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Dairy CPI Fell 0.3% In November, To Lowest Level Since Aug. 2022

Average Retail Cheddar Price Dropped Almost 20 Cents In November; Retail Whole Milk Price Rose

Washington—The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for dairy and related products was 267.6 in November (1982-84=100), down 0.3 percent from October and 1.4 percent below November 2022, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported Tuesday.

That's the lowest level for the dairy CPI since August 2022, when it was 267.5.

The dairy CPI had been above 270 every month from November 2022 through April 2023, including a record high of 272.3 in February.

The CPI for all items was 307.1 in November, down 0.2 percent from October but 3.1 percent higher than in November 2022.

Also in November, the CPI for food was 325.2, down 0.2 percent from October but up 2.9 percent from November 2022; the CPI for food at home was 303.2, down 0.5 percent from October but up 1.7 percent from November 2022; and the CPI for food away from home was 360.4, up 0.4 percent

from October and up 5.3 percent from November 2022.

November's CPI for cheese and related products was 264.4, down 0.7 percent from October and down 2.6 percent from November 2022. That's the lowest level for the cheese CPI since June 2022, when it was 263.5. The cheese CPI was above 270 every month from August 2022 through May 2023.

In November, the average retail price for a pound of natural Cheddar cheese was \$5.65, down almost 20 cents from October and down more than 28 cents from November 2022. That's the lowest average retail Cheddar price since May 2022, when it was \$5.65 per pound.

Average retail Cheddar cheese prices in the four major regions in November, with comparisons to a month earlier and a year earlier, were as follows:

Northeast: \$6.27 per pound, down almost six cents from October but up more than nine cents from November 2022.

Midwest: \$5.42 per pound, up almost two cents from October but down almost 19 cents from November 2022.

South: \$5.40 per pound, down almost 47 cents from October and down almost 40 cents from November 2022.

West: \$5.78 per pound, down more than nine cents from October and down almost 51 cents from November 2022.

The average retail price for a pound of American processed cheese in November was \$4.75, up one cent from October but down more than nine cents from November 2022.

November's CPI for whole milk was 253.4, up 0.6 percent from October but down 2.9 percent from November 2022. The whole milk CPI has now been above 250 for two straight months, after being below that level for three consecutive months.

Also in November, the CPI for "milk" was 175.8 (December 1997=100), up 0.3 percent from October but down 2.4 percent from November 2022; and the

• See **Dairy CPI Falls**, p. 9

House OKs Bill To Allow Schools To Serve Whole Milk; Bill Stalls In Senate

Washington—The US House on Wednesday voted in favor of the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, which would restore the option of whole milk in school nutrition programs.

The legislation was approved by a bipartisan vote of 330 to 99.

On Thursday, US Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS), one of the bill's sponsors in that chamber, called for unanimous consent on the Senate floor to bring the legislation to a vote.

However, US Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, objected to Marshall's unanimous consent request. She noted that USDA is in the process of updating school meal standards, and that intervening in that process creates "a very unfortunate precedent and will lead to other ideas and options that may be coming forward about individual products."

USDA had published a proposed rule in February of this year that would establish long-term school nutrition standards for, among other things, fluid milk, sodium, and added sugars. According to the Biden administration's recently released fall 2023 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions, USDA will issue a final rule on

• See **Whole Milk For Kids**, p. 4

National Federal Order Hearing Recesses Until Jan. 16, 2024

Zionsville, IN—After two more weeks of testimony focusing on Class I and Class II differentials, USDA's national federal milk marketing order hearing recessed last Friday afternoon and won't reconvene until Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024, in Carmel, IN.

If the hearing is not completed by Jan. 19, it will reconvene on Monday, Jan. 29, at the same location.

The hearing had gotten underway on Aug. 23, then was recessed on Oct. 11 and reconvened on Nov. 27.

Leading off last Friday morning's testimony was Tim Galloway, CEO of Galloway Company,

• See **Hearing Recessed**, p. 6

Cheese Box Companion Items Merit Consideration; Mimic Artisan Trends

Madison—As holiday cheese boxes gain momentum, producers and retailers are investing serious thought when selecting accompaniments to the "marquee" cheeses within.

Companion foods often mimic overall artisan trends, with local items favored, and quality over quantity. Pairing items feature robust and unique flavors like single-origin, high-cocoa dark chocolates, raw honey and locally-made charcuterie.

All said, a stellar cheese box should arrive in prompt and perfect condition, feature cheese that's appealing to both the eye and the palate, and include carefully curated pairing items.

The first consideration when creating a new gift set is to fulfill the specific needs of our customers, said Marguerite Merritt, cheese emissary for Rogue Creamery, Central Point, OR.

"Is it to create a pairing with a particular beverage, such as beer or wine? Or perhaps to design a gift that's appropriate for a specific occasion, such as Valentine's Day or Thanksgiving? Once our concept is clear, we determine which of our cheeses would fit best," Merritt said.

Then comes the best part — we brainstorm accompaniments that both fit our theme and pair well with the cheeses we selected, Merritt said. This part of the process involves serious tasting.

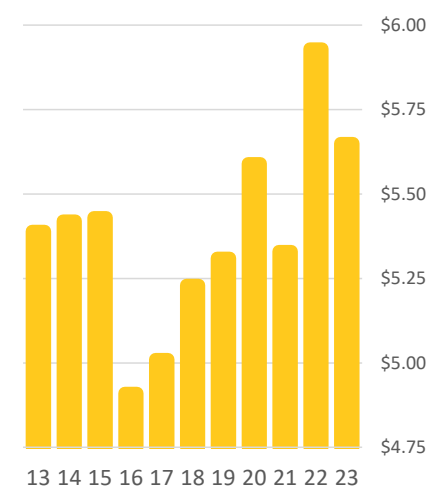
Zoe Brickley, director of communications and e-commerce for Jasper Hill Farm, Greensboro, VT, said even with a broad selection of cheese styles, curating

• See **Box Companions**, p. 10

Average Retail Cheddar Price

November 2013 - 2023

Price per pound: US Bureau of Labor Statistics





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EDITORIAL COMMENT



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by the time it reconvenes, the hearing will have taken place in six different months, starting in August 2023, possibly continuing into a seventh month, and in two different years.

The Never-Ending Saga Of Updating Federal Orders

The ongoing national federal milk marketing order hearing is recessed again, and won't resume until Tuesday, Jan. 16, in Carmel, IN. That means that, by the time it reconvenes, the hearing will have taken place in six different months, starting in August 2023, possibly continuing into a seventh month, and in two different years.

It was two months ago when we noted, in this space, the "good news" that the hearing had advanced to the fifth and final hearing proposal category, Class I and Class II differentials, but also the "bad news," which was that the hearing had recessed until Nov. 27, "meaning it will likely continue at least until early December."

Well, it not only continued until early December, it's now going to continue until at least mid-January, and possibly even into early February. And now it looks like it could be February of 2025, if not later, before updates to the federal order system are finally implemented.

These lengthening timelines have prompted us to look back at some missed "opportunities" to update the federal order system prior to this ongoing proceeding, which might not have been needed, or might not be taking as long as it is, had these earlier opportunities been taken advantage of.

Keep in mind that the current federal order system has now been around for over two decades. Federal order reforms were implemented starting on Jan. 1, 2000.

Eight years later, the 2008 farm bill included a section requiring the secretary of agriculture to establish a "Federal Milk Marketing Order Review Commission" to conduct a "comprehensive review and evaluation" of the federal milk marketing order system in effect on the date of establishment of the commis-

sion; and non-federal milk marketing order systems.

One of the seven "elements" of this review and evaluation was as follows: "streamlining and expediting the process by which amendments to Federal milk market orders are adopted."

That section of the 2008 farm bill was never implemented.

That same farm bill included a separate section requiring USDA to issue supplemental rules of practice to define guidelines and timeframes for the rulemaking process relating to federal order amendments. Those supplemental rules of practice were supposed to establish proposal submission requirements, pre-hearing information session specifications, written testimony and data request requirements, public participation timeframes, and electronic document submission standards.

That section of the 2008 farm bill was implemented, which is why the first part of this current proceeding moved relatively fast, from the first proposals being submitted on Mar. 28, 2023, to USDA releasing an "Action Plan" on June 1 and then releasing a hearing notice on July 21.

But obviously things have gotten bogged down since the hearing got underway, which makes us wonder what a Federal Milk Marketing Order Review Commission might have recommended for streamlining and expediting the federal order amendment process, had that commission been created.

That wasn't the only time USDA had an opportunity to address federal order problems. In August of 2009, US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack established the Dairy Industry Advisory Committee to review the issues of farm milk price volatility and dairy farmer profitability.

Two of the 23 recommendations included in the DIAC's

final report, which was released in March 2011, dealt with the federal order program. Both of these recommendations were approved unanimously (17 DIAC members in favor, none opposed).

The first of these federal order-related recommendations was for the secretary of agriculture to appoint a committee to review implications of federal orders, including, but not limited to, end-product pricing's impact on milk price volatility and impact of classified pricing and pooling on processing investment, competition and dairy product innovation.

The second of these recommendations was to explore alternative measures to the current end product pricing system, such as competitive pricing and mandatory price reporting.

Why is this pertinent today? Think back to August and September, when the ongoing federal order hearing was focusing on the issues of Class III and Class IV formula factors, surveyed commodity products, and milk composition. All of those issues are part of the end product pricing system, which has been controversial for a couple of decades now but hasn't really been addressed directly when it comes to a possible replacement (which would come with its own set of controversies).

Finally, we recall that, in 2015, USDA sought comments as part of its regulatory review of the federal order program. The purpose of that review was to determine whether the program should be continued without change, amended, or rescinded.

Several changes to the federal order program were recommended, but those ideas went nowhere.

So here we are, waiting to ring in the new year and continuing a federal order amendment proceeding with no end in sight.

USDA Issues Final Baby Formula Rule; FDA Updates Infant Formula Actions

Washington—USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) on Thursday published a final rule to amend the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) regulations by incorporating provisions of the Access to Baby Formula Act (ABFA) and making related amendments.

Specifically, the final rule will:

- Codify permanent, expanded waiver authority of the secretary of agriculture to help ensure continuity of WIC services during emergency periods and supply chain disruptions impacting WIC. A supply chain disruption is defined as a shortage of WIC supplemental foods, including infant formula.

- Codify requirements for WIC state agencies to include language in their WIC infant formula cost containment contracts that describes remedies in the event of an infant formula recall, including how an infant formula manufacturer would protect against disruption to supplemental food access by WIC participants.

- Add a new provision that WIC state agencies must include as a part of the state plan a "plan of alternate operating procedures," in the event of an emergency period, supplemental food recall, or other supply chain disruption.

WIC is currently administered by 89 WIC state agencies.

According to their participant category and nutritional needs, WIC participants receive supplemental foods on a monthly basis from one of seven food packages.

The amounts and categories of foods provided are intended to supplement participants' diets and provide specific nutrients known to be lacking in the diets of WIC's target population.

In other infant formula-related developments, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this week provided an update on actions the agency has taken, and those underway, to strengthen the safety and resiliency of the supply of nutritious infant formula.

The update includes release of a progress report specific to actions FDA has taken to meet the recommendations in the *FDA's Evaluation of the Infant Formula Response* report, which was released in September 2022.

The US Food and Drug Administration's update highlights notable actions, including:

- Hiring and providing specialized training to personnel dedicated to the oversight of critical

foods, including infant formula. This includes setting up a dedicated critical foods inspectional cadre and establishing a new Office of Critical Foods.

Both actions are intended to arm FDA with resources and expertise that are focused solely on critical foods, and which facilitate enhanced oversight of these commodities.

- Updating and improving FDA's infant formula compliance program, which outlines the agency's inspectional and compliance approach to infant formula, to help ensure that infant formula products in the US food supply are safe and nutritious.

- Supporting the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) position on elevating Cronobacter to a nationally noti-

fiable disease, which was a critical step toward better understanding how these illnesses occur, spread, who is most at risk, and most importantly, what can be done to prevent Cronobacter-related illnesses.

Cronobacter sakazakii is a pathogen found naturally in the environment that can enter manufacturing facilities and home environments on hands, shoes, and other contaminated surfaces.

Cronobacter sakazakii is especially good at surviving in dry foods, like powdered infant formula, powdered milk, and starches.

- Increasing the diversity of infant formula available in the US, especially through the US Food and Drug Administration's transition plan for firms that had previously received a letter of enforcement discretion.

- Continuing to build on FDA's

Strategy to Help Prevent Cronobacter sakazakii Illnesses Associated with Consumption of Powdered Infant Formula, which aims to broaden scientific knowledge, improve oversight, and enhance communications and engagement with industry consumers and other stakeholders.

- Updating and streamlining infant formula-related materials on *FDA.gov* to provide consumers, industry, and medical professionals with more accessible information, including materials on: infant formula, Cronobacter sakazakii, and a new resource on handling infant formula safely in both English and Spanish.

- Issuing warning letters to infant formula manufacturers as part of the agency's ongoing commitment to enhance regulatory oversight to help ensure that manufacturers are producing infant formula under the safest conditions possible.

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Whole Milk For Kids

(Continued from p. 1)

long-term school nutrition standards in April 2024.

Currently, schools participating in the National School Lunch Program must provide milk that is consistent with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans; USDA regulations require milk to be fat-free or lowfat and allow milk to be flavored or unflavored. The bill modifies these restrictions and instead permits schools to offer students whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, and fat-free flavored and unflavored milk.

Also, schools currently participating in the program must provide meals that meet certain nutrition requirements; USDA regulations require that the average saturated fat content of the meals offered must be less than 10 percent of the total calories, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) noted.

Under the bill, fluid milk is excluded from the saturated fat content calculation; milkfat included in any fluid milk provided by the program must not be considered saturated fat for the purposes of measuring compliance with USDA regulations.

"This bill would allow schools to once again provide children with a wide variety of milk options that they will drink and that meet their individual needs — whether that be whole and 2 percent, low-fat milks, or lactose-free milks," said Michael Dykes, president and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA). "A wide majority of parents and medical and nutrition professionals know that offering these options increases school meal participation, reduces food waste, and provides nutritionally valuable school meals for children and adolescents."

"Milk's unique nutritional profile gives it an unparalleled role in providing kids the nutrients they need. Expanding the milk

schools can choose to serve to include 2 percent and whole is a common-sense solution that will help ensure kids have access to the same healthful milk options they drink at home," said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.

"Access to whole milk in schools allows students to benefit from affordable, unmatched and wholesome nutrition," Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) said in a statement released after the House approved the legislation. "Today's decision is in alignment with scientific research that demonstrates the benefits of real dairy at all fat levels, and consumer preference."

Brody Stapel, president of Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, thanked the bill's sponsors "for their unwavering support and leadership to ensure that fuller-fat dairy products are recognized as healthy options, especially for school nutrition programs."

"The reintroduction of whole milk in school cafeterias will not only promote children's health by offering a well-rounded selection of milk options in schools, but also the potential for increased demand for milk, thereby supporting dairy farmers," said Jeff Lyon, general manager of Farm-First Dairy Cooperative.

"Too many children and adolescents don't get enough dairy in their diets and this important legislation would help ensure that more of them benefit from the nutrient density and great taste of fresh, whole milk," said Allan Huttema, dairy farmer and chairman and interim CEO of Darigold.

"Scientific evidence supports fuller-fat milk and dairy as an excellent source of vital nutrients and other health benefits. While the natural milkfat aids absorption of key vitamins, it also brings flavor to the table so students can enjoy and benefit from all that milk has to offer them," said Walt

Moore, chairman of the American Dairy Coalition.

"I'm delighted to see this change, which is backed by the most rigorous science showing that regular dairy is the healthiest for growing children. This law is a rare instance in nutrition where good science has triumphed over special interests," said Nina Teicholz, founder of the Nutrition Coalition.

However, the legislation was opposed by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA), which is self-described as the nation's largest nutrition advocacy coalition. Its members include the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American Heart Association, among others.

In a Dec. 6 letter to US Reps. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and Robert Scott (D-VA), that panel's top Democrat, the NANA said that singling out whole and reduced-fat milk to be exempt from the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines "is a slippery slope for allowing special interests to carve out exemptions in school meal program rules."

While milk is "an important part of a well-balanced diet," full-fat milk "contains too much saturated fat to be part of a healthy food pattern," the NANA letter stated.

Passing the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act "would be a departure from the long-standing tradition of establishing food and nutrition standards for federal child nutrition programs based upon the findings of independent reviewers and the scientific community," the letter added.

"How many parents would turn to their members of Congress for nutrition advice for their children instead of health experts?" asked Megan Maroney, CSPI campaign manager for federal child nutrition programs.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

50 YEARS AGO

Dec. 14, 1973: Marshfield, WI—Stephen Miller, founder and president of the Central Cheese Company here, passed away Dec. 8 after a short illness. Miller was also a former director and active trading member of the Wisconsin Cheese Exchange.

Washington—Responding to proposed changes to the Mandatory Allocation Program for fuel, NMPF argues that the dairy industry should receive all the fuel needed to produce, transport and process milk and dairy products. Under the program, fuel would be allocated via a "priority base period volume," which NMPF deems unworkable.

25 YEARS AGO

Dec. 18, 1998: Baltimore, MD—Harold Meister, deputy director of USDA's Dairy Division, passed away Dec. 7 at his home here. A Minnesota native, Meister gained an early insight into milk production and standards by working for Marigold Dairies in Austin, and the Minnesota Ag Department.

Watertown, SD—Forecasters expect the retail shredded cheese market to keep growing at a rate of 6 to 8 percent annually. The market that's "really growing the fastest right now" is the processed shredded market, said Bill Aimutis, director of research for Land O'Lakes. Two years ago, it was difficult to find a processed shredded cheese on the market, he said.

10 YEARS AGO

Dec. 13, 2013: Madison—The Sartori Company will embark on a \$14 million expansion and renovation project at its plants in Antigo and Plymouth, WI. Work will begin in 2014, which is also Sartori's 75th anniversary.

Auckland, New Zealand—Global Dairy Trade announced that Land O'Lakes dairy products will be offered on Global Dairy Trade starting in March. LOL will initially offer skim milk powder via the semi-monthly online platform. Currently six sellers will be offering skim milk powder: Dairy America, Fonterra, Arla, Amul and Euroserum.

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Bicameral Legislation Would Require Front-Of-Package Nutrition Labels

Washington—Legislation introduced Thursday in both the House and Senate would direct the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to develop new front-of-package nutrition labels for foods and beverages.

The Transparency, Readability, Understandability, Truth, and Helpfulness (TRUTH) in Labeling Act was introduced in the House by US Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and in the Senate by US Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).

The legislation amends the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to require a standardized front-of-package nutrition label that helps consumers differentiate between foods of greater or lesser nutritional value. The labels must also show the amount of calories a food contains.

The new labels would be required to have clear information about nutrients of concern, including salt, sugar, and saturated fat, to help consumers make healthier choices. The Nutrition Facts label would still have to be displayed on the back or side of the package.

The legislation allows FDA the flexibility to determine the specific format of the labels, but suggests several considerations for their implementation, including enabling consumers to quickly and easily understand the label and encouraging FDA to evaluate the effectiveness of the labeling system.

The TRUTH in Labeling Act has been endorsed by a number of advocacy groups, including the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators, Association of State Public Health Nutritionists, ChangeLab Solutions, Consumer Federation of America, Consumer Reports, Corporate Accountability, Food & Water Watch, Healthy Food America, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of School Nurses, National Center for Health Research, Public Health Advocacy Institute, Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health, Society for Behavioral Medicine, and Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior.

“Food companies have led the American people astray for too long. If consumers could see how much sodium, sugar, and saturated fat is in their food, they might think twice about what they are purchasing,” Schakowsky said.

“Our bill will create a consumer-friendly nutrition labeling system on the front of food packages,” Schakowsky continued. “We must do all we can to cre-

ate transparency in food labeling and empower consumers to make informed dietary decisions.”

“This measure ensures foods have clear front-of-package labels that highlight high levels of concerning nutrients,” Blumenthal said.

“While Nutrition Facts labels are popular among those who use them, research has found that their impact is limited: only 40 percent of consumers frequently use them, and more than a third of consumers are unable to accurately interpret the percent Daily Value on the labels,” said Eva Greenthal, CSPI senior policy scientist.

“Several countries, including Canada and Mexico, have improved their nutrition labeling systems by offering more accessible, user-friendly nutrition information on the front of the package, in addition to the more complicated back-of-package disclosure,” Greenthal continued.

Last year, CSPI petitioned the US Food and Drug Administration to issue regulations to implement a standardized front-of-package nutrition labeling system that is mandatory, nutrient-specific, includes calories, and is “interpretive” with respect to the levels of sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars per serving.

FDA is currently conducting consumer research on front-of-package labeling.

In January 2023, FDA announced an opportunity for public comment on a proposed collection of information associated with a study entitled “Quantitative Research on Front of Package Labeling on Packaged Foods.”

In that announcement, the agency explained that is exploring the development of a front of package (FOP) system to help consumers interpret the nutrient information on food products.

Last year, FDA conducted a review of the literature on FOP nutrition-related labels and conducted a set of focus groups to test FOP concepts and draft FOP schemes.

These focus group results provided insights into the varying ways that consumers interpret FOP nutrition information.

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Chr. Hansen-Novozymes Merger Approved; Name Will Be 'Novonesis'

Brussels, Belgium, Copenhagen, Denmark, and Tralee, Ireland—The European Commission on Tuesday announced that it has approved the proposed merger between Chr. Hansen and Novozymes.

The approval is conditional upon compliance with the commitments offered by the parties.

The Commission's investigation showed that the merger, as initially notified, would have reduced competition in the market for the manufacture of one specific enzyme, lactase, using genetic modification technology.

In particular, the Commission found that Chr. Hansen had a project to start manufacturing lactase and would very likely grow into an effective competitor within a short timeframe.

The European Commission also found that, post-merger, there would not be sufficient potential competitors to exert sufficient competitive pressure on the merged entity.

To address the Commission's competition concerns, the parties offered to divest: Chr. Hansen's project to enter the market for the manufacture of lactase; Chr. Hansen's lactase distribution business; and Novozymes' lactase production facility.

Related to that, Kerry Group plc announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire part of the global lactase enzyme business of Chr. Hansen and Novozymes on a carve out basis.

This acquisition is subject to EC approval of Kerry as a buyer and forms part of the Chr Han-

sen-Novozymes merger approval process, Kerry Group noted.

The lactase enzymes business, which includes NOLA® products, further enhances Kerry's biotechnology solutions capability, Kerry noted.

This acquisition will add enzyme technology which helps create lactose-free and sugar-reduced dairy products.

On Wednesday, Chr. Hansen and Novozymes announced their future name, "Novonesis."

The company expects the merger closing to take place in the first quarter of 2024, following regulatory approval.

The name Novonesis will be used and gradually implemented once the proposed combination is completed.

Until final merger control approvals are received, and the proposed combination is completed, Chr. Hansen and Novozymes will operate as completely separate companies.

"We developed the name Novonesis in close collaboration and dialogue between Novozymes and Chr. Hansen," said Cees de Jong, chairman of Novozymes. "It has been crucial to find a name that can be a home to all our 10,000 employees, but even more importantly the name should represent the future potential of biosolutions."

"In Novonesis, we will unite the brightest minds and the best science and technology in the field to help customers and businesses prosper while enabling to solve some of the greatest challenges we all face," said Ester Baiget, president and CEO of Novozymes.

Hearing Recessed

(Continued from p. 1)

who testified in opposition to Proposal 21, submitted by the American Farm Bureau Federation, which would raise the Class II differential from the current 70 cents to \$1.56 per hundredweight.

Galloway Company, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Classic Mix Partners, only manufactures industrial ingredients that are considered Class II items under federal orders, Galloway explained.

He said Proposal 21 will not attract more milk to Class II uses, increase the blend price, reduce depooling and negative producer price differentials (PPDs). In fact, "it has a likelihood of taking more Class II milk out of the pool replaced by regulated Class IV ingredients, or milk ingredients from unregulated markets."

In the Upper Midwest order, where Galloway Company is located, milk purchases have to be competitive to the dominant Class III market, Galloway said. And on the sales side, his company has to be competitive to competing ingredients such as condensed skim milk, nonfat dry milk, concentrated milkfat and anhydrous milkfat.

Mike Brown, chief economist for the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), testified in opposition to Proposal 19, submitted by NMPF, which would raise Class I differentials in all counties, parishes, and independent cities in the contiguous United States.

Brown listed multiple reasons why USDA should reject Proposal 19, including:

The current milk supply is "far more than adequate" to serve Class I needs.

"The simple but inescapable and striking truth is that the current supply of milk greatly exceeds, by any measure, the amount necessary to satisfy fluid needs," Brown stated. "There is no justification to increase Class I differentials and stimulating a larger milk supply given the presence of an already far more than adequate milk supply."

When a consumer product like fluid milk is suffering continuing, massive sales declines, materially raising its price makes no sense. The notion that the price for milk going to fluid use should be raised so that, once blended with the price of milk for other purposes, farmers will reap a financial benefit, "no longer matches reality."

Recent price elasticity studies firmly establish that Class I differentials should not be raised. Even if viewed solely based upon the effect on dairy farmers, increasing Class I differentials "is completely misguided if the concomitant retail price increase so diminishes Class I product sales that they largely if

not entirely offset the higher Class I price."

Proposal 19 would significantly increase government program costs. The \$1.49 per hundredweight increase in Class I differentials would cost the government over \$67 million, assuming direct pass through.

Proposal 19 should be rejected "because it reflects an ill-conceived amalgamation if disparate, unevenly applied criteria, many of which bear no relevance to Class I pricing and have never played a role in setting Class I differentials."

Proponents of federal order amendments have an obligation to present a coherent, cohesive justification for their proposals, Brown said. "Proposal 19's proposed Class I differential map falls far short."

USDA should not raise Class I differentials in a misguided and doomed effort to reduce or eliminate depooling.

"Regardless of whether one regards depooling as good, bad, or neutral, the plain fact is that Proposal 19's increases in Class I differentials would have little effect on depooling," while resulting in a "substantial decline" in fluid milk sales, and farmer receipts from those sales, Brown said.

There is no basis to increase Class I differentials in the three southeastern orders, in light of USDA's recent decision to increase transportation credits and establish delivery credits in those orders. USDA's decision "significantly increases" the amount of money Class I handlers must pay farmers and farmer organizations to bring sufficient supplies of milk to meet Class I needs, "the very purpose also served by Class I differentials," Brown said.

Any proposed increase in Class I differentials should be offset by a 40-cent per hundredweight decrease in Class I differentials because the 40-cent per hundred Class I differential component relating to the cost of becoming or maintaining a Grade A farm is both obsolete and inaccurate.

Sally Keefe, owner and principal of skFigures testified as a representative of the Milk Innovation Group (MIG) in opposition to Proposal 19.

"MIG's position is that USDA should not raise the Class I differentials at all, particularly given the growth in milk supplies and declining Class I sales," Keefe said. "But USDA certainly should not adopt Proposal 19 as it is not a reliable nor justifiable approach to setting Class I differentials."

From the beginning of its testimony to the conclusion of the roughly 20 witnesses NMPF put forth on its Proposal 19, "it was clear that NMPF's proposal lacked any consistent rationale for how it set differentials," Keefe said continued.

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House Bill To Help Dairy Producers Impacted By Flooding

Washington—US Rep. David G. Valadao (R-CA) late last week introduced the Emergency Assistance for Dairy Producers Act, which aims to ensure that dairy producers impacted by California's historic storms earlier this year can qualify for Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) emergency assistance funds.

California's agriculture industry was hit hard by this year's historic storms, but currently, there are limited avenues available to assist dairy producers impacted by natural disasters, a Valadao press release noted.

Valadao's bill aims to address this gap by amending the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act to authorize the use of CCC funds for emergency assistance to dairy producers in the case of livestock relocation and feed crop losses due to natural disasters and ensures the US secretary of agriculture has the proper explicit authorities to assist dairy producers using Commodity Credit Corporation funds.

"California dairy farm families endured major challenges this year from storms that displaced families and cattle, damaged farms and feed supplies, and severely impacted crops being grown to feed the state's dairy cows," said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.

"This legislation can't come soon enough for our producers who experienced catastrophic losses due to the historic flooding in the Tulare Lake Basin in 2023," said Kevin Abernathy, general manager of Milk Producers Council.

"Property damage, feed losses, and transportation costs from moving livestock during the flooding were devastating to Central Valley dairy farmers, but there are limited options for them to be reimbursed for these costs," Valadao said.

"Time is of the essence to get financial support to individual dairy farmers who have lost years of feed supplies due to flooding, and are buying corn, wheat, alfalfa and other total mixed ration (TMR) ingredients on the open market," Milk Producers Council's Abernathy continued.

Pennsylvania Milk Board Keeps Over-Order Premium At \$1.00 Per Hundred

Harrisburg, PA—The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board (PMMB) on Wednesday decided to keep the state's over-order premium at \$1.00 per hundredweight for six more months, from Jan. 1 through June 30, 2024.

Pennsylvania's over-order premium applies only to Class I milk that's produced, processed and sold in the state.

One of the three Board members, James A. Van Blarcom, disagreed with the majority's decision to establish any level of over-order premium for any duration at this time. The other two board members, Robert N. Barley, chairman, and Kristi Kassimer Harper, consumer member, voted in favor of keeping the over-order premium at \$1.00 per hundred for another six months.

At a hearing earlier this month, Matt Espenshade, president of the Pennsylvania State Grange, testified in support of fixing the over-order premium at \$1.00 per hundredweight for the next six months. He testified about several challenges dairy farmers are facing, including:

- An excessive heat wave, coupled with no rain during the pollination stage, led to a drastic decrease in yield for a majority of his corn acres. The lack of rain also limited growth in his hay fields.

- The farm milk price has declined through 2023. In January 2023, Espenshade received \$23.65 per hundred for his milk, with an income over feed cost of \$15.60 per hundred. By October 2023, the price had dropped to \$16.82

per hundred and an income over feed cost of \$6.44 per hundred.

- The cooperative that Espenshade belongs to, Mount Joy Farmers Co-op, and other cooperatives are challenged finding markets for milk. To help cover balancing costs, Mount Joy members continue to be assessed a market adjustment fee, which is currently 72 cents per hundred.

- Supply chain issues, record inflation rates, and price increases that have impacted Americans' daily lives have hit Pennsylvania's dairy sector very hard.

- Higher input costs make it difficult to keep current on bills, take advantage of early payment discounts, and avoid significant late fees.

Russell Redding, secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), testified that the PDA didn't oppose Grange's over-order premium proposal as the PDA works with industry and the state legislature to address challenges presented by the current over-order premium structure. He testified that the PDA believes it is important to maintain the over-order premium while legislative solutions are developed.

John Painter testified on behalf of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, which agrees with Grange's recommendation that the over-order premium be set at \$1.00 per hundred for six months. He testified that he has comparable issues as described by Espenshade.

In partnership with his brothers, Painter operates Painterland Farms, an organic dairy and crop farm. Since there are no organic

processing plants in Pennsylvania, Painterland Farms doesn't receive any over-order premium, he said.

Farm Bureau supports reforming the over-order premium and if meaningful reform cannot be achieved, Farm Bureau's support for the premium is not indefinite, Painter noted.

Brittini Treichler-Harris, the Eastern region milk supply manager for Land O'Lakes, testified on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association of Dairy Cooperatives (PADC), whose other members are Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Association and Lanco Dairy Farms Co-op. She testified that PADC does not oppose setting the over-order premium at \$1.00 per hundred for the next six months.

Two of the three PMMB members found that the over-order premium should be fixed at \$1.00 per hundred for the first six months of 2024.

In disagreeing with the majority's decision, Van Blarcom said he continues to have concerns regarding the current over-order premium system. The hearing record demonstrated that Pennsylvania dairy farmers are facing rising costs and falling milk prices.

All Pennsylvania dairy farmers would benefit if they received over-order premium dollars and those over-order premium dollars should be distributed fairly, Van Blarcom stated. That doesn't happen in the current system.

A concern Van Blarcom expressed is that "we do not know the amount of over-order premium collected from Pennsylvania consumers through the minimum retail price. All over-order premium dollars should be accounted for. That does not happen."

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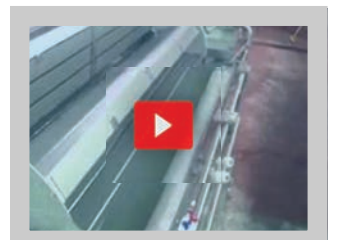
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WCMA 2024 Scholarship Application Window Is Open Now Through Feb. 9

Madison—The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) is accepting applications for its annual student scholarships through Feb. 9.

Seven applicants will be awarded a total of \$19,000 in March 2024, with awards presented on April 17 at Cheese-Expo in Milwaukee, WI.

Two WCMA scholarships target students attending a college, university, or technical school in the US, or high school seniors registered to attend a qualifying school next fall.

Preference for these scholarship awards will be given to candidates pursuing degrees and careers connected to the dairy industry.

They include:

WCMA Myron P. "Mike" Dean Cheese Industry Student Scholarship – Two students will be awarded this scholarship, worth \$3,000 each.

Any employee or child of an employee at a WCMA dairy manufacturing, processing, or marketing member company may apply. In 2023, this scholarship was awarded to Lizzette Lopez of Great Lakes Cheese and Tyler Schroepfer of Sartori Company.

WCMA Cheese Industry Supplier Student Scholarship – Three students will receive scholarship awards of \$3,000 each. Employees or children of employees at WCMA supplier member companies may apply for this scholarship.

In 2023, it was awarded to Josie Boyle of Chr. Hansen, Rainna Simone of Roehl Trans-

port, and Samantha Hawkey of Kelley Supply.

The Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association will also select two students to receive the **Brian Eggebrecht Student Scholarship Supporting Skilled Trades in the Dairy Industry**, worth \$2,000 each.

This award, named in honor of longtime Championship Cheese Contest chairman and generous donor Brian Eggebrecht, who passed away last year, is open to students attending any technical school in Wisconsin, or high school students registered to attend a Wisconsin technical school.

In 2023, this scholarship was awarded to Kaitlyn Rydzewski of ProActive Solutions and Nathan Nikolay of Nelson-Jameson.

Priority consideration for the Eggebrecht Scholarship will be given to applicants pursuing technical certificates, technical diplomas, or associate degrees that may lead to a career in the dairy industry.

Unlike other WCMA scholarships, applicants for this award are not required to be connected to a WCMA member company or cooperative.

Applicants for all WCMA scholarships must supply school transcripts, a letter of recommendation, and a completed application form.

Forms are available online at WisCheeseMakers.org/Scholarships or by request from WCMA's Grace Atherton at (608) 673-5545 or via email: gatherton@wischeesemakers.org.

PERSONNEL

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative has hired KAITLIN HEUSEL to work on its members services team, with a focus on the co-op's members in South Dakota and Minnesota, including farmers who are part of the Minnesota Milk Producers Association. Heusel most recently served as a field representative for Foremost Farms USA for nearly 10 years, where she provided member services to 70 dairy farms in northern Wisconsin. Among her responsibilities with Edge, Heusel is completing monthly verification checks along with bulk tank calibrations for members upon request. Edge Dairy Cooperative has also hired TIM BAUMGARTNER as director of regulatory and permitting services, leading the co-op's new fee-based services to guide farmers through the complexities of local and state permitting and regulations for large farms. Baumgartner worked in the farm credit system for the past 18 years, most recently as team leader for Compeer Financial in Sun Prairie, WI. RACHEL MALCORE has joined the co-op's communication team as public relations specialist, creating strategic messaging and engaging content on behalf of the association and its affiliates.

Nominations For Fluid Milk Promotion Board Due Jan. 12

Washington—Nominations for candidates to serve on the National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Board are now being accepted through Jan. 12, 2024.

Newly appointed members will serve three-year terms from July 1, through June 30, 2027.

The other at-large position may be an owner or employee of a fluid milk processor, or a member of the general public.

Regions with vacancies are Region 3 – Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and District of Columbia; Region 6 – Ohio and West Virginia; Region 8 – Illinois and Indiana; Region 9 – Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee; Region 12 – Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah; and Region 15 – Southern California.

Fluid milk processors and interested parties can submit nominations for regions in which they are located, or regions where they market fluid milk. They can also submit nominations for the at-large members.

Nomination forms and full details are available www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/research-promotion/fluid-milk.

ASSOCIATION NOTES

CWCBA Offering Three Scholarships For 2024; Deadline To Apply Is Feb. 4

Marshfield, WI—The Central Wisconsin Cheesemakers & Buttermakers Association (CWCBA) announced it will offer three \$1,500 student scholarships for the coming year.

The application window is open today through Feb. 4, 2024.

One \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded to an applicant from a cheese or butter plant member of CWCBA, enrolled in a program of study towards any dairy or food science, or a related degree.

The second and third \$1,500 scholarships will be awarded to students from a CWCBA member company supplying equipment, ingredients or services to the dairy industry, who is enrolled full-time in a program of study toward any degree in dairy science, food science, or related field.

Financial need will be considered in awarding these scholarships. Recipients must provide proof of enrollment for the fall 2024 semester before scholarship funds are released. Awards are not retroactive and may not be credited to semesters already completed.

Forms can be found online at www.marshfield.foundation/scholarships.

OBITUARIES

Theodore "Ted" Labuza, 83, internationally recognized leader in dairy and food research, passed away Monday, Dec. 4, 2023, at his home in Vadnais Heights, MN. Labuza earned his bachelor of science and doctorate degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), achieving the rank of associate professor before joining the University of Minnesota department of food science and nutrition faculty in 1971. With over 50 years of contributions, Labuza became one of the university's top scholars and retired as an emeritus professor in 2021. He was also elected the youngest president of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) in 1988, and went on to receive the Nicolas Appert Award, the highest honor given by IFT for preeminence in food science and technology.

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House Members Want To Know Next Steps In US-Canada Dairy TRQ Dispute

Washington—A bipartisan group of more than 60 House members on Thursday asked two key Biden administration officials to outline the next steps they plan to take to ensure fair access to Canadian markets for US dairy products.

The letter, sent to US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, follows a dispute settlement panel's finding late last month that Canada's dairy TRQ allocation measures do not breach any of its USMCA commitments, as the US had alleged.

The House members expressed their "extreme disappointment" in the dispute settlement panel's ruling, saying it "preserves a status quo that denies retailers, food service operators, and other types of importers engaging in the Cana-

dian food and agriculture sector from utilizing TRQ allocations.

"Fair access to Canada's dairy TRQ allocations is instrumental in ensuring that the market access gains the United States negotiated in the USMCA are actually meaningful," the letter continued.

"We strongly encourage you to prioritize fair access to the Canadian marketplace for US dairy products and work collectively between your departments to rectify this trade imbalance".

The House members that signed the letter understand that this USMCA panel ruling is not subject to appeal, and requested

responses from Vilsack and Tai to the following questions:

- What steps will the Office of the USTR and USDA take to ensure fair access to Canadian export markets for US products?

- Will USTR consider exploring other ways to address Canada's dairy TRQ allocation system?

- Will USTR and USDA address other identified distortive Canadian dairy policies, such as their milk class prices and increased dairy protein exports?

- Could Vilsack and Tai provide a briefing on an estimated timeline and identified next steps?

"American dairy farmers cannot afford to lose further ground in a growing global competitive landscape due to continued Canadian stonewalling of that access,"

said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of the NMPF.

The IDFA "is grateful to the many congressional dairy champions working to improve market access with Canada, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress, the US Trade Representative, and the US Department of Agriculture to hold Canada accountable to its USMCA commitments," said Michael Dykes, IDFA's president and CEO.

"It is more important than ever that the administration thinks creatively about addressing the outstanding market access and dairy protein export dumping concerns that remain with Canada," said Krysta Harden, president and CEO of the USDEC.

Dairy CPI Falls

(Continued from p. 1)

CPI for milk other than whole was 181.9, up 0.1 percent from October but down 1.8 percent from November 2022.

The average retail price for a gallon of whole milk in November was \$4.00, up seven cents from October but down more than 22 cents from November 2022.

Average retail whole milk prices in the regions reported by the BLS, with comparisons:

Northeast: \$4.37 per gallon, up almost two cents from October but down almost 13 cents from November 2022; **South:** \$4.07 per gallon, up almost 13 cents from October but down more than 19 cents from November 2022; **West:** \$3.97 per gallon, down almost three cents from October and down almost 28 cents from November 2022.

Butter CPI Declines

November's CPI for butter was 305.9, down 0.7 percent from October and down 0.9 percent from November 2022.

The butter CPI has now been above 300 in nine of the first 11 months of 2023, and was also above 300 every month from June through December 2022.

CPI for ice cream and related products was 276.6, up 1.1 percent from October and up 1.0 percent from November 2022. The ice cream CPI has now been above 270 for six consecutive months.

The average retail price for a half-gallon of regular ice cream was \$6.01, down almost three cents from October's record price.

November's CPI for other dairy and related products was 187.1 (December 1997=100), down 0.9 percent from October and down 0.4 percent from November 2022.

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Box Companions

(Continued from p. 1)

boxes takes thought.

“We’re all about the cheese,” Brickley said. “We have a broad selection of styles as a cheese maker, but it can still be a trick to make sure they are all represented within our gifts, and distributed in collections in such a way that serves our varied inventory positions. We always aim for a nice contrast of textures and flavors, and are always sure to have at least one ‘all cheese’ offering for those with stocked pairing pantries who are just looking to ship the good stuff,” she said.

Lindsey Schechter, owner of Houston Dairymaids, Houston, TX, said she and her team start picking cheeses for holiday gift assortments in June.

“We look for a variety of milk types, styles and intensities,” Schechter said. “We always include a soft-ripened cheese, a fresh goat, two firm cheeses and a Blue.”

We favor cheeses and cheese makers that we’ve worked with throughout the year, and know we can count on their cheese to be consistent and delicious for the holidays, she continued.

The Muranda Cheese Company of Waterloo, NY, starts off its holiday assortment with two or three of its “pure” cheese varieties that are best-sellers – Red Buddy, Old Man Cheddar, or Gotcha Gouda, said Savannah Trombley, general manager, Muranda Cheese.

“Then we add in a few more fun flavored cheeses, like Dilly Girl or Checkerboard Cheddar for some pizzazz,” Trombley said.

Elevated Crackers, Seed Crisps

Careful attention is needed to pick the perfect cracker accompani-

ment. Rogue Creamery’s Merritt said fruit- and nut-studded crisps, such as Lesley Stowe Raincoat Crisps, are very popular with customers right now.

“They’re delicious with a variety of cheeses and add an interesting dimension to the flavor of the bite,” Merritt said. “Effies Oatcakes are also a consistent favorite; they pair especially well with our Blue cheeses, and are just as delicious on their own as when they act as a carrier for cheese.”

Houston Dairymaids loves Wisconsin-based Potter’s Handmade crackers.

“There’s also a local company here in Houston, Leven, that’s making seeded crackers that are gluten free and delicious,” Schechter said.

Muranda Cheese favors traditional Pepperidge Farm variety packs, but also recognizes gluten-free and seed crisps trends, “so we always carry them in store and on our site,” Trombley said.

Jasper Hill favors a more neutral cracker, because our focus is always on the flavors of the cheeses themselves, Brickley said.

“Our favorites recently have been Brewer’s Flatbreads Pretzel Crackers – they’re perfect for scooping Harbison and the flavor combination is beyond delicious,” she said.

“Another great offering to round out a selection would be something with some seeds or nuts for nice texture variation and roasted flavors that play well with washed-rind and Alpine-style cheeses,” Brickley continued.

The Fruit/Jam Element

An assortment of green grapes and giant, woody strawberries won’t excite today’s customers, but jam remains a perennial favorite, along with more exotic and unusual fruits.

“Our customers are getting increasingly curious about unusual flavor combinations, and we’ve found surprising success when pairing our cheeses with tropical fruits and spreads,” Merritt said.

“Mango, pineapple, and guava have been a few of our favorite recommendations lately,” she said.

“Of course, you can never go wrong with a classic quince paste (membrillo) – this is never out of style,” Merritt continued.

The go-to companies that Dairymaids rely on include Houston-based Garden Dreams, which makes exceptional jam using Texas-grown fruit; Bee2Bee Honey, which harvests local honey; and Home-Grown Roasted Hazelnuts from Freddy Guys of Monmouth, OR.

Muranda Cheese is committed to using local products year round, and features “Hip Jam” – a line of wine jams made with the freshest-picked fruits and a favorite among visitors.

“We also carry Nat’s Nuts – a staple in the FLX,” Trombley said.

People just can’t get enough jam, Jasper Hill’s Brickley agreed.

“We have a line of bespoke flavors that were designed to meld with tasting notes from our cheese,” she said. “Blake Hill Preserves are masters of their game right here in Vermont.”

“Our favorite is their Savory Onion Jam – like French Onion Soup in a jar; an excellent pairing with our Alpha Tolman, Mountain Style,” Brickley continued.

“We also love artisan hot tea and tisanes (teas that don’t contain leaves of the Camellia Sinensis) as a non-alcoholic beverage pairing,” she said. “Look for Pu’er fermented green teas for really interesting aromatic affinity across a range of cheese styles – try it with a funky French Tomme.”

Meat/Nuts/Protein Alternatives

In keeping with the mission to stay local, Muranda Cheese offers Schrader Farms Sopressata in hot and sweet varieties, both of which pair nicely with our cheeses, Trombley said.

The Rogue Creamery team has fallen in love with pâté made by Olympia Provisions, Merritt said, but try as we might, customers haven’t really caught our enthusiasm.

“Perhaps pâté is still a little off-putting, even to the more adventuresome consumer,” she said. “PSA – try it; you’ll like it.”

“That said, classic salumi prepared by the same company has been very successful for us, particularly their less-spiced recipes such as Saucisson d’Arles,” Merritt said.

“This provides a wonderful savory accompaniment to the cheese experience, without confounding the cheese’s flavors by

introducing more pungent herbs and spices.”

Gift assortments featuring charcuterie from Houston Dairymaids will include current favorite Lady Edison Fancy Country Ham from North Carolina.

“Pepper jellies have their place, but I think nearly everyone has at least one (if not five) different spicy jams either unopened in their pantry or on the condiment shelf of their refrigerator, awaiting ‘the perfect moment’ that just never seems to arrive.”

– Marguerite Merritt, Rogue Creamery

While Jasper Hill hasn’t seen an interest in meat imitations, maple roasted pecans have been popular as a swap, Brickley said.

“We love our local charcutier, Babette’s Table, for their classic technique and local pastured pork sourcing,” she said. “Their Saucisson Sec French-style salami has a warm spice profile that plays beautifully with our Cabot Clothbound.”

Something Sweet

In the same way that Jasper Hill likes the natural complexity of its cheese to speak for itself, the company tends to gravitate towards ‘single origin’ accompaniments.

“Good Now Farm’s high cocoa content, single-origin Dark Chocolate series is known for big complex aromas with a smooth finish and velvety texture on the palate,” Brickley said. “We it serve with our Bayley Hazen Blue at the end of a meal for a simple and memorable dessert course.”

“Raw honey, especially flights from different plant concentrations are really fun to match up with cheeses, too,” she said.

Shout out to Big Picture Farm’s Goat Milk Caramels, which come in a variety of natural flavors, are great paired with sweet, nutty, hard cheeses like an aged Gouda, Brickley continued.

Rogue Creamery’s proven winner is a simple 70 percent dark chocolate with sea salt, such as Scharffen Berger’s Chocolate Provisions.

“Chocolate Provisions are the perfect single-portion size for cheese boards,” Merritt said. “When seeking something more complex, we enjoy dark chocolate bars or truffles that incorporate dried or macerated cherries inside; the sweet-yet-tart combination offsets the bitter flavor of the cacao and is delightful when paired with a wide variety of cheese styles.”

• See **Box Companions**, p. 11

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Box Companions

Continued from p. 10

Muranda Cheese collections include local chocolates from Chocolate Pizza Company, a favorite being the Chocolate Sparklers – peanut butter and chocolate dipped pretzel rods.

Fallen Out Of Favor: Giant Boxes Of Unremarkable Cheese, Pepper Jelly, Pickled Items, Dull Flavors

Over the years, certain cheese box companions have lost some luster – pepper jelly being one example.

“Pepper jellies have their place, but I think nearly everyone has at least one (if not five) different spicy jams either unopened in their pantry or on the condiment shelf of their refrigerator, awaiting ‘the perfect moment’ that just never seems to arrive,” Merritt said.

Houston Dairymaids “stopped using grapes,” Schechter noted. “I’m not crazy about berries on trays, either.”

Muranda’s Trombley noted the company doesn’t sell as many pickled goods or sweets, “but everything comes back around!”

“We always aim for a nice contrast of textures and flavors, and are always sure to have at least one ‘all cheese’ offering for those with stocked pairing pantries who are just looking to ship the good stuff.”

—Zoe Brickley,
Jasper Hill Farm

Cheese box items with muted, dull flavors are also a thud.

“We’ve sensed a newfound eagerness to discover unusual flavor combinations and to try cheeses with inclusions or affinage treatments that set them apart from the classic, old-world recipes.”

Back in New York state, Muranda Cheese is “currently riding the spicy train, and just released some new HOT cheeses,” Trombley said.

“We’re really into themed boxes, so we’re featuring a spicy theme box and an Italian themed box this holiday,” she said.

Jasper Hill’s Zoe Brickley said the industry is starting to see thought-leaders lead us away from the chock-a-block, kaleidoscopic charcuterie boards – which often featured beautiful arrays with run-of-the-mill, unremarkable cheese or unlabeled artisan cheeses.

“Instead, we are seeing smaller platters featuring a nice big hunk of a single cheese arranged with thoughtfully selected pairing elements that are meant to highlight that special selection,” she said.

Dairy Business Innovation Alliance Awards Grants To 41 Dairy Businesses

Madison—The Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA), a partnership between the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) and Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research (CDR), on Monday announced 41 grants totaling almost \$4 million for dairy processing businesses and farmstead dairy operations in nine states.

The grants are being awarded through the DBIA’s Dairy Business Builder and Dairy Industry Impact grant programs.

Specifically, 37 of the 41 grants are Dairy Business Builder grants targeting small- to medium-size farmers or processors. Supported projects are aimed at diversifying on-farm activity, creating value-added products, enhancing dairy by-products or export programs.

In this latest grant round, the DBIA will be distributing 37 Dairy Business Builder grants totaling \$3.3 million to businesses in nine of the 11 states covered by the DBIA.

Businesses receiving a Dairy Business Builder grant are:

- Alpinage Cheese LLC, Oak Creek, WI
- Amo Creamery, Heron Lake, MN
- Black Radish Creamery, Alexandria, OH
- Blue Ice Creamery, Brighton, IL
- Bold Spoon Creamery, Park Hills, MO
- Buckeye Country Creamery / Buckeye Milk House, Rittman, OH
- Burnett Dairy Cooperative, Grantsburg, WI
- CannonBelles Cheese Inc., Cannon Falls, MN
- Cinnamon Ridge Inc., Donahue, IA
- Concept Processing, Melrose, MN
- Country View Dairy, Hawkeye, IA
- Cream Cup Dairy, Bear Lake, MI
- Ducks in a Row Family Farm, Arena, WI
- Dwight and Anita Rokey DBA Rokeyroad Holsteins, Sabetha, KS
- GoodSport Nutrition, Evanston, IL
- Happy Cows Creamery at New Horizon Farm, New Vienna, OH
- Hidden Springs Creamery LLC, Westby, WI
- Holland’s Family Cheese, LLC, Thorp, WI
- Kuehnert Milk House, Fort Wayne, IN
- Marcoot Jersey Creamery LLC, Greenville, IL
- Mesta Meadows, LLC, Glenallen, MO
- Minerva Dairy Inc., Minerva, OH
- Protein Pints, Grand Rapids, MI
- Sassy Cow Creamery, Columbus, WI
- Semifreddo LLC, Hart, MI
- Shatto Farms, Inc., Osborn, MO
- Snowville Creamery, Pomeroy, OH
- Specialty Cheese Company, Inc., Reeseville, WI
- Stil Dreamn Dairy, Conway, MO
- Strack-View Farms LLC / Jersey Valley Cheese, Adell, WI
- Sundae Morning Dairy LLC, Ogden, IA
- The Brown Cow Ice Cream Parlor, Inc., Forest Park, IL
- The Mullen Dairy & Creamery, Okeana, OH
- Vieira Ventures LLC DBA Swanky Scoops, Toledo, OH
- Voelker Creamery, Perryville, MO
- Westby Co-op Creamery, Westby, WI
- Wiscon Corp (Caputo Cheese), Melrose Park, IL

DBIA is also awarding four Dairy Industry Impact grants totaling \$400,000 to small dairy processing businesses in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

This grant program supports projects in targeted topic areas that have the potential to positively impact the dairy industry as a whole. In the latest grant cycle, applications were accepted for projects related to exporting dairy products.

Businesses receiving a Dairy Industry Impact Grant are: Milk Specialties Global, Eden Prairie, MN; Rosewood Dairy, Inc., DBA Renard’s Cheese, Algoma, WI; Sartori Cheese, Plymouth, WI; and Specialty Cheese Company, Reeseville, WI.

In total, including these grants, DBIA has awarded more than \$13 million in grants to 129 dairy processing businesses in the Midwest.

“Our goal is to increase the number of thriving farmsteads and innovative dairy manufacturers in our region,” said John Lucey, CDR director.

“We are thrilled to support dairy entrepreneurs in their continued growth and their contributions to the overall health of our dairy industry,” said John Umhoefer, WCMA executive director.

The DBIA is funded by a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) award intended to drive dairy business innovation and make the industry more robust and resilient.

For more information, visit www.cdr.wisc.edu/dbia.

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PLANNING GUIDE

Winter Fancy Food Show: Jan. 21-23, Las Vegas Convention Center. www.specialtyfood.com.

Dairy Forum 2024: Jan. 21-24, J.W. Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge, www.idfa.org/dairy-forum.

World Championship Cheese Contest: March 5-7, Monona Terrace Convention Center, Madison. Visit www.worldchampioncheese.org for updates.

ADPI Global Ingredients Summit: March 11-13, 2024, Peppermill Resort, Reno. Visit www.adpi.org for information.

Cheese Expo: April 16-18, 2024, Baird Center, Milwaukee, WI. Registration now available online at www.cheeseexpo.org.

ADPI/ABI Joint Annual Conference: April 28-30, Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk, Chicago, IL. For details, visit adpi.org/events for details.

American Cheese Society Annual Conference: July 10-13, Buffalo, NY. Visit www.cheesesociety.com.

IMPA Annual Meeting: Aug. 8-9, Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, ID. Visit www.impa.us for details closer to event date.

Registration Open For ADPI/ABI Joint Annual Meeting April 28-30 In Chicago

Chicago, IL—Registration is now available for the 2024 joint annual meeting of the American Dairy Products Institute (ADPI) and the American Butter Institute (ABI).

The meeting takes place April 28-30 at the Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk.

The annual conference kicks off Monday with the ADPI annual meeting, award and scholarship presentations, and hallmark dairy market outlook session analyzing domestic and global outlooks, and how weather and climate will impact both.

General sessions, on the first day, will also look at turning uncertainty into competitive advantage, and a senior leaders roundtable discussion.

As before, the meeting will feature conference tracks with commercial-focused and technical-focused sessions.

Commercial Track

Monday's lineup for the commercial track includes a session on the future of dairy and sustainability led by Jessie Deelo of Deelo Consulting.

Chris Galen, ABI executive director will give a presentation

entitled *All About Butter* Monday afternoon.

Tuesday will begin with a panel discussion on dairy economics and policy moderated by Mike McCully of McCully Consulting. Panelists include First District Association CEO Bob Huffman; David Lenzmeier, CEO, Milk Specialties Global; and Kenneth Bailey of Ken Bailey Consulting, LLC.

Attendees will hear different perspectives on why policies matter and what impact they have on pricing, supply and consumer demand, conference organizers reported.

Another session on value-added ingredients will be moderated by ADPI's Andy Powers and features a panel of sales, marketing and distribution experts on how to supply dairy-derived ingredients to United States and international markets.

Technical Track

North Carolina State University's MaryAnne Drake will kick off Monday's technical track with a

session on the sensory evaluation of dairy ingredients.

Drake will discuss how taste, texture, smell, and vision play roles in consumer decision-making. KJ Burrington, ADPI's vice president of technical development, will also present the latest research from early-career food scientists.

Tuesday's technical sessions feature ADPI's Andy Powers leading a panel on quality assurance, food safety, and regulatory compliance.

A second session will highlight programs administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to create domestic and international marketing opportunities for US dairy products.

The early registration price for members is \$699 per person, and \$899 for non-members. Discounts are available for members of academia, government officials, and students. Reduced registration runs through March 1.

Visit www.adpi.org/events for more details.



California Artisan Cheese Festival Returns to Santa Rosa March 22-24

Santa Rosa, CA—The 18th annual California Artisan Cheese Festival has been scheduled for March 22-24, 2024 at the Sonoma County Event Center here, organizers announced.

Tickets for the three-day event, hosted by the California Artisan Cheese Guild (CACG), will soon be available online for those interested in knowing more.

The festival will include farm and creamery tours, educational seminars and tasting events, Cheese Crawl, and the annual Marketplace with over 100 artisan cheese, food and beverage producers.

The Marketplace will run from noon until 4 p.m.

Cost is \$65 for adults and \$30 for children 12 and under, organizers reported.

Those interested in attending and/or volunteering should check the event website, www.artisancheesefestival.com, after Jan. 1, 2024

California Dairy Innovation Center Releases Course, Conference Lineup

Tracy, CA—The California Dairy Innovation Center (CDIC) released its short course calendar, and dates for the second Dairy Products, Processing, & Packaging Innovation Conference.

The CDIC will offer eight workshops and training courses in 2024.

Jan. 16-17: Coffee, Tea & Creamers: The Science and Art of Milk Ready-to-Drink Beverage, Chapman University, Orange, CA. This new course will feature presentations by product development experts, as well as industry representatives from Nestlé, Chobani, Torani and more.

The course will include demonstrations, and networking

opportunities. There are no prerequisites required, and the course is suited for marketing personnel, as well as for entrepreneurs and established beverage processors.

Registration is open at www.chapman.edu/coffeeteacreamers.

The calendar for advanced and expanded learning opportunities includes the following workshops:

March 26-27: Hispanic and Mediterranean Cheeses, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

April 2024: Dairy 101 and Value-Added Milks, final date and location to be confirmed

May 14-15: Advanced Unit Operations & Dairy Economics, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

June 20-21: Fermented Milks, Yogurts & Probiotics, University of California-Davis

July 16-17: Advanced Cheesemaking, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo

Sept. 12: Innovation Workshop & State of the Industry, Fresno State University.

For details about the CDIC opportunities, contact Veronique Lagrange via email: vlagrange@cmab.net. Information is also available online at www.cdic.net.

Dairy Products, Processing, Packaging Innovation Conference

The Dairy Products Processing & Packaging Innovation Conference returns to the Cliff's Resort at Shell Beach, Feb. 27-29. The program will focus on sustainability advances at the plant level and throughout the supply chain.

The conference will feature presentations on packaging innovation and dairy leadership panels with representatives from the California Milk Advisory Board, Hilmar Cheese, Sierra Nevada Cheese, Leprino Foods, Saputo, and Dairy Management, Inc.

Topics of discussion include reducing waste in cheese packaging, the regulatory environment for dairy innovation, AI-powered platforms for product development, and the relative sustainability footprint of bio-fermented dairy alternatives.

The early registration deadline is Jan. 15.

Cost to attend prior to the deadline is \$495 per person. After Jan. 15, the cost is \$595.

Registration is available online at www.calpoly.irisregistration.com.



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DAIRY PRODUCT MARKETS

AS REPORTED BY THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WHOLESALE CHEESE MARKETS

NATIONAL - DEC. 8 : Milk demand from Class III processors is steady to stronger in the East. Plant managers note production schedules and inventories are strong. Retail demand is strengthening ahead of end-of-year holidays, while foodservice demand wanes. Milk supplies are reportedly balanced in the Central region, where spot loads of milk were reported from \$4 under Class to \$1 over Class. Cheddar and Italian-style cheese makers note demand is strong, and spot cheese loads are sparse. Cheese processors in the West relay comfortable cheese inventories and spot availability. Contacts share that while domestic and foreign cheese prices have become more competitive, recent movements have not strengthened export demand.

NORTHEAST - DEC. 13: Contacts note spot milk demand is steady to stronger from cheese makers. Plant managers relay cheese production schedules remain strong. Inventories are growing week over week, while demand is mixed. Contacts share retail holiday order fulfillment is nearing completion, and demand of Cheddar and Mozzarella is especially strong. Foodservice demand continues to trend lower from previous weeks, which contacts suggest is a result of both menu price inflation and holiday celebrations occurring at home. Retail demand remains strong.

MIDWEST AREA - DEC. 13: Cheese makers in the Midwest report milk is available, allowing them to run steady production schedules. Reported prices for Class III spot milk volumes range from \$4-under to \$1-over. Stakeholders say spot milk volumes are not excessive, but some sellers are offering spot loads of milk at below Class prices ahead of the end of year holidays. Contacts report seasonally steady demand for American type and Italian type cheeses. Some cheese curd processors say they have shifted production towards other varieties in recent weeks. Demand for cheese barrels reportedly softened somewhat as the gap between barrels and blocks narrowed on the CME. Softening demand has contributed to a steeper decline in CME prices for barrels than blocks since last Wednesday. Cheese inventories are available to meet current market demands.

WEST - DEC. 13 : Domestically, in the West, retail demand for varietal cheeses is steady, while foodservice demand for varietal cheese is steady to moderate. Some stakeholders indicate foodservice avenues are drawing softer demand than retail avenues. Cheese makers report comfortable inventories at the midpoint of the month. However, some note limited spot load availability with inventories heavily allocated to fulfil contractual obligations. Some stakeholders say price competitiveness of domestic cheese versus international cheeses has improved, but that has not manifested into strengthening moderate export demand. Manufacturers indicate enough milk volumes to meet production schedule needs are readily available, and Class III milk demand is strong to steady. Mostly steady production schedules are reported.

FOREIGN -TYPE CHEESE - DEC. 13: European milk production is steady to lower, as winter weather has had a negative impact on farm level output. Some cheese makers in Europe report having lighter milk volumes available for production, compared to last year and say this is negatively impacting their production schedules. Demand for cheese remains strong from both retail and food service markets in the region. Industry sources indicate strong demand is present ahead of the end of year holidays. Spot inventories are tight, and some cheese makers say they are unable to meet the demands of purchasers looking for additional loads. Contacts report they typically can replenish stocks somewhat during the end of year holidays but say they anticipate current market conditions will prevent this in the coming weeks. Markets for European cheese remain bullish, and prices continue to push upwards

EEX Weekly European Cheese Indices (WECI): Price Per/lb (US Converted)

| Variety | Date: 12/13 | 12/6 | Variety | Date: 12/13 | 12/6 |
|--------------|-------------|--------|--------------|-------------|--------|
| Cheddar Curd | \$2.05 | \$2.03 | Mild Cheddar | \$2.03 | \$2.03 |
| Young Gouda | \$2.02 | \$2.04 | Mozzarella | \$1.85 | \$1.85 |

WHOLESALE BUTTER MARKETS - DECEMBER 13

NATIONAL: Cream is mixed this week. Stakeholders in the west region report some improvement in cream volumes and spot load availability. Stakeholders in the east and central regions indicate cream supplies are tightening and somewhat available. Retail butter production schedules are strong to steady, and some butter makers have more comfortable December retail inventory levels than others. Some stakeholders indicate bulk butter and unsalted butter spot loads are tight. Domestic demand is strong to steady. Bulk butter overages range from 3 to 8 cents above market, across all regions.

CENTRAL: Cream is looser, and some butter makers say spot load availability is plentiful. Some stakeholders anticipate heavy Class I milk orders will largely slow down next week. Churning and micro-fixing rates keep pace with much of the past month. Plant managers report strong to steady production schedules as some have kept churning rates in check, despite more cream availability. Domestic butter demand is strong to steady as some manufacturers note some slow down in orders as the year end approaches and more holiday season orders get fulfilled. Bulk butter is somewhat available. Stakeholders say salted and unsalted varieties have ranged from one week to the next, from available to tight.

NORTHEAST: Butter market tones are variable as closing prices on industry cash exchanges have fallen from \$2.67 last

Wednesday to \$2.50 as of today. Contacts share cream demand is steady, but butter plant managers continue to relay they are both micro-fixing and churning. Cream demand is healthy from other sectors and spot cream availability for churning is tighter than in recent weeks. Contacts share foodservice demand is unchanged, but that retail demand is robust ahead of end of year holidays. Last week's National Retail Report lists the national weighted average advertised price of conventional 1-pound packages of butter at \$4.24, down from \$4.72. The weighted average advertised price of conventional 1-pound packages of butter is listed at \$3.55.

WEST: In the West, stakeholders say cream volumes have improved, along with strengthened average butterfat levels in milk output. Spot loads of cream are more available. Butter makers anticipate more milk clearing to Class IV in coming weeks as bottling demand declines with upcoming breaks at educational institutions. Although this has strengthened bulk butter production schedules, bulk butter availability is on the tight end. Some stakeholders note unsalted butter availability is somewhat looser for spot buyers. Plant managers say retail production schedules are strong to steady. Domestic demand is strong to steady as some stakeholders note orders for the remainder of the 2023 holiday season are being fulfilled. Demand from international buyers is moderate.

NATIONAL - CONVENTIONAL DAIRY PRODUCTS

Both conventional and organic dairy ads increased this week. Conventional dairy ads had the larger increase at 79 percent, compared to 41 percent for organic dairy ads. Cheese led the way as the most advertised dairy commodity. Conventional 6-to 8-ounce shredded cheese, 6-to 8-ounce block cheese, and 6-8 ounce sliced cheese had average advertised prices of \$2.43, \$2.59, and \$2.50, respectively. Each decreased in price, but of the three, the sliced style had the biggest price decrease, which was 29 cents.

Butter and sour cream, along with yogurt were well represented this week. The average price for conventional 1-pound butter packages increased 6 cents to \$4.30. Comparing sour cream container sizes and prices, the 16-ounce containers were more advertised, but the 24-ounce containers had a larger decrease in price. The 24-ounce containers had an average advertised price of \$2.92, compared to \$3.74 last week.

RETAIL PRICES - CONVENTIONAL DAIRY - DECEMBER 15

| Commodity | US | NE | SE | MID | SC | SW | NW |
|-----------------------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|
| Butter 8 oz | 3.24 | | 3.41 | | 3.49 | 2.50 | |
| Butter 1# | 4.30 | 3.95 | 4.36 | 4.03 | 4.70 | 4.20 | 3.15 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz block | 2.59 | 2.64 | 2.75 | 2.86 | 2.03 | 2.28 | 3.29 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz shred | 2.43 | 2.61 | 2.26 | 2.48 | 2.17 | 2.50 | 2.40 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz sliced | 2.50 | 2.76 | 2.74 | 2.37 | 2.23 | 2.49 | 2.33 |
| Cheese 1# block | 4.10 | 3.86 | 4.61 | 4.44 | | 3.74 | |
| Cheese 1# shred | 3.89 | 3.61 | 4.22 | 3.69 | 3.69 | 3.97 | |
| Cheese 2# block | 10.02 | | | 7.99 | 11.49 | | 6.69 |
| Cheese 2# shred | 7.05 | 9.99 | 9.99 | 7.99 | 7.23 | 6.22 | 4.99 |
| Cottage Cheese 16 oz | 2.36 | 2.42 | 2.22 | 3.06 | 2.43 | 2.13 | |
| Cottage Cheese 24 oz | 3.45 | 4.24 | 3.63 | 3.47 | 3.14 | 3.41 | |
| Cream Cheese 8 oz | 2.18 | 1.87 | 2.34 | 2.09 | 2.10 | 2.26 | |
| Egg Nog quart | 3.37 | 3.63 | 3.17 | | 3.33 | 3.93 | |
| Egg Nog ½ gallon | 5.20 | 6.09 | 5.19 | 4.14 | 5.25 | 5.99 | |
| Milk ½ gallon | 1.95 | 1.95 | 1.66 | | 1.81 | 2.30 | 2.13 |
| Milk gallon | 3.09 | 3.43 | 2.66 | 2.66 | 2.70 | 4.13 | 3.99 |
| Ice Cream 14-16 oz | 3.42 | 3.59 | 3.41 | 4.31 | 3.40 | 2.88 | 3.99 |
| Ice Cream 48-64 oz | 4.06 | 3.61 | 3.90 | 3.89 | 4.82 | 3.67 | 3.69 |
| Flavored Milk gallon | 2.68 | 2.72 | 1.66 | 2.67 | 1.74 | 2.72 | |
| Sour Cream 16 oz | 2.05 | 2.08 | 1.97 | 2.12 | 1.96 | 2.09 | 2.05 |
| Sour Cream 24 oz | 2.92 | 2.66 | 2.97 | 2.49 | 3.00 | 3.31 | |
| Yogurt (Greek) 4-6 oz | 1.05 | 0.96 | 1.23 | 1.30 | 0.94 | 0.80 | 0.80 |
| Yogurt (Greek) 32 oz | 4.83 | 4.65 | 5.43 | | 4.56 | 4.51 | 6.49 |
| Yogurt 4-6 oz | 0.72 | 0.76 | 0.72 | 0.68 | 0.71 | 0.72 | 0.70 |
| Yogurt 32 oz | 2.60 | 3.09 | 2.36 | 3.99 | 2.36 | 2.78 | 3.98 |

ORGANIC DAIRY - RETAIL OVERVIEW

| National Weighted Retail Avg Price: | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Butter 8 oz: | | Sour Cream 16 oz: | \$4.20 |
| Butter 1 lb: | | Ice Cream 48-64 oz | |
| Cheese 6-8 oz shred: | \$4.81 | Milk ½ gallon: | \$4.95 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz block: | \$4.49 | Milk gallon: | \$7.49 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz sliced: | \$4.49 | Egg Nog quart: | \$5.77 |
| Cream Cheese 8 oz: | \$3.68 | Yogurt 4-6 oz: | |
| Cheese 2 lb shred: | | Greek Yogurt 4-6 oz: | |
| Cottage Cheese 8 oz: | \$5.40 | Yogurt 32 oz: | \$4.88 |
| | | Yogurt Greek 32 oz | \$6.87 |

DRY DAIRY PRODUCTS - DECEMBER 14

WPC CENTRAL/WEST: Bullish markets for whey protein concentrate 80% and whey protein isolate have caused manufacturers to shift their production towards these commodities. Due to this, production of WPC 34% is limited. Contacts report robust interest and softer production of WPC 34% in recent weeks have contributed to tightening warehouse inventories. Spot purchasers say some WPC 34% manufacturers of preferred brands have sold all their loads through the end of the year, but loads of WPC 34% which are more interchangeable remain available for purchasing.

LACTOSE CENTRAL/WEST: Demand for lactose is steady from both spot and contract purchasers. Contacts say they continue to secure contracts for lactose to deliver in Q1 of 2024. Some lactose makers report increased interest for quarterly contracts of lactose for Q1 compared to the final quarter of this year. International interest in lactose is steady, though some contacts note they continue to offer loads near the bottom of the range to entice export

purchasers. Lactose inventories are declining, and some spot purchasers say the task of finding loads which meet their specific needs is becoming more arduous. Production of lactose is steady to higher as some manufacturers are ramping up production to replenish depleted warehouse stocks.

DRY WHEY CENTRAL: Inventories of dry whey remain tight and some say they have few or no spot loads available through the end of the year. Meanwhile, demand has ebbed slightly this week as some manufacturers say they have received fewer calls from spot purchasers this week. Central region cheese makers are running steady production schedules, leaving plenty of liquid whey available for drying. Despite this, dry whey production is limited. Stakeholders report bullish market tones for higher whey protein concentrates have caused some manufacturers to focus their production schedules on these commodities in recent weeks. Contacts say animal feed whey inventories are tight, but soft demand is keeping markets steady.

WEEKLY COLD STORAGE HOLDINGS

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| DATE | BUTTER | CHEESE |
|----------------|--------|--------|
| 12/11/23 | 32,103 | 82,249 |
| 12/01/23 | 32,368 | 82,019 |
| Change | -265 | 230 |
| Percent Change | -1 | 0 |

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|---------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| MONDAY December 11 | \$1.5500 (-½) | \$1.6000 (+2) | \$2.5750 (-9½) | \$1.1650 (NC) | \$0.3900 (-½) |
| TUESDAY December 12 | \$1.4925 (-5¼) | \$1.5800 (-2) | \$2.5000 (-7½) | \$1.1625 (-¼) | \$0.3950 (+½) |
| WEDNESDAY December 13 | \$1.5175 (+2½) | \$1.6000 (+2) | \$2.4600 (-4) | \$1.1725 (+1) | \$0.3950 (NC) |
| THURSDAY December 14 | \$1.4950 (-2¼) | \$1.5700 (-3) | \$2.4600 (NC) | \$1.1650 (-¾) | \$0.3950 (NC) |
| FRIDAY December 15 | \$1.4500 (-4½) | \$1.5200 (-5) | \$2.4900 (+3) | \$1.1600 (-½) | \$0.3950 (NC) |
| Week's AVG | \$1.5010 | \$1.5740 | \$2.4970 | \$1.1650 | \$0.3940 |
| \$ Change | (-0.0770) | (-0.0235) | (-0.1755) | (-0.0055) | (-0.0045) |
| Last Week's AVG | \$1.5780 | \$1.5975 | \$2.6725 | \$1.1705 | \$0.3985 |
| 2022 AVG Same Week | \$1.8135 | \$2.0630 | \$2.7860 | \$1.3510 | \$0.4530 |

MARKET OPINION - CHEESE REPORTER

Cheese Comment: On Monday, 1 car of blocks was sold at \$1.6000, which set the price. Three cars of blocks were sold Tuesday, the last at \$1.5800, which set the price. No blocks were sold Wednesday; the price increased on an unfilled bid for 1 car at \$1.6000. Three cars of blocks were sold Thursday, the last at \$1.5700, which set the price. Two cars of blocks were sold Friday, the last at \$1.5200, which set the price. The barrel price declined Monday on an uncovered offer at \$1.5500, dropped Tuesday on a sale at \$1.4925, increased Wednesday on a sale at \$1.5175, fell Thursday on a sale at \$1.4950, and declined Friday on a sale at \$1.4500.

Butter Comment: The price dropped Monday on an uncovered offer at \$2.5750, fell Tuesday on a sale at \$2.5000, declined Wednesday on an uncovered offer at \$2.4600, then increased Friday on a sale at \$2.4900.

Nonfat Dry Milk Comment: The price declined Tuesday on a sale at \$1.1625, increased Wednesday on a sale at \$1.1725, dropped Thursday on a sale at \$1.1650, and fell Friday on a sale at \$1.1600.

Dry Whey Comment: The price declined Monday on a sale at 39.0 cents, then increased Tuesday on an unfilled bid at 39.50 cents.

WHEY MARKETS - DECEMBER 11 - 15, 2023

RELEASE DATE - DECEMBER 14, 2023

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Animal Feed Whey—Central: Milk Replacer: | .2600 (NC) – .3300 (NC) |
| Buttermilk Powder: | |
| Central & East: | 1.0500 (NC) – 1.1200 (-) |
| Mostly: | 1.1600 (+) – 1.2200 (+) |
| West: | 1.0800 (-4) – 1.2600 (+) |
| Casein: Rennet: | 3.3500 (+10) – 3.7500 (NC) |
| Acid: | 3.5000 (+10) – 3.9000 (NC) |
| Dry Whey—Central (Edible): | |
| Nonhygroscopic: | .3700 (NC) – .4300 (NC) |
| Mostly: | .3800 (NC) – .4200 (NC) |
| Dry Whey—West (Edible): | |
| Nonhygroscopic: | .3900 (+) – .4700 (-) |
| Mostly: | .4000 (-2) – .4500 (-) |
| Dry Whey—NE: | .3750 (+½) – .4475 (+½) |
| Lactose—Central and West: | |
| Edible: | .1500 (+½) – .3900 (NC) |
| Mostly: | .2200 (+½) – .3200 (NC) |
| Nonfat Dry Milk—Central & East: | |
| Low/Medium Heat: | 1.1400 (-) – 1.2300 (-) |
| High Heat: | 1.2900 (NC) – 1.3600 (NC) |
| Mostly: | 1.1800 (NC) – 1.2200 (NC) |
| Nonfat Dry Milk—Western: | |
| Low/Med Heat: | 1.1300 (-1½) – 1.2500 (-1½) |
| High Heat: | 1.2800 (-½) – 1.4475 (-¼) |
| Mostly: | 1.1700 (-) – 1.2100 (-) |
| Whey Protein Concentrate—34% Protein: | |
| Central & West: | .8700 (+2) – 1.1000 (+½) |
| Mostly: | .9000 (+2) – .9800 (NC) |
| Whole Milk: | 1.8200 (+2) – 2.1800 (NC) |

Visit www.cheesereporter.com for historical dairy, cheese, butter, & whey prices

HISTORICAL MONTHLY AVG BUTTER PRICES

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|--------|--------|
| '09 | 1.1096 | 1.1097 | 1.1770 | 1.2050 | 1.2526 | 1.2235 | 1.2349 | 1.2000 | 1.2199 | 1.2830 | 1.5008 | 1.3968 |
| '10 | 1.3950 | 1.3560 | 1.4641 | 1.5460 | 1.5896 | 1.6380 | 1.7787 | 1.9900 | 2.2262 | 2.1895 | 1.9295 | 1.6327 |
| '11 | 2.0345 | 2.0622 | 2.0863 | 1.9970 | 2.0724 | 2.1077 | 2.0443 | 2.0882 | 1.8724 | 1.8295 | 1.7356 | 1.6119 |
| '12 | 1.5077 | 1.4273 | 1.4895 | 1.4136 | 1.3531 | 1.4774 | 1.5831 | 1.7687 | 1.8803 | 1.9086 | 1.7910 | 1.4848 |
| '13 | 1.4933 | 1.5713 | 1.6241 | 1.7197 | 1.5997 | 1.5105 | 1.4751 | 1.4013 | 1.5233 | 1.5267 | 1.6126 | 1.5963 |
| '14 | 1.7756 | 1.8047 | 1.9145 | 1.9357 | 2.1713 | 2.2630 | 2.4624 | 2.5913 | 2.9740 | 2.3184 | 1.9968 | 1.7633 |
| '15 | 1.5714 | 1.7293 | 1.7166 | 1.7937 | 1.9309 | 1.9065 | 1.9056 | 2.1542 | 2.6690 | 2.4757 | 2.8779 | 2.3318 |
| '16 | 2.1214 | 2.0840 | 1.9605 | 2.0563 | 2.0554 | 2.2640 | 2.2731 | 2.1776 | 1.9950 | 1.8239 | 1.9899 | 2.1763 |
| '17 | 2.2393 | 2.1534 | 2.1392 | 2.0992 | 2.2684 | 2.5688 | 2.6195 | 2.6473 | 2.4370 | 2.3293 | 2.2244 | 2.2078 |
| '18 | 2.1587 | 2.1211 | 2.2011 | 2.3145 | 2.3751 | 2.3270 | 2.2361 | 2.3009 | 2.2545 | 2.2600 | 2.2480 | 2.2071 |
| '19 | 2.2481 | 2.2659 | 2.2773 | 2.2635 | 2.3366 | 2.3884 | 2.3897 | 2.2942 | 2.1690 | 2.1071 | 2.0495 | 1.9736 |
| '20 | 1.8813 | 1.7913 | 1.7235 | 1.1999 | 1.4710 | 1.8291 | 1.6925 | 1.5038 | 1.5163 | 1.4550 | 1.3941 | 1.4806 |
| '21 | 1.3496 | 1.3859 | 1.7153 | 1.8267 | 1.8124 | 1.7758 | 1.6912 | 1.6815 | 1.7756 | 1.8002 | 1.9714 | 2.1536 |
| '22 | 2.7203 | 2.6196 | 2.7346 | 2.7169 | 2.7514 | 2.9546 | 2.9506 | 3.0073 | 3.1483 | 3.1792 | 2.8634 | 2.6695 |
| '23 | 2.3553 | 2.4017 | 2.3692 | 2.3655 | 2.4293 | 2.3902 | 2.5598 | 2.6760 | 2.8833 | 3.3814 | 2.7190 | |

USDA Buys Shredded Cheddar, UHT And Evaporated Milk, Instant NDM

Washington—The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Tuesday announced the awarding of contracts to two companies for a total of 168,000 pounds of shredded Cheddar cheese for delivery from Feb. 1 through Mar. 31, 2024.

The total price of the Cheddar purchases is \$380,728.32. Contracts were awarded as follows:

Cedar Valley Cheese, Inc.: 134,400 pounds of shredded Cheddar, at a total price of \$304,960.32.

Fleetwood Foods LLC: 33,600 pounds of shredded Cheddar, at a total price of \$75,768.00.

USDA on Monday announced the awarding of contracts to four companies for a total of 12,066,041 pounds of UHT milk and 74,358 pounds of skim evaporated milk for delivery during the first three months of 2024.

The total price of the purchases is \$5,209,697.34.

Contracts were awarded as follows:

Diversified Foods Inc.: 1,857,600 pounds of UHT milk, at a total price of \$856,442.61.

Gossner Foods, Inc.: 7,925,140.8 pounds of UHT milk, at a total price of \$3,335,224.47.

Naturally Brand Inc.: 2,283,300 pounds of UHT milk, at a total price of \$939,850.31.

O-AT-KA Milk Products Cooperative: 74,358 pounds of evapo-

rated milk, at a total price of \$78,180.00.

Late last week, USDA announced the awarding of a contract to **Transylvania Vocational Services** for a total of 1,647,360 pounds of instant nonfat dry milk, for delivery from Feb. 1 through June 30, 2024. The total price of the instant NDM purchases is \$5,838,282.78.

All of these dairy products are being procured by USDA in support of child nutrition and other related domestic food distribution programs.

The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) purchases a variety of domestically produced and processed commodity food products, through a competitive process among approved vendors.

These food product purchases made by the AMS Commodity Procurement Program (CP) support US agriculture by encouraging the consumption of domestic foods.

Dairy products purchased by AMS-CP include cheese, butter, fluid milk, yogurt, UHT milk, evaporated milk, and instant nonfat dry milk.

For more information on selling dairy and other food products to USDA, visit www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food.

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