influential decision makers.
- **Develop farm and community leaders for dairy** by promoting the Dairy Ambassador program and leadership opportunities for dairy farmers and community leaders.

These objectives will assist Midwest Dairy with programming and checkoff investment priorities in 2021 and beyond.

The dairy checkoff promotion program was established in 1984 with one purpose—to increase demand for U.S. dairy products. While dairy farmers have experienced both the highs and lows of markets the dairy checkoff has played an important role in maintaining a positive demand curve.

The need for wholesome, nutrient-rich dairy foods, combined with the necessity of telling the dairy farm and farmer story in a consumer-friendly way, makes the case for the importance of an effective dairy checkoff program going forward. Midwest Dairy, on behalf of North Dakota dairy farmers and those in surrounding states, is committed to serving that role.

I hope that after hearing about these efforts, you share my confidence in how North Dakota dairy farmers' checkoff funds are invested to the benefit of our farms, families and communities.

Thank you for your time and continued support.

**With me today from Midwest Dairy are Program Managers Amber Boeshans and Char Heer.**

**We would be happy to entertain any questions at this time.**