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# CHEESE REPORTER

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# US Cheese Production Reached A Record 14.1 Billion Pounds In 2023

## In December, Cheese Production Increased 0.9%, Butter Production Rose 4.4%, Yogurt Output Fell

**Washington**—US cheese production during 2023 totaled a record 14.11 billion pounds, up 0.3 percent, or 43.5 million pounds, from 2022, according to statistics released Monday by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

US cheese production has now reached new record highs for 32 consecutive years. The last time cheese production declined was in 1991, when output of 6.055 billion pounds was down about 4.6 million pounds from 1990.

December cheese production totaled 1.21 billion pounds, up 0.9 percent from December 2022. In 2023, monthly cheese production was higher than in 2022 in seven months, with those increases ranging from 0.1 percent in March to 2.3 percent in January; and lower than in 2022 in five months, with those declines ranging from 0.1 percent in both August and September to 1.2 percent in July.

Regional cheese production in December, with comparisons to December 2022, was: Central, 587.3 million pounds, down 0.02 percent; West, 485.5 million pounds, up 2.6 percent; and Atlantic, 137.3 million pounds, down 0.5 percent.

December cheese production in the states broken out by NASS, with comparisons to December 2022, was: Wisconsin, 300.4 million pounds, up 0.6 percent; California, 214.6 million pounds, up 2.7 percent; New Mexico, 89.8 million pounds, up 7.7 percent; Idaho, 88.8 million pounds, up 2.6 percent; Minnesota, 70.2 million pounds, down 0.1 percent; New York, 68.2 million pounds, up 2.1 percent; South Dakota, 45.0 million pounds, up 1.7 percent; Pennsylvania, 38.1 million pounds, down 4.6 percent; Iowa, 35.8 million pounds, up 1.2 percent; Ohio, 22.7 million pounds, down 2.1 percent; Vermont, 12.2 million pounds, down 5.2 percent; New Jersey, 6.2 million pounds, up 3.2 percent; and Illinois, 5.9 million pounds, down 1.2 percent.

December cheese production in all other states totaled 212.2 million pounds, down 2.1 percent from December 2022.

American-type cheese production during December totaled 488.1 million pounds, up 0.5 percent from December 2022. For all of 2023, American-type cheese output totaled 5.72 billion pounds, up 1.4 percent from 2022.

December production of American-type cheese in the states broken out by NASS, with comparisons to December 2022, was: Wisconsin, 93.5 million pounds, up 0.4 percent; Minnesota, 59.1 million pounds, down 1.0 percent; California, 47.6 million pounds, up 2.4 percent; Iowa, 18.2 million pounds, down 4.5 percent; and New York, 13.1 million pounds, up 6.3 percent.

American-type cheese production in all other states during December totaled 256.6 million pounds, up 0.6 percent from December 2022.

Cheddar cheese production during December totaled 336.5

• See **Record Production,** p. 6

# Dairy, Farm Groups, Key Senators Seek Swift Passage Of New Farm Bill

**Washington**—A coalition of 20 dairy and farm organizations late last week urged Senate and House leaders to "prioritize and support the swift passage of a bipartisan farm bill this year."

"Our nation's farmers and ranchers are facing numerous challenges that were unforeseen during the last farm bill authorization," the organizations noted in a letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

"A global pandemic, record-high inflation, rising supply costs, and global supply chain disruptions have all increased the uncertainty for farmers and ranchers who weather the market conditions to run their businesses," the letter stated.

Organizations signing the letter included, among others, National Milk Producers Federation, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Farmers Union, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, American Sugar Alliance, Farm Credit Council, National Grain and Feed Association, American Soybean Association, National

• See **Farm Bill Urged,** p. 4

# USDA Lowers 2024 Milk Production Forecast, Boosts Price Forecasts

**Washington**—The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), in its monthly supply-demand estimates released Thursday, lowered its 2024 milk production forecast while raising its dairy product and milk price forecasts.

USDA's milk production forecast is lowered by 100 million pounds from last month's forecast, to a record 228.2 billion pounds, due to lower expected output per cow, which is partly offset by higher cow inventories. USDA estimates that 2023 milk production totaled 226.6 billion pounds, unchanged from 2022.

On a fat basis, domestic dairy use is raised as a more rapid

See **Higher Prices,** p. 20

# US Dairy Exports Declined 16% In 2023; Dairy Imports Set New Record

## Cheese Exports Fell 3% In 2023; Lactose Exports Topped 1.0 Billion Pounds

**Washington**—US dairy exports during 2023 were valued at $8.0 billion, down 16 percent, or $1.54 billion, from 2022's record value, according to figures released Wednesday by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

Despite the decline, 2023 was just the second year in which US dairy exports topped $8.0 billion in value. As recently as 2016, US dairy exports were valued at less than $5.0 billion (at $4.7 billion), and as recently as 2019, exports

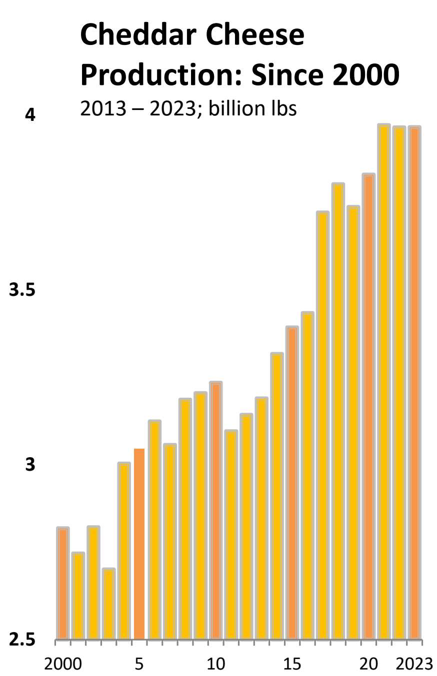
• See **Exports Decline,** p. 11

## Cheese Imports Rose 2% In 2023; Butter Exports Increased 12%

**Washington**—US dairy imports during 2023 were valued at a record $4.86 billion, up 5 percent, or $213.3 million, from 2022, according to figures released Wednesday by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

That's the second straight year in which dairy imports topped $4.0 billion in value. Dairy imports have risen by more than $2.0 billion in value since 2018.

• See **Imports Rose,** p. 10



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# EDITORIAL COMMENT

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**First, depooling isn't going to go away anytime soon. Even if the spread between Class III and Class IV prices narrows, and it will at some point, not all milk in Classes II, III and IV is going to be pooled every month in the future.**

## Another Interesting Year For Federal Orders

The year 2023 will long be remembered as the year in which the dairy industry tackled, or at least started to tackle, some long-overdue updates to the federal milk marketing order program.

But setting aside the just-concluded national federal order hearing, last year turned out to be another in a long line of interesting and volatile years in the federal order program. Some recently released statistics, reported on our front page last week, help illustrate this point.

For starters, a record volume of milk was pooled on the 11 federal orders in 2023: 158.45 billion pounds, to be exact. That broke the previous record of 156.1 billion pounds, which was set in 2019.

There are a couple of points worth noting about this new federal order volume record. First, 2023 was just the fifth full year for the California federal order, but adding California and its potential of over 40 billion pounds of milk to the federal order system has translated into only two new volume records and three below-average volume years.

Second, that's because depooling continues to alter the volume of milk being pooled, in some years more than others, but in all recent years to a certain extent. California is a great example here; in 2023, a total of 26.4 billion pounds of milk was pooled on the California order (which covers the entire state), which means somewhere around 14 billion pounds of milk was depooled in California.

But California wasn't the only order that saw significant volumes of milk being depooled last year. As the latest figures from USDA show, basically any order with significant Class IV utilization saw considerable volumes of milk being depooled.

This can be illustrated simply by looking at the volume of milk being pooled in Class IV every month last year. That volume ranged from a high of 3.7 billion pounds in April to a low of just 803 million pounds in August.

And that can be easily put into historical perspective by going back to 2019 and 2020, when Class IV volume totaled 30.5 billion pounds and 41.5 billion pounds, respectively.

A fair amount of milk was also depooled in Class II last year. Class II volume in 2023 totaled 14.8 billion pounds, which is down more than 5.0 billion pounds from 2021's record high (but up 606 million pounds from 2022).

Class III volume set a new record last year, at 85.25 billion pounds. Class III volume has now topped 80 billion pounds for two straight years, something that of course wouldn't be possible without the California order and its 16.6 billion pounds of Class III milk in 2023 and its 14.7 billion pounds of Class III milk in 2022.

Not that the presence of the California order guarantees higher Class III volumes. It may be recalled that, in the turbulent, COVID-upended year of 2020, Class III volume for the entire year totaled just 32.9 billion pounds, with the California order contributing all of 673 million pounds to that total.

Despite record volumes in 2023 and 2022, Class III is still not "living up to its potential." That is, volumes aren't quite as high as might be expected, given recent years.

Just to cite one example: while Class III volume on the Upper Midwest order reached a record 30.5 billion pounds last year, monthly volumes trailed 2022 volumes in each of the last five months of the year. Had 2023 volumes during the August-December period matched volumes of that same period in 2022, Class III volume for the entire year would have been almost 1.2 billion pounds higher than it was.

So what kind of volume would the federal order system be looking at if there was ever a "normal" year? That is, if Classes II, III and IV all saw record volumes in a single year?

If that were to happen, the volume of milk pooled in all 11 federal orders would total around 187 billion pounds, up almost 30 billion pounds from last year's record.

But that's probably never going to happen, for at least two reasons. First, depooling isn't going to go away anytime soon. Even if the spread between Class III and Class IV prices narrows, and it will at some point, not all milk in Classes II, III and IV is going to be pooled every month in the future. The volumes of Class III milk in the August-December periods in 2022 and 2023 illustrate that point.

Second, while there are very few guarantees in the federal order program, here's one: Class I volumes are going to continue to decline. Last year's Class I volume of 40.4 billion pounds was the lowest since 1975, when Class I utilization was 57.9 percent (it was 25.5 percent, a record low, in 2022).

Notably, 2023's Class I volume was lower than it was in 2017, the last full year without the California order.

As noted above, if there was little or no depooling, the total volume of milk pooled on all 11 federal orders would be around 187 billion pounds. With no Class I milk being depooled, Class I utilization would actually be somewhere around 21 percent.

Federal order volumes will continue to be volatile and at least somewhat unpredictable in the future. About the only guarantee is that Class I volumes will continue to fall.

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# Global Dairy Trade Price Index Rises 4.2% Only Mozzarella Price Declines

**Auckland, New Zealand**—The price index on this week's semi-monthly Global Dairy Trade dairy commodity auction increased 4.2 percent from the previous auction, held three weeks ago.

That's the fifth straight increase in the GDT price index.

In this week's auction, which featured 172 participating bidders and 104 winning bidders, prices were higher for Cheddar, skim milk powder, whole milk powder, butter, anhydrous milkfat, lactose, and buttermilk powder, and lower for Mozzarella cheese.

Results from this week's GDT auction, with comparisons to the previous auction, were as follows:

**Cheddar cheese:** The average winning price was $4,469 per metric ton ($2.03 per pound), up 6.3 percent. Average winning prices were: Contract 1 (March), $4,403 per ton, up 7.2 percent; Contract 2 (April), $4,473 per ton, up 7.7 percent; Contract 3 (May), $4,495 per ton, up 7.7 percent; Contract 4 (June), $4,470 per ton, up 4.0 percent; and Contract 5 (July), $4,480 per ton, up 4.2 percent.

**Mozzarella cheese:** The average winning price was $3,760 per ton ($1.71 per pound), down 1.8 percent. That was for Contract 2.

**Skim milk powder:** The average winning price was $2,758 per ton ($1.25 per pound), up 4.6 percent. Average winning prices were: Contract 1, $2,797 per ton, up 5.8 percent; Contract 2, $2,726 per ton, up 4.8 percent; Contract 3, $2,775 per ton, up 3.9 percent; Contract 4, $2,830 per ton, up 4.8 percent; and Contract 5, $2,820 per ton, up 3.5 percent.

**Whole milk powder:** The average winning price was $3,463 per ton ($1.57 per pound), up 3.4 percent. Average winning prices were: Contract 1, $3,490 per ton, up 4.4 percent; Contract 2, $3,444 per ton, up 3.8 percent; Contract 3, $3,463 per ton, up 2.5 percent; Contract 4, $3,499 per ton, up 2.2 percent; and Contract 5, $3,475 per ton, up 1.2 percent.

**Butter:** The average winning price was $6,516 per ton ($2.96 per pound), up 10.3 percent. Average winning prices were: Contract 1, $6,815 per ton, up 14.2 percent; Contract 2, $6,445 per ton, up 9.0 percent; Contract 3, $6,556 per ton, up 11.1 percent; Contract 4, $6,635 per ton, up 13.2 percent; and Contract 5, $6,595 per ton, up 11.9 percent.

**Anhydrous milkfat:** The average winning price was $6,033 per ton ($2.74 per pound) up 3.3 percent. Average winning prices were: Contract 1, $6,050 per ton, up 2.9 percent; Contract 2, $6,101 per ton, up 5.1 percent; Contract 3, $5,938 per ton, up 1.7 percent; Contract 4, $6,035 per ton, up 2.7 percent; and Contract 5, $6,018 per ton, up 2.5 percent.

**Lactose**: The average winning price was $785 per ton (35.6 cents per pound). That was for Contract 2.

**Buttermilk powder**: The average winning price was $2,412 per ton ($1.09 per pound) up 1.2 percent. Average winning prices were: Contract 1, $2,425 per ton, up 0.4 percent; Contract 2, $2,407 per ton, up 1.3 percent; Contract 3, $2,390 per ton, down 0.4 percent; Contract 4, $2,430 per ton, up 1.7 percent; and Contract 5, $2,485 per ton, up 4.6 percent.

ASB Bank, in its "Commodities Weekly" report released after this week's GDT auction, noted that it has commented many times before on its surprise that whole milk powder prices have continued to prove so robust despite the continued weakness in China, New Zealand's key market for WMP. There has been little change to that narrative with "North Asia" once again purchasing only a third or so of the WMP on offer. China remains more active in other product streams (notably butter), but all-important WMP demand remains lackluster.

There are a few theories and likely drivers underpinning the surprising resilience in prices, ASB noted.

Strong whole milk powder demand from other regions has helped offset China's absence and provide support for prices, notably among Middle Eastern buyers. Whatever the balance of drivers, the upshot is that whole milk powder prices are looking relatively stable and lofty right across all terms.

There's not long to go now until the end of the season in New Zealand, ASB pointed out. Fonterra is largely hedged for the season, and increasingly, there isn't that much product left to be priced.

Still, the resilience in prices has been such that ASB's estimate for the season's farmgate milk price continues to be mechanically pushed higher. ASB now thinks dairy farmers can expect a price at or around the $8.00 per kilogram of milk solids mark.

Also after this week's GDT auction, Westpac revised up its milk price forecast for the current season to $7.90 per kilogram of milk solids.

## Farm Bill Urged

(Continued from p. 1)

Corn Growers Association, and Agricultural Retailers Association.

"The need for a modernized farm bill is clear; Congress should increase baseline funding for farm programs and expand risk management tools like crop insurance, commodity programs and resources that support the domestic production of food and fiber," the letter stated. "We also call on Congress to maintain a unified farm bill that includes both nutrition programs and farm programs.

"We strongly believe that enhancements to the farm safety net, support for all sectors of production and addressing other essential priorities across the farm bill require additional resources beyond the current baseline," the letter added. "We implore you to allow the committees of jurisdiction to work their will to responsibly address the significant needs of rural America."

Agricultural goods produced in varying regions have different research, conservation, and trade needs, the letter pointed out. America's public investment in agricultural research has remained flat for the past two decades "and we now find ourselves outspent by both China and the European Union. Meanwhile USDA's trade efforts are more important now than ever before, to build and strengthen markets for US crops and agricultural products across the globe.

"Farm bill programs such as the suite of voluntary conservation programs and trade promotion, rural development, credit, and agriculture research programs have proven their value in addressing these diverse needs and must be reauthorized this year," the letter said. "The farm bill ensures a resilient, healthy, and safe food supply and we urge you to act."

### Lower Farm Income Projected

On Wednesday, USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) released its annual "Farm Sector Income Forecast" report for 2024.

Net farm income, a broad measure of profits, is forecast at $116.1 billion in calendar year 2024, a decline of $39.8 billion (25.5 percent) relative to 2023 in nominal (not adjusted for inflation) dollars. This follows a forecast decrease of $29.7 billion (16.0 percent) from 2022 to $155.9 billion in 2023.

Net cash farm income is forecast at $121.7 billion in 2024, down $38.7 billion (24.1 percent) relative to 2023 (not adjusted for inflation). Net cash farm income encompasses cash receipts from farming as well as cash farm-related income (including federal government payments) minus cash expenses.

Cash receipts from the sale of agricultural commodities are forecast to decline by $21.2 billion (4.2 percent, in nominal terms) from 2023 to $485.5 billion in 2024. Also contributing to lower forecast net income in 2024 are lower direct government payments and higher production expenses.

Following the release of that ERS report, as well as economic projections from the Congressional Budget Office, US Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, issued a statement on the urgency to pass a strong, bipartisan 2024 farm bill.

"I am glad to see the family safety net is working. Nutrition spending in the SNAP program is decreasing as the economy improves, food prices stabilize, and fewer people need SNAP," Stabenow said.

"But the broader trends make abundantly clear what I have been saying for months: If we are serious about passing a farm bill that keeps farmers farming, families fed, and rural communities strong, the time to act is now," Stabenow continued.

"Farming has always been one of the riskiest businesses there is, and that is why we need to invest in the tools that supporot all farmers and think creatively about new solutions that provide targeted and timely assistance to help them meet the emerging challenges they face," Stabenow said.

"I have worked with the administration to invest in new trade opportunities, and I have secured a commitment from Senate Democratic leadership to invest billions of dollars in new resources into the farm bill," Stabenow added.

US Sen. John Boozman (R-AR), the top Republican on the Senate Ag Committee, said the farm income forecast underscores the need to make meaningful investments in the farm bill's safety net programs.

"We are witnessing the most rapid and steepest erosion in the farm economy of all time. This dramatic projected decline reflects what I've heard around the country from farmers and ranchers and is why I have repeatedly said that risk management tools must be enhanced in the next farm bill," Boozman said.

## FROM OUR ARCHIVES

### 50 YEARS AGO

**Feb. 8, 1974: Green Bay, WI**—The L.D. Schreiber Cheese Company just broke ground on construction of a $6 million processing plant here. The new 156,000-square-foot plant will be fully automated to increase production by 75 percent, and the company will add several new production lines.

**Washington**—A sharp rise in the illegal underpayment of workers has been recently reported. Wage-hour division enforcement statistics for the last six months of 1973 show underpayments of $44 million found owed to 170,000 employees, mostly under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

### 25 YEARS AGO

**Feb. 12, 1999: Madison**—Part of a proposed "Truth in Cheese Labeling" bill was singled out for criticism by cheese industry representatives at a Senate hearing this week. The proposed bill prohibits a person from representing or implying that cheese is Wisconsin cheese or is from or made in Wisconsin unless the cheese is manufactured in Wisconsin.

**Tillamook, OR**—Tillamook Creamery has pared down the list of areas it is considering for a new satellite cheese plant to Baker County, OR; Boardman, OR; Blackfoot, ID; and Orland, CA. The initial projection is that the satellite plant will produce 40 million pounds of cheese annually.

### 10 YEARS AGO

**Feb. 7, 2013: Sochi, Russia**—US Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) criticized the Russian government for its refusal to accept Chobani's yogurt into Russia for consumption by US athletes at the Winter Olympics here. Russia is not permitting the yogurt to enter the country without very specific and unattainable Customs certifications.

**Syracuse, NY**—Members of Dairylea Cooperative approved a proposed merger with Dairy Farmers of America, the nation's largest dairy cooperative. Dairylea and DFA have enjoyed a successful working relationship since DFA was formed in 1998.

# Restaurant Performance Index Fell 0.3% In Dec.

**Washington**—The National Restaurant Association's Restaurant Performance Index (RPI) stood at 99.8 in December, down 0.3 percent from November, the association reported recently.

The RPI is constructed so that the health of the restaurant industry is measured in relation to a neutral level of 100. Index values above 100 indicate that key industry indicators are in a period of expansion, while index values below 100 represent a period of contraction.

The RPI consists of two components: the Current Situation Index and the Expectations Index. The Current Situation Index, which measures current trends in four industry indicators (same-store sales, traffic, labor and capital expenditures), stood at 99.8 in December, up 0.3 percent from November.

A majority of restaurant operators reported higher same-store sales in December, although results were somewhat softer than November's readings, the association noted. Some 51 percent of operators said their same-store sales rose between December 2022 and December 2023, down from 58 percent of operators who reported higher sales in November.

Restaurant operators reported a net decline in traffic in December for the ninth straight month. Some 34 percent of operators said their customer traffic rose between December 2022 and December 2023, while 51 percent reported a traffic decline.

The Expectations Index, which measures restaurant operators' six-month outlook for four industry indicators (same-store sales, employees, capital expenditures and business conditions), also stood at 99.8 in December, down 0.9 percent in November.

Restaurant operators' outlook for sales growth deteriorated somewhat in December compared to November. Some 30 percent of operators expect their sales volume in six months to be higher than it was during the same period in the previous year, down from 45 percent who reported similarly in November.

And 29 percent of operators think their sales volume in six months will be lower than it was during the same period in the previous year, up from 16 percent in November.

Restaurant operators are also uncertain about the direction of the overall economy. Only 8 percent of operators said they expect economic conditions to improve in six months.

# US Restaurant Industry Sales Forecast To Reach $1.1 Trillion In 2024

**Washington**—US restaurant sales are forecast to exceed $1.1 trillion in sales this year, marking a new milestone for the industry, according to the National Restaurant Association 2024 "State of the Restaurant Industry" report.

Key findings from this year's report include:

•Positive sales expected: Restaurant operators are cautiously optimistic about the year ahead, with nearly eight in 10 predicting their sales will increase (33 percent) or hold steady (45 percent) from 2023 levels.

•Delivery, carry-out and drive-thru growth continues: 52 percent of consumers, including 67 percent of millennials and 63 percent of Gen Z adults, say ordering takeout from a restaurant is an essential part of their lifestyle, further showing the profound impact restaurants have on consumers' lives.

•Industry employment increased but help still wanted: Some 45 percent of restaurant operators report needing more employees to meet customer demand and a majority (70 percent) have job openings that are hard to fill.

•Profitability remains challenged: Operators are slightly less optimistic about profitability, with only 27 percent of operators expecting to be more profitable this year. Average food costs have increased more than 20 percent and average wages more than 30 percent from 2019 — both impacting profitability.

•Jobs drive consumer spending: All restaurant sales are local, and consumers are generally upbeat about their community. Fifty-five percent of adults describe their local economy, including the availability of jobs, as excellent or good.

"With more than $1 trillion in sales expected this year, the state of the restaurant industry is strong thanks to the agility of its operators and employees," said Michelle Korsmo, president and CEO of the National Restaurant Association.

"As our report shows, restaurants are finding ways to adapt to the challenges of increased food costs and supply chain disruption," Korsmo continued. "Restaurants have responded well to customers' desire to have more opportunities to enjoy restaurant meals, which continues to grow sales, create employment opportunities, and foster a strong sense of community."

## Higher Food Costs, Shortages

If consumers notice menu changes on a more frequent basis, it's often the result of increased food costs, the report noted. In the past year, operators report needing to find new suppliers, removing items from their menus, adjusting portion sizes or substituting lower cost items all in response to elevated food prices.

The availability of food items impacted menu composition as well, with more than three-quarters (77 percent) of operators saying their restaurant experienced supply delays or shortages of key food or beverage items in 2023. These changes will present a challenge for operators, especially with most adults (86 percent) saying they like ample choices on menus.

Further directing menu choices are social media trends. As the National Restaurant Association's 2024 "What's Hot Culinary Forecast" found, savvy operators are turning to TikTok and other social media platforms to be inspired and to fire up viral trends. Operators will need to be strategic in how they balance thoughtfully streamlined, food-cost-effective menus and enough variety to satisfy demand and lead the latest trends.

For those offering it, off-premises remains a key area of opportunity, and customers agree, with a vast majority (88 percent) reporting being satisfied with the variety of local food options for takeout and delivery. Customers are viewing takeout in new ways, with two-thirds (67 percent) of adults saying they'd be interested in subscriptions that offer a specified number of meals each month and half (53 percent) saying they're open to supplementing home-cooked meals with restaurant-prepared items.

The restaurant and foodservice industry is projected to add 200,000 jobs in 2024, bringing total industry employment to 15.7 million. Between 2024 and 2032, the industry is projected to add 150,000 jobs per year on average, with total staffing levels reaching 16.9 million by 2032.

Despite this expansion, 45 percent of operators say their restaurant doesn't have enough employees to support existing customer demand, the report noted. Operators looking for the necessary support are turning to the gig economy and technology.

One in four operators say using gig workers to fill in staffing will become more common in their segment in 2024 and nearly half (47 percent) of operators say the use of technology and automation to help with the current labor shortage will become more common.

## Record Production

(Continued from p. 1)

million pounds, down 2.0 percent from December 2022. For all of 2023, Cheddar output totaled 3.96 billion pounds, up 0.6 percent from 2022.

Production of other American-type cheeses during December totaled 151.6 million pounds, up 6.4 percent from December 2022.

### Italian & Other Cheeses

December production of Italian-type cheeses totaled 509.5 million pounds, up 0.3 percent from December 2022.

For 2023, Italian cheese production totaled 5.86 billion pounds, down 0.7 percent from 2022.

December production of Italian cheese in the states broken out by NASS, with comparisons to December 2022, was: Wisconsin, 144.1 million pounds, up 1.8 percent; California, 139.6 million pounds, up 0.2 percent; New York, 29.6 million pounds, up 2.6 percent; Pennsylvania, 23.2 million pounds, down 7.0 percent; Minnesota, 10.9 million pounds, up 6.2 percent; and New Jersey, 3.3 million pounds, down 3.0 percent.

Italian cheese production in all other states totaled 158.6 million pounds, down 0.6 percent from December 2022.

Mozzarella production totaled 403.6 million pounds, up 1.0 percent from December 2022. For all of 2023, Mozzarella output totaled 4.6 billion pounds, down 0.1 percent from 2022.

December production of other Italian cheese varieties, with comparisons to December 2022, was: Parmesan, 41.3 million pounds, down 3.6 percent; Provolone, 30.3 million pounds, up 0.7 percent; Ricotta, 22.7 million pounds, up 0.1 percent; Romano, 4.5 million pounds, up 2.2 percent; and all other Italian cheeses, 7.1 million pounds, down 17.4 percent.

Production of other cheese varieties during December, with comparisons to December 2022, was:

**Swiss cheese:** 29.0 million pounds, down 4.9 percent.

**Cream and Neufchatel:** 91.9 million pounds, down 0.2 percent.

**Brick and Muenster:** 16.4 million pounds, up 7.3 percent.

**Hispanic cheese:** 39.1 million pounds, up 19.7 percent.

**Blue and Gorgonzola:** 6.8 million pounds, up 2.7 percent.

**Feta:** 9.5 million pounds, down 3.4 percent.

**Gouda:** 5.96 million pounds, up 19.6 percent.

**All other types of cheese:** 13.8 million pounds, up 6.1 percent.

### Whey Products Production

December production of dry whey, human, totaled 66.1 million pounds, down 9.2 percent from December 2022. Manufacturers' stocks of dry whey, human, at the end of December totaled 65.5 million pounds, down 4.1 percent from a year earlier and down 1.9 percent from a month earlier.

Lactose production, human and animal, during December totaled 90.9 million pounds, up 1.7 percent from December 2022. Manufacturers' stocks of lactose, human and animal, at the end of December totaled 105.3 million pounds, down 38.8 percent from a year earlier and down 3.2 percent from a month earlier.

December production of whey protein concentrate, human, during December totaled 41.1 million pounds, up 1.5 percent from December 2022. Manufacturers' stocks of WPC, human, at the end of December totaled 61.8 million pounds, down 24.0 percent from a year earlier and down 2.0 percent from a month earlier.

Production of whey protein isolates during December totaled 10.1 million pounds, up 14.9 percent from December 2022. Manufacturers' stocks of WPIs at the end of December totaled 15.9 million pounds, down 31.1 percent from a year earlier and down 3.9 percent from a month earlier.

### Butter & Dry Milk Products

In December, butter production totaled 196.3 million pounds, up 4.4 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, butter output totaled 2.1 billion pounds, up 2.7 percent from 2022.

Regional butter production in December, with comparisons to December 2022, was: West, 103.3 million pounds, up 7.7 percent; Central, 76.5 million pounds, up 0.8 percent; and Atlantic, 16.5 million pounds, up 1.8 percent.

Nonfat dry milk production during December totaled 146.4 million pounds, down 12.7 percent from December 2022. For all of 2023, NDM output totaled 1.88 billion pounds, down 4.6 percent from 2022.

Manufacturers' shipments of nonfat dry milk during December totaled 144.8 million pounds, down 14.2 percent from December 2022. Manufacturers' stocks of NDM at the end of December totaled 203.3 million pounds, down 20.5 percent from a year earlier and down 1.3 percent from a month earlier.

Production of other dry milk products during December, with comparisons to December 2022, was: skim milk powder, 48.3 million pounds, down 24.3 percent; dry whole milk, 9.6 million pounds, up 13.7 percent; milk protein concentrate, 18.1 million pounds, up 2.4 percent; and dry buttermilk, 14.6 million pounds, up 3.2 percent.

### Yogurt & Other Dairy Products

December production of yogurt, plain and flavored, totaled 369.0 million pounds, down 0.6 percent from December 2022.

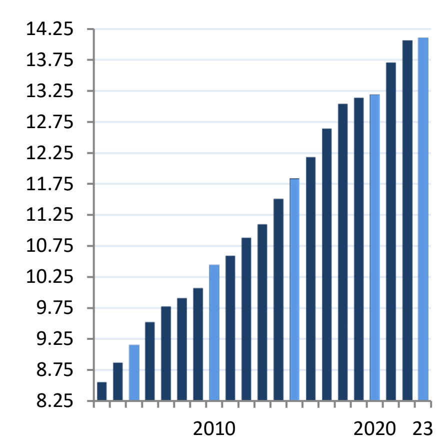
For all of 2023, yogurt output totaled 4.76 billion pounds, up 3.0 percent from 2022.

Sour cream production totaled 134.4 million pounds, up 0.6 percent from December 2022. Sour cream output during all of 2023 totaled 1.51 billion pounds, up 1.0 percent from 2022.

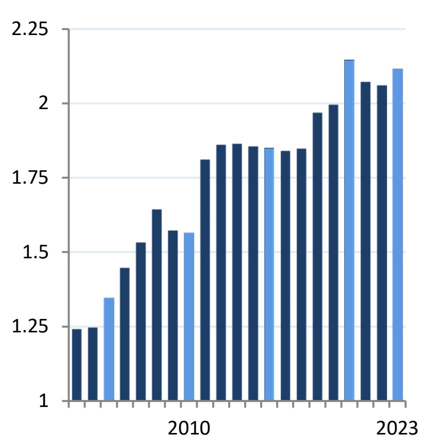
Cream cottage cheese production during December totaled 29.5 million pounds, up 1.4 percent from December 2022. Lowfat cottage cheese output during December totaled 26.0 million pounds, up 19.0 percent from a year earlier.

December production of regular ice cream totaled 47.7 million gallons, down 11.1 percent from December 2022. Lowfat ice cream production during December totaled 24.0 million gallons, down 11.8 percent from December 2022.

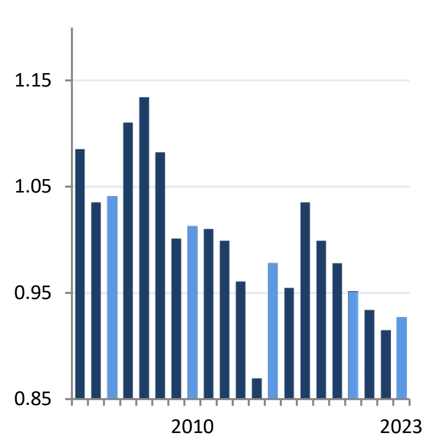
**Cheese Production**
**2003 - 2023**
Billion pounds



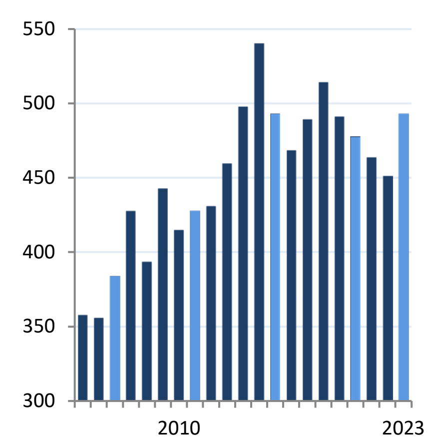

**Butter Production**
**2003 - 2023**
Billion pounds



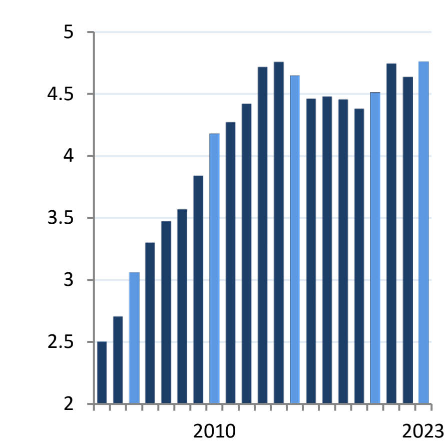

**Dry Whey Production**
**2003 - 2023**
Billions



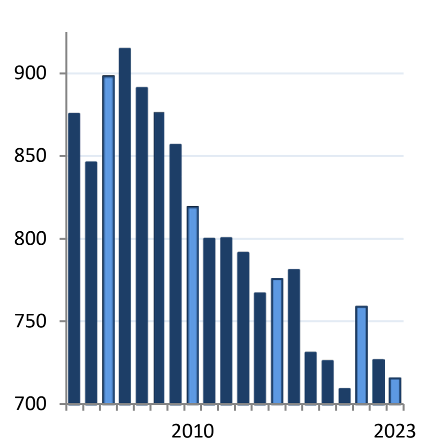

**WPC Production**
**2003 - 2023**
million of pounds



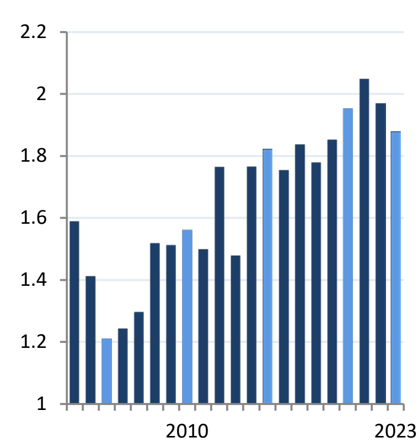

**Yogurt Production**
**2003 – 2023**
Billion pounds



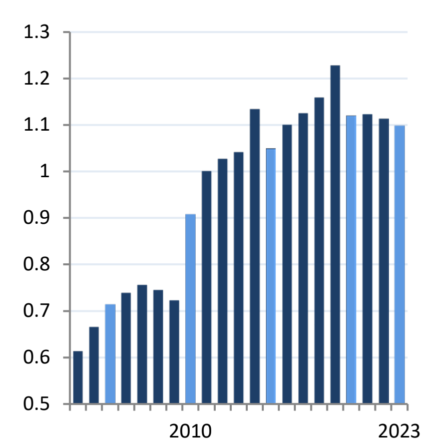

**Ice Cream (reg. hard) Production**
**2003 - 2023**
million of gallons




**NDM Production**
**2003 - 2023**
Billions of pounds




**Lactose Production**
**2003 - 2023**
Billions of pounds



## Idaho Accepting Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant Applications

**Boise, ID**—The Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) recently announced the competitive solicitation process to award over $5.0 million in Resilient Food System Infrastructure (RFSI) Grants.

Grants will fund projects that enhance markets for producers and improve transportation of Idaho food products to local or regional markets. Agricultural producers, processors, nonprofit organizations, for-profit entities, local government entities, tribal governments and educational institutions are eligible to apply for funding.

Through stakeholder engagement and outreach, Idaho identified top priorities to expand capacity for food and beverage processing and manufacturing. Priorities include co-pack facilities, support construction of a new facility, modernize or expand an existing facility, as well as improve the aggregation and distribution of agricultural products.

Last May, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the availability of up to $420 million through RFSI to strengthen local and regional food systems.

Through this program, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has entered into cooperative agreements with state agencies, commissions, or departments responsible for agriculture, commercial food processing, seafood or food system and distribution activities or commerce activities or US territories.

The Idaho RFSI program is contingent upon approval of the Idaho legislature; the spending authority for the program requires legislative approval, the ISDA noted.

In order to meet USDA deadlines, ISDA will be accepting applications in advance. Grants will only be awarded if approved in ISDA's fiscal year 2025 budget.

There are two grants opportunities, the ISDA explained:

•Simplified Equipment-Only Projects: These projects offer a simplified application to fund smaller grants between $10,000 and $100,000 for equipment purchases.

•Infrastructure Grant: The minimum award amount is $100,000 and the maximum award amount of $3,000,000.

Those interested in receiving a grant award should apply directly through the ISDA at *agri.idaho.gov/rfsi* by March 15.

## Rizo-Lopez Foods Recalls Numerous Products Due To Listeria Concerns

**Modesto, CA**—Rizo-Lopez Foods, Inc. (RLF) on Monday announced that it is voluntarily recalling numerous dairy products because they have the potential to be contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes.

The recalled products were distributed nationwide by RLF and through distributors. Products also were sold at retail deli counters including, but not limited to, El Super, Cardenas Market, Northgate Gonzalez, Superior Groceries, El Rancho, Vallarta, Food City, La Michoacana, and Numero Uno Markets.

The recalled products include cheese, yogurt, and sour cream sold under the brand names Tio Francisco, Don Francisco, Rizo Bros, Rio Grande, Food City, El Huache, La Ordena, San Carlos, Campesino, Santa Maria, Dos Ranchitos, Casa Cardenas, and 365 Whole Foods Market.

Based on information shared by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), RLF said it may be a potential source of illness in an ongoing nationwide Listeria monocytogenes outbreak.

FDA and CDC, in collaboration with state and local partners, are investigating illnesses in a multi-year, multi-state outbreak of Listeria monocytogenes infections linked to Queso Fresco and Cotija cheeses made by RLF, FDA noted in an update released Monday.

This outbreak includes cases dating back to 2014 and is currently ongoing, FDA noted. CDC investigated this outbreak in 2017 and 2021. Epidemiologic evidence in previous investigations identified Queso Fresco and other similar cheeses as a potential source of the outbreak, but there wasn't enough information to identify a specific brand.

A sample of Rizo Bros Aged Cotija tested positive for Listeria monocytogenes during sampling conducted by the Hawaii State Department of Health's Food and Drug Branch in January 2024, FDA explained. In response to that finding, Rizo Lopez Foods voluntarily recalled one batch of Rizo Bros Aged Cotija Mexican Grating Cheese (8 oz.) on Jan. 11, 2024.

CDC and FDA reopened the investigation in January 2024 after new illnesses were reported in December 2023 and whole genome sequencing (WGS) analysis of the Cotija cheese sample showed that it is the same strain of Listeria that is causing illnesses in this outbreak.

According to the CDC, of the 22 people interviewed, 16 (73 percent) reported eating Queso Fresco, Cotija, or other similar cheeses. Among people who remembered specific brands, three people who got sick between 2014 and 2022 reported Don Francisco brand Queso Fresco or Cotija.

FDA initiated an on-site inspection at Rizo Lopez Foods. The agency's inspection is still ongoing; however, an environmental sample collected during that inspection tested positive for Listeria monocytogenes. WGS analysis of that sample showed that it is the same strain of Listeria that is causing illnesses in this outbreak, FDA stated.

In response to this investigation, FDA noted that Rizo Lopez Foods has voluntarily recalled all sell-by dates of its dairy products. The firm has temporarily ceased the production and distribution of these products, while the investigation is ongoing.

On Thursday, FDA said it has been notified of additional recalls for products made with or containing recalled dairy products from Rizo Lopez Foods. These companies include, among others, Simply Fresh LLC, Trader Joe's Company, Fresh Creative Foods, Fresh Express, and BrightFarms.

As of Feb. 6, 2024, a total of 26 people infected with the outbreak strain of Listeria have been reported from 11 states, the CDC reported. Illnesses started on dates ranging from June 14, 2015, to Dec. 10, 2023. Of 26 people with information available, 23 have been hospitalized.

Two deaths have been reported, one from California and one from Texas.

The true number of sick people in this outbreak is likely higher than the number reported, the CDC stated, and the outbreak may not be limited to the states with known illnesses. This is because some people recover without medical care and are not tested for Listeria. Also, recent illnesses may not yet be reported as it usually takes three to four weeks to determine if a sick person is part of an outbreak.

Public health investigators are using the PulseNet system to identify illnesses that may be part of this outbreak, the CDC explained.

More information about recalled products, including descriptions, sizes, and UPCs or "best by" dates, are included in recall notices and updates posted on FDA's website, at *www.fda.gov*.

# US Gross Refrigerated Storage Capacity Falls; Private Capacity Rises

**Washington**—Gross refrigerated storage capacity in the US totaled 3.70 billion cubic feet on Oct. 1, 2023, according to the *Capacity of Refrigerated Warehouses 2023 Summary*, which was released last week by USDA's NASS.

That gross refrigerated storage capacity is down from 3.73 billion cubic feet on Oct. 1, 2021, but up from 3.65 billion cubic feet on Oct. 1, 2019, and 3.60 billion cubic feet on Oct. 2017, according to the report.

For this NASS report, questionnaires were mailed around the 23rd of September 2023, to operators of over 950 public and private cold storage warehouses. Some 900 firms met the qualifications that their warehouses were artificially cooled to a temperature of 50 degrees F or lower, normally stored food products for 30 days or more, and stored one of the 110 commodities reported in the monthly *Cold Storage* report.

The list included specialized storage facilities meeting the 30-day requirement, such as dairy manufacturing plants, fruit houses, frozen fruit, fruit juice, and vegetable processors, and poultry and meat packing plants. Wholesalers, jobbers, packer branch houses, and frozen food processors whose entire inventories are turned over more than once a month were excluded.

Usable refrigerated storage capacity as of Oct. 1, 2023, totaled 2.99 billion cubic feet, or 81 percent of the gross space. Usable freezer space was 80 percent of the usable refrigerated space with the remaining 20 percent used as cooler space.

For this report, gross space is defined as the total area under refrigeration, measured from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling. Usable space is the actual area used for storing commodities; that is, gross space less an allowance for aisles, posts, coils, blowers, etc.

As of Oct. 1, 2023, the states with the largest gross warehouse capacity were: California, 369.8 million cubic feet, including 64.7 million cubic feet of gross cooler space and 305.1 million cubic feet of gross freezer space; Washington, 293.5 million cubic feet, including 13.6 million cubic feet of gross cooler space and 279.9 million cubic feet of gross freezer space; Wisconsin, 289.9 million cubic feet, including 126.8 million cubic feet of gross cooler space and 163.0 million cubic feet of gross freezer space; Texas, 262.0 million cubic feet, including 73.6 million cubic feet of gross cooler space and 188.5 million cubic feet of gross freezer space; and Florida, 236.2 million cubic feet, including 105.7 million cubic feet of gross cooler space and 130.5 million cubic feet of gross freezer space.

Public warehouse refrigerated storage capacity totaled 2.51 billion gross cubic feet, accounting for 68 percent of the storage. In 2021, public warehouse refrigerated capacity totaled 2.67 billion gross cubic feet and accounted for 72 percent of the total storage.

Public refrigerated storages are defined in this report as refrigerated facilities maintained for storing food for others at specified rates per unit.

Private and semi-private warehouse refrigerated capacity totaled 1.18 billion gross cubic feet in 2023, or 32 percent of the gross refrigerated space. In 2021, private and semi-private warehouse refrigerated capacity totaled 1.06 billion gross cubic feet and accounted for 28 percent of the gross space.

For this report, private and semi-private refrigerated storages are defined as refrigerated facilities maintained by an operator to facilitate his or her principal function as a producer, processor, or manufacturer of food products. The space is used to store the owner's products, although some space may be used by others at specified rates per unit stored.

Refrigerated warehouse numbers totaled 900 in 2023, down from 904 in 2021, and 912 in 2019. That included 492 public warehouses, down from 517 in 2021 and 551 in 2019; and 408 private and semi-private warehouses, up from 387 in 2021 and 361 in 2019.

Refrigerated warehouses by size group as of Oct. 1, 2023, were: up to 499,999 cubic feet, 141 warehouses, including 30 public and 111 private and semi-private; 500,000 to 999,999 cubic feet, 95 warehouses, including 30 public and 65 private and semi-private; 1,000,000 to 2,499,999 cubic feet, 192 warehouses, including 100 public and 92 private and semi-private; 2,500,000 to 4,999,999 cubic feet, 214 warehouses, including 137 public and 77 private and semi-private; and 5,000,000 and over, 258 warehouses, including 195 public and 63 private and semi-private.

States with the largest number of refrigerated warehouses were: California, 102 warehouses; Wisconsin, 95 warehouses; Texas, 55 warehouses; Washington, 50 warehouses; and Georgia, 49 warehouses.

# Prairie Farms Iced Coffee Now Sold In Singles; Super Bowl Campaign Launch

**Edwardsville, IL**—Prairie Farms Dairy recently launched its first new product for 2024 – single-serve containers of its popular ready-to-drink iced coffee in two favorite flavors.

The introduction was inspired by the success of the company's iced coffee, which has been sold in half-gallon cartons since 2013.

Our award-winning, single-serve milk lineup has positioned Prairie Farms as a market leader for several years, said Matt McClelland, executive vice president and CEO, Prairie Farms Dairy.

"Now, our half-gallon iced coffee has paved a successful path for new single-serve iced coffee options, allowing us to serve more coffee lovers than ever before," McClelland said.

"Iced coffee is our first new product launch in 2024, with many more to come throughout the year," he continued.

Prairie Farms Barista Style Iced Coffee in 14-ounce bottles is available in Mocha and Caramel flavors. Retailers and mass merchandiser outlets across the US will carry Prairie Farms single-serve iced coffee just in time for the Super Bowl.

The launch will be supported by Prairie Farms' 10 Days of Super Prizes multifaceted campaign. During the 10 days leading up to the Super Bowl on February 11, consumers can enter to win $100 dairy prize packages and iced coffee.

For details, visit *www.prairiefarms.com/gameday*.

# Dairy, Ag Among Priorities In PA's New Economic Development Strategy

**Newville, PA**—Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding and Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Secretary Rick Siger visited dairy manufacturer Reykjavik Creamery here late last week to highlight the important role of agriculture in the new *Pennsylvania Economic Development Strategy.*

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and Siger had unveiled the strategy last week.

The new economic development strategy aims to capitalize on Pennsylvania's strengths and reignite the state's economy by focusing on the agriculture, manufacturing, energy, life sciences, and robotics and technology sectors.

Agriculture contributes $132.5 billion annually to Pennsylvania's economy. The state ranks eighth nationally in milk production, also ranks eighth nationally in cheese production, and ranks second in ice cream output.

Proximity to major markets and strong transportation infrastructure makes Pennsylvania a key location for agricultural producers to efficiently distribute their products, according to the strategy. Agriculture's economic impact is prevalent across the state, including dairy production in the Northwest, South Central, and Northern Tier regions; animal food manufacturing across the state; and snack food, beverage, and confectionery product manufacturing with hubs in South Central, Central, Northeast, and Lehigh Valley regions.

The Shapiro adminstration's 10-year economic development strategy centers upon five goals:

•Invest in economic growth to compete and prioritize economic development investments that result in real opportunities for the state's businesses, communities, and residents.

•Continue to make government work at the speed of business, and ensure companies find an attractive business environment where they can innovate and thrive.

•Open doors of opportunity for all Pennsylvanians and enable every Pennsylvanian to secure a family-sustaining job and have a meaningful career.

•Innovate to win, because innovators become entrepreneurs and new discoveries enable people and companies to succeed.

•Build vibrant and resilient regions, where every community flourishes and provides for the needs of residents and businesses.

"Innovation and growth in agriculture not only depend on innovation and growth in energy, life sciences, manufacturing, and technology — agriculture drives innovation in each of those sectors. Investing in that synergy will feed our success together over Pennsylvania's next decade," Redding commented.

Redding and Siger toured Reykjavik Creamery, a high-tech dairy manufacturing facility that specializes in cultured artisan dairy products.

The company's 30,000-square-foot facility creates specialty dairy products, including strained yogurt called skyr, also known as Icelandic-style yogurt.

"As the CEO of Reykjavik Creamery, I am delighted to commend Governor Shapiro for his insightful recognition of the crucial economic role played by agriculture and dairy processing in Pennsylvania," said Gunnar Birgisson, CEO, Reykjavik Creamery. "As a relatively new dairy processing facility specializing in contract manufacturing, we are experiencing encouraging growth prospects in the state. Our focus includes the development and production of new and innovative high-protein dairy products in collaboration with our clients. We are prepared to make the necessary investments to ensure sustained long-term support for this growth."

Also participating in last week's event were the Painterland Sisters, Hayley and Stephanie Painter, fourth-generation dairy farmers from Tioga county who produce Painterland Sisters organic skyr yogurt, and Daniyar Chukin, CEO of Norr Organic, a New York-based company which produces probiotic skyr yogurt. Both companies' products are manufactured at Reykjavik Creamery.

"Agriculture is the backbone of our communities nationwide, and Pennsylvania farmers and producers are a key force in fueling our future," said Hayley Painter, co-founder, Painterland Sisters. "Our mission at Painterland Sisters is to connect consumers with the source of their food, the American Farmer.

"Empowering Pennsylvania agriculture both boosts our economy and creates transformative opportunities in both rural communities and cities alike," she continued. "This plan encourages synergistic relationships amongst our entire commonwealth."

## Imports Rose

(Continued from p. 1)

Leading sources of United States dairy imports for all of 2023, on a value basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Ireland, $711.9 million, down 7 percent; New Zealand, $646.4 million, down 6 percent; Italy, $515.0 million, up 1 percent; Canada, $383.0 million, up 25 percent; France, $351.3 million, up 4 percent; Mexico, $291.1 million, up 10 percent; Netherlands, $241.7 million, down 6 percent; Denmark, $198.5 million, up 18 percent; Spain, $189.0 million, up 21 percent; and United Kingdom, $172.2 million, up 44 percent.

Just during December, US dairy imports were valued at $375.9 million, down 15 percent from December 2022.

### Cheese Import Volume, Value Up

During December, US cheese imports totaled 36.8 million pounds, up 16 percent from December 2022.

The value of those cheese imports, $152.9 million, was up 21 percent.

For all of 2023, cheese imports totaled 424.1 million pounds, up 2 percent, or 9.7 million pounds, from 2022.

That's the third straight year in which United State cheese imports topped 400 million pounds, although cheese imports remain well below their record level of 474.6 million pounds, set in 2002.

Over the 2001-2007 period, US cheese imports averaged about 459 million pounds per year.

The value of 2023's cheese imports, $1.76 billion, was up 12 percent from 2022. That's the 13th straight year in which cheese imports were valued at more than $1.0 billion.

Leading sources of US cheese imports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were:

***Italy:*** 82.5 million pounds, down 2 percent.

***France:*** 44.8 million pounds, down 13 percent.

***Netherlands:*** 38.8 million pounds, up 3 percent.

***Spain:*** 34.0 million pounds, up 51 percent.

***Ireland:*** 21.1 million pounds, up 5 percent.

***Nicaragua:*** 21.1 million pounds, up 35 percent.

***Switzerland:*** 20.3 million pounds, down 5 percent.

***United Kingdom:*** 19.8 million pounds, up 2 percent.

***Canada:*** 16.9 million pounds, up 21 percent.

***Greece:*** 15.6 million pounds, up 5 percent.

***Mexico:*** 14.8 million pounds, down slightly.

***Germany:*** 13.9 million pounds, up slightly.

***Denmark:*** 10.7 million pounds, down 13 percent.

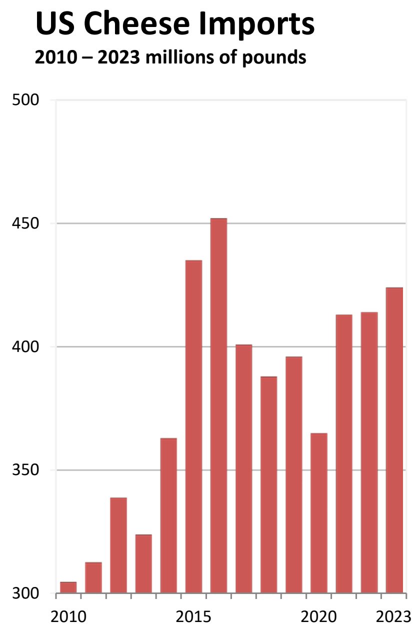
### Butter Imports Increase

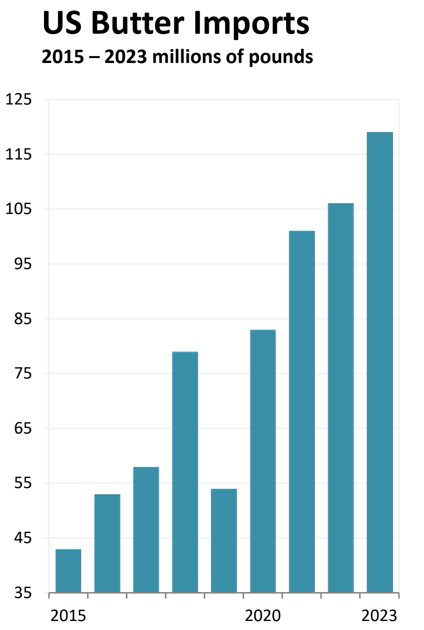
December 2023 imports of butter and other butterfat-based products totaled 15.0 million pounds, up 7 percent from December 2022.

Butter imports during December totaled 11.5 million pounds, up 29 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, imports of butter and other butterfat-based products totaled 161.0 million pounds, up 8 percent from 2022.

The value of those butter imports, $541.9 million, was up 16 percent.




Butter imports during 2023 totaled 118.6 million, up 132 percent from 2022. The value of those imports, $440.9 million, was up 10 percent.

Leading sources of US butter imports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Ireland, 87.9 million pounds, up 6 percent; New Zealand, 19.1 million pounds, up 71 percent; France, 5.7 million pounds, up 1 percent; and India, 1.2 million pounds, up 14 percent.

Casein imports during December totaled 5.4 million pounds, down 69 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, casein imports totaled 67.2 million pounds, down 44 percent from 2022. The value of those casein imports, $294.2 million, was down 43 percent.

Leading sources of US casein imports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: New Zealand, 26.6 million pounds, down 39 percent; France, 13.5 million pounds, down 21 percent; Ireland, 11.5 million pounds, down 67 percent; Argentina, 5.1 million pounds, down 35 percent; and India, 5.0 million pounds, down 53 percent.

December 2023 imports of caseinates totaled 3.9 million pounds, down 20 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, imports of caseinates totaled 66.7 million pounds, up 27 percent from 2022. The value of those imports, $323.4 million, was up 20 percent.

Leading sources of US imports of caseinates last year, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Poland, 20.7 million pounds, up 126 percent; Denmark, 17.0 million pounds, up 42 percent; New Zealand, 12.9 million pounds, up 9 percent; and Netherlands, 12.6 million pounds, down 25 percent.

December imports of Chapter 4 milk protein concentrates totaled 4.5 million pounds, down 47 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, imports of Chapter 4 MPCs totaled 78.7 million pounds, up 2 percent from 2022. The value of those imports, $317.6 million, was up 10 percent.

Leading sources of US imports of Chapter 4 MPCs in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: New Zealand, 72.4 million pounds, up 1 percent; Germany, 4.5 million pounds, up 28 percent; and Canada, 1.4 million pounds, down 25 percent.

December imports of Chapter 35 MPCs totaled 3.3 million pounds, down 76 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, imports of Chapter 35 MPCs totaled 46.2 million pounds, down 19 percent from 2022. The value of those imports, $72.3 million, was down 29 percent.

Leading sources of US imports of Chapter 35 MPCs in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Ireland, 39.6 million pounds, down 5 percent; New Zealand, 3.2 million pounds, down 26 percent; and Ukraine, 1.0 million pounds, up 21 percent.percent; and Ukraine, 1.0 million pounds, up 21 percent.

## Exports Decline

(Continued from p. 1)

were valued at less than $6.0 billion (at $5.9 billion).

Leading markets for US dairy exports in 2023, on a value basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Mexico, $2.3 billion, down 5 percent; Canada, $1.08 billion, up 5 percent; China, $607.7 million, down 24 percent; Japan, $389.4 million, down 25 percent; Philippines, $373.1 million, down 36 percent; South Korea, $321.0 million, down 44 percent; Indonesia, $311.0 million, down 31 percent; Australia, $182.8 million, down 15 percent; and Vietnam, $146.1 million, down 35 percent.

Just during December, US dairy exports were valued at $616.9 million, down 16 percent from December 2022.

### Cheese Exports Decline

US cheese exports totaled 958.3 million pounds, down 3 percent, or 33.7 million pounds, from 2022's record exports.

The value of 2023's cheese exports, $2.2 billion, was down 4 percent from 2022's record.

Leading markets for US cheese exports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Mexico, 326.3 million pounds, up 20 percent; South Korea, 100.4 million pounds, down 40 percent; Japan, 90.7 million pounds, down 15 percent; Australia, 62.0 million pounds, down 2 percent; Canada, 45.6 million pounds, up 32 percent; Guatemala, 38.1 million pounds, up 44 percent; China, 29.6 million pounds, up 176 percent; Dominican Republic, 26.3 million pounds, up 8 percent; Chile, 25.6 million pounds, down 2 percent; and Panama, 22.6 million pounds, down 23 percent.

Just during December, US cheese exports totaled 80.3 million pounds, up 1 percent from December 2022. The value of those exports, $179.7 million, was down 6 percent.

### Lactose Exports Set Record

Nonfat dry milk exports during December totaled 144.2 million pounds, up 1 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, nonfat dry milk exports totaled 1.78 billion pounds, down 3 percent from 2022. The value of those NDM exports, $2.3 billion, was down 25 percent from a year earlier.

Leading NDM export markets in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Mexico, 919.0 million pounds, up 16 percent; Philippines, 191.0 million pounds, down 25 percent; Indonesia, 143.9 million pounds, down 19 percent; Vietnam, 80.3 million pounds, down 8 percent; Malaysia, 62.4 million pounds, down 37 percent; Colombia, 49.9 million pounds, up 7 percent; and China, 46.5 million pounds, down 59 percent.

Dry whey exports during December totaled 34.1 million pounds, down 15 percent from December 2022.

For 2023, dry whey exports was 397.7 million pounds, down 20 percent from 2022. The value of those exports, $198.3 million, was down 32 percent from 2022.

Leading markets for dry whey exports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: China, 158.1 million pounds, down 20 percent; Canada, 29.5 million pounds, down 41; Vietnam, 27.1 million pounds, up slightly; Philippines, 26.9 million pounds, up 16; Thailand, 22.6 million pounds, up 78 percent; Mexico, 19.5 million pounds, down 15 percent; and Indonesia, 19.2 million pounds, down 57 percent.

December exports of whey protein concentrate totaled 26.4 million pounds, down 11 percent from December 2022.

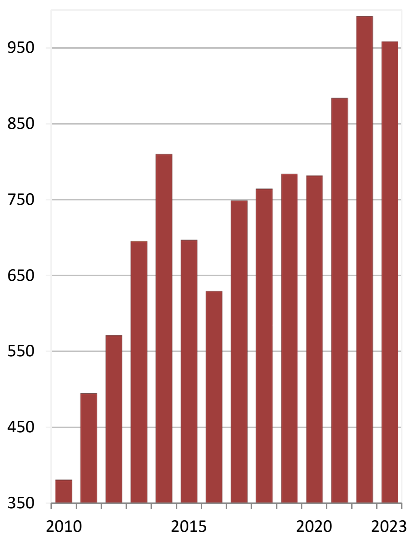
For all of 2023, WPC exports totaled 322.2 million pounds, down 17 percent from 2022. The value of those WPC exports, $252.1 million, was down 29 percent from a year earlier.

Leading markets for US exports of WPC during 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: China, 131.1 million pounds, down 36 percent; Mexico, 52.6 million pounds, up 19 percent; Canada, 41.1 million pounds, down 30 percent; Indonesia, 27.1 million pounds, up 146 percent; and Philippines, 17.0 million pounds, up 9 percent.

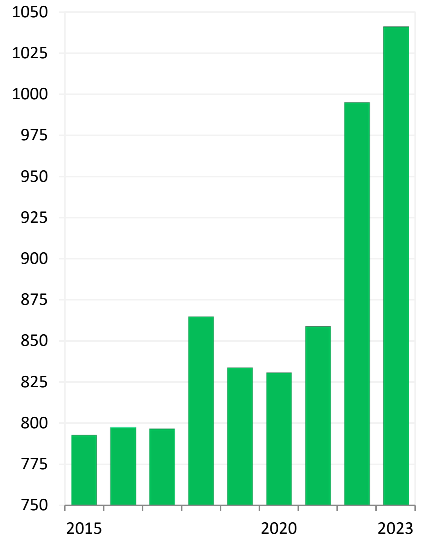
Lactose exports totaled 81.7 million pounds, down 3 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, lactose exports totaled a record 1.04 billion pounds, up 5 percent from 2022's record level. That's the first time lactose exports ever topped 1.0 billion pounds.

**US Cheese Exports**
2010 – 2023 millions of pounds




**US Lactose Exports**
2015 – 2023 millions of pounds




The value of 2023's lactose exports, $491.7 million, was down 15 percent from 2022.

Leading markets for lactose exports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: China, 320.1 million pounds, up 23 percent; New Zealand, up 3 percent; Japan, 104.5 million pounds, down 11; and Mexico, 95.2 million pounds, up 24 percent.

Butter exports totaled 4.4 million pounds, down 42 percent from December 2022.For all of 2023, butter exports totaled 66.8 million pounds, down 54 percent from 2022. The value of those butter exports, $161.7 million, was down 33 percent. Leading markets for US butter exports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Canada, 45.1 million pounds, down 36 percent; Mexico, 4.9 million pounds, down 48 percent; and South Korea, 4.4 million pounds, down 77 percent.

December ice cream exports totaled 11.4 million pounds, up 20 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, ice cream exports totaled 144.7 million pounds, down 7 percent from 2022. The value of those exports, $243.6 million, was down 5 percent.

Leading markets for ice cream exports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Mexico, 51.3 million pounds, up 9 percent; Saudi Arabia, up 1 percent; Canada, 12.8 million pounds, down 1 percent; Australia, 8.8 million pounds, down 23 percent; and United Arab Emirates, up 1 percent.

Yogurt exports during December totaled 3.5 million pounds, up 3 percent from December 2022.

For all of 2023, yogurt exports totaled 45.8 million pounds, up 11 percent from 2022. The value of those exports, $62.2 million, was up 17 percent.

Leading markets for US yogurt exports in 2023, on a volume basis, with comparisons to 2022, were: Mexico, 17.5 million pounds, up 66 percent; South Korea, down 44 percent; Canada, 2.5 million pounds, down 20 percent; Panama, up 19 percent; and Australia, down 4 percent.

# Deadline Extended To Apply For Choose Iowa Dairy Innovation Grants

**Des Moines, IA**—The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship on Monday announced that the deadline to apply for the Choose Iowa Dairy Innovation Grant Program has been extended by two weeks, from Feb. 9 at 12:00 p.m. to Feb. 23 at 12:00 p.m.

Initial interest in the grant program has been strong, the department noted; however, industry feedback expressed that a two-week extension will provide more companies with additional time to gather information to complete the application on ChoooseIowa.com.

The Iowa legislature authorized the grant program last year with the intent of helping smaller dairies and farmers increase on-farm dairy processing, reduce labor costs, and expand the selection of Iowa dairy products. The competitive grant will match up to $100,000 per project.

The concept builds off the success of other recent Iowa cost-share grant programs, including the Choose Iowa Value-added Grant and the Butchery Innovation and Revitalization Program, both of which are also aimed at increasing the availability of local food and boosting local processing capacity.

The Choose Iowa Dairy Innovation Grant Program has an initial overall budget of $750,000. Cost-share grants could, for example, help dairies invest in pasteurization equipment, processing vats, packaging and labeling products, robots, health monitoring, automated feeding systems, or cleaning assistance. The program funds are not eligible to cover start-up costs, advertising, public relations, salary/benefits/wages, existing debt or any expenses incurred prior to awarding the grant.

Successful applicants must be located in Iowa, have fewer than 50 employees, and be in good standing with pertinent regulatory agencies. Only dairies permitted and inspected by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship are eligible.

"The Choose Iowa Dairy Innovation Grant Program will help Iowa dairy farms cost-share the addition of new on-farm processing equipment or labor-saving technology, both of which will ultimately lead to the availability of more Iowa dairy products for consumers to enjoy," said Iowa Agriculture Secretary Mike Naig.

Full details about the cost-share grant program are available at *www.chooseiowa.com*.

# MN Accepting Applications For Grants To Strengthen Food Supply Chain

**St. Paul, MN**—The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for a new grant program to help strengthen Minnesota's food supply chain.

The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Grant Program offers competitive grants for Minnesota businesses and organizations operating middle-of-the-food-supply-chain activities that support local agricultural products. Up to $9.6 million in funding is available as part of a cooperative agreement awarded to the MDA by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transportation, wholesaling, or distribution of locally and regionally produced food intended for human consumption, including dairy, specialty crops, grains, and other food products (except meat and poultry, as they are funded through other programs).

Awards will be between $100,000 and $3 million, and a 50 percent match of the total project cost is required.

Examples of eligible projects include, building a new cold storage facility, updating or expanding an existing processing facility, purchasing and installing new equipment, making facility upgrades that enhance worker safety, and improving capacity to comply with food safety regulations.

The program will prioritize projects that involve dairy, annual and perennial grains, fruits and vegetables, dry beans, or aquaculture as well as projects submitted by farmer- and worker-owned enterprises and cooperatives.

A variety of entities operating in the middle of the supply chain are eligible to apply, including: agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors (including cooperatives or associations); small for-profit businesses; nonprofit organizations; local and tribal government entities; and institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals.

Consideration and a reduced 25 percent match requirement will be given to eligible applicants who are historically underserved farmers and ranchers; small and underserved business owners; and other businesses that qualify under the U.S. Small Business Administration categories of small disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, and veteran-owned small business.

Applications must be received on April 3. Visit *www.mda.state.mn.us/business-dev-loans-grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure-rfsi-grant*.

## PERSONNEL

**Foremost Farms USA** has appointed BRENDA DEHART as the new senior vice president, chief financial officer and member of its executive leadership team. Dehart succeeds BOB BASCOM, who will retire after more than six years of service with Foremost Farms. In her new role, Dehart is responsible for developing and managing the co-op's financial strategy, planning analysis, and reporting of short-and long-term financial objectives. Dehart brings more than 30 years of food manufacturing and executive finance experience to Foremost Farms. Most recently, she served as the CFO for Edlong, an international dairy flavor manufacturer serving the food and beverage industry. Dehart worked at Sensient Technologies as global general manager of the company's BioNutrients Division. She was also employed by Kerry, Inc., in charge of operations and quality for Kerry Americas' flagship Cheese & Dairy Specialty Ingredient business.

Ireland's **Ornua Cooperative** has tapped CONOR GALVIN as the new chief executive, effective May 2024. Conor currently serves as chief executive of the Dairygold Cooperative Society, a position he started in January 2022. Galvin joined Dairygold in 2014, and held a number of senior leadership positions before his chief executive role. Prior to joining Dairygold, he served as finance director with DCC's Food & Beverage division, and was country finance manager with Procter & Gamble in Ireland. Ornua also appointed LINDSAY BRADY as president, Ornua Foods North America. Brady will have responsibility for leading the business in driving ambitous growth plans for Kerrygold in the US and Latin America. Brady most recently served as general manager at Conagra Brands, managing a portfolio of brands and businesses including Marie Callendar's and Birds Eye.

The **International Food Information Council (IFIC)** has named MILTON STOKES senior director, food and nutrition. In his new role, Stokes will lead the organization's food and nutrition strategy in support of its mission to effectively communicate science-based information on food safety, nutrition, and sustainable food systems.

## World Championship Cheese Contest Gets 3,302 Entries From 25 Countries

**Madison**—Global dairy product entries for the 35th biennial World Championship Cheese Contest have reached 3,302 cheeses, butters, yogurts and dairy ingredients, according to the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA), which hosts the contest.

That's up from the 2,978 entries in the 2022 World Championship Cheese Contest, but down from the record 3,667 entries in the 2020 competition.

For this year's contest, more than 400 dairy manufacturers from 25 countries and 32 US states submitted entries to vie for the coveted title of World Champion.

"It's a truly global competition, with the best makers entering their best products — so a win at our contest means the world," said Kirsten Strohmenger, WCMA contest director.

Countries represented in the World Championship Cheese Contest include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, and United Kingdom.

US dairy manufacturers entered in the competition hail from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

"In the US and around the world, the contest's gold medal seal on the labels of award-winning products drives consumer purchases and boosts sales," Strohmenger said. "Our contest offers entrants the chance at a coveted title, as well as valuable impartial technical feedback from a team of internationally renowned judges."

On March 5 and 6 at Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center in Madison, WI, dairy processing experts from all over the world will carefully evaluate each Contest entry, considering products' flavor, body, texture, salt, color, finish, and packaging.

These preliminary rounds of judging will be open to the public from 10:00 a.m to 3:00 p.m. Central time. Gold, silver, and bronze medals will be awarded to the three highest-scoring entries in each of this year's 142 distinct classes.

On March 7, the gold-medal cheeses will be evaluated again by the entire panel of international judges to determine a single World Champion.

The announcement of the World Champion Cheese can be viewed live online at *WorldChampionCheese.org* and on Facebook at 2:00 p.m. Central time on Thursday, March 7.

The World Championship Cheese Contest has been hosted biennially by WCMA since 1957. Additional information about the competition is available at *WorldChampionCheese.org*.

## Bipartisan Ag Trade Caucus Launched In House To Promote Policies That Boost Ag, Food Exports

**Washington**—US Reps. Dusty Johnson (R-SD), Adrian Smith (R-NE), Jim Costa (D-CA) and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) recently announced the launch of the bipartisan Congressional Agricultural Trade Caucus to advance and promote policies vital to US agriculture, including boosting agricultural exports, facilitating food and agriculture trade, and knocking down unnecessary trade barriers.

The new bipartisan Congressional Agricultural Trade Caucus will work to solidify support for trade policies that benefit farmers, ranchers, producers, rural communities, and all those along the food and agricultural supply chains.

The caucus will support education and engagement opportunities for members of Congress to promote policies which boost international competitiveness, increase market access, address non-tariff barriers to trade, improve supply chains, and re-establish US global leadership on trade.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) "appreciates House lawmakers for coming together in a bipartisan manner to form an agriculture trade caucus," commented Zippy Duvall, AFBF president. "We have a real opportunity to showcase American agriculture on the global stage.

"Expanded trade agreements will help ensure America's farmers and ranchers remain economically sustainable by providing access to new markets as they feed families around the world," Duvall added.

"Ensuring access to international markets for ag products is essential for South Dakota producers," said Johnson, a member of the House Agriculture Committee. "I look forward to working with the co-chairs to help booster America's ag exports to retain healthy demand for our farmers and ranchers."

"Representing the breadbasket of the world, access to global markets is critical to our economy," said Costa, also a House Ag Committee member. "As co-chair of the Agricultural Trade Caucus, I look forward to working together to promote trade policies that will ensure American farmers remain competitive on the global stage."

"American agriculture producers have the capacity to feed and fuel the world, and robust engagement on trade opportunities is vital to unleashing this potential," Smith said. "Increasing, and maintaining, market access for our first-class products through rules-based trade strengthens our economy, increases economic security with our allies, and benefits consumers worldwide. I thank my fellow co-chairs for joining me in this effort to advance bipartisan trade policy."

"Congress needs to be more active in promoting trade agreements that will keep American producers competitive and empower them to feed the world," Panetta stated. "The bipartisan Agriculture Trade Caucus was founded to ensure the farmers and ranchers in our districts and throughout the country are prioritized in our nation's overall trade agenda.

## Equipment Specialists' Ultrasonic Cheese Cutter Reduces Trim Loss

**Janesville, WI**—Equipment Specialists has introduced a new ultrasonic cheese cutter that provides a cleaner cut and reduces trim loss for any cheese variety including Mozzarella, Swiss cheese and Parmesan, the company said.

Equipment Specialists' Sonic Slabber-40C offers a unique ultrasonic blade which provides precise slabs and superior reliability and performance, the company said.

Norm Bittner is the sales manager at Equipment Specialists.

A vision system measures the height of the block, ensuring accurate and consistent thickness and weight of each slab, Bittner said.

"A 40-pound block is suppose

to be seven inches thick," Bittner said. "But it is seldom the case."

The trim-less design calculates block height and then reclaims trim back into the slabs, reduces trim loss and provides cleaner and more accurate measuring of each cut.

"Let's say the block is actually 7.30 inches thick," Bittner said "Traditionally cutting .70 inch slabs, that extra .30 would be trim or one slab would be larger than the other slabs. With this machine, with the vision system, we measure the thickness of each block and if we want 10 slabs, each slab will then be .730 inches thick instead, providing a consistent size slab and ultimately a consistent size cube."

The ultrasonic cutting blade provides precise slab thickness for cubers and stick cutters. It could also slab wheels for pie cuts.

"The ultrasonic blade allows for the reduction of a greater variety of cheese, with a cleaner cut," Bittner said. "And the blade design we've come up with allows us to go underneath the cheese to feed off the slabs one at a time, as opposed to the entire block."

It's a horizontal cut and denests the slabs at the same time, Bittner said. "De-nesting is when the slabs come out of the system individually, not layered in block form."

The Sonic Slabber uses Servo technologies in order to provide cutting speeds for a variety of applications, cutting 40-pound block down to slabs.

"We could add robots to the line, and that could slab 640-pound blocks to whatever application the customer wants, including cubes or sticks," Bittner said.

Bittner said the Sonic Slabber can cut the softest of cheese to the hardest of cheeses.

"The knife is a ultrasonic blade that moves so fast you can't see the blade move. It provides a much cleaner cut," Bittner said. "It does it without much pressure at all. It could be Parmesan. It doesn't even know the product is there; it moves so rapidly."

The fully automated system reduces the need for people to feed the machine as well as a person to remove the cheese.

The SonicSlabber 40C compliments the company's AutoCube machines to complete a fully automated stick or cubing cut line, Bittner said.

The system is compact, measuring 92" x 64" and both infeed and discharge conveyors can be expanded accordingly to production and application.

The stainless steel, tool-less design makes the system easy to clean and sanitize, as well as operate and maintain.

Equipment Specialists has over 40 years of experience building equipment that meets or exceeds USDA and WDATCP specifications and standards, the company said.

For more information, contact Norm Bittner at *norm@eqspecial.com* or visit *www.eqspecial.com.*

## Companies Partner To Launch SSHE

**Charlotte, NC**—SPX FLOW brands APV, Gernstenberg Schroder and Waukesha Cherry-Burrell have joined together to launch the Origin Series Scraped Heat Exchanger (SSHE).

With combined design efforts from three global brands, the Origin Series SSHE is engineered for multi-use performance and global applications, SPX noted. Dairy and food processors can apply this to a variety of products.

According to SPX, the Origin Series' design features include:

**Simplicity:** The Origin Series was designed with ease of maintenance and serviceability in mind, featuring easily removed flanges, a simplified tube design, easy access for maintenance, a cartridge seal design and a removable jacket.

**Cost efficiency:** With emphasis on savings and reduced operating expenses, both now and in the future, the Origin Series brings together standard W+ pump seals and other existing components for easier aftermarket availability.

**Flexibility:** This SSHE enables many options for multiple applications and configurations as a truly customizable solution.

For more information, visit *www.spxflow.com.*

## Nelson-Jameson Re-Locates Idaho Distribution Center To Jerome

**Marshfield, WI**—Nelson-Jameson, a leading food processing distributor, this week announced that its current distribution operation in Twin Falls, ID, is re-locating to its new strategic distribution center in Jerome, ID.

Nelson-Jameson broke ground on the Jerome location in September 2022, as part of a strategic plan to open its most technologically advanced facility yet.

Jerome is one of five Nelson-Jameson distribution centers in the US to support its core operation of offering a broad range of food processing products and services that help companies uphold the highest standards of safety and compliance.

"Nelson-Jameson's commitment to the growth of the food processing industry in the Pacific Northwest is exemplified by our company's expansion in Idaho's Magic Valley," said Mike Rindy, Nelson-Jameson's president. "Our substantial investment in the Jerome distribution center underscores our dedication to the region while prioritizing food quality and safety for our customers."

The Jerome facility includes approximately 1.5 million cubic feet of combined storage, office space, refrigerated and frozen storage areas, and a service and maintenance area. The company designed the center to align with its environmental goals, including efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and improve sustainability for the food processing industry.

Construction of the facility includes architecturally embedded, energy-saving features, including insulated concrete tilt wall panels, all LED lighting, occupancy sensors for lighting, high-efficiency HVAC systems, electronically controlled warehouse ventilation, and energy-efficient warehouse storage systems. Excel Engineering from Fond du Lac, WI, served as the efficiency design team.

"Food safety is of paramount importance to Nelson-Jameson. Designed to align with industry advancements and regulations, the center fosters employee engagement in customer plants, offering technical expertise and leading training workshops," Rindy said.

The Jerome distribution center is located at 2423 South Garfield Street, Jerome, ID 83338. It has transitioned operations of the Twin Falls location as of Feb. 1, 2024. A grand opening event is planned for the spring.

For more information about Nelson-Jameson, visit *www.nelson-jameson.com.*

# DBIA Begins Accepting Dairy Business Builder Grant Applications

**Madison**—A new round of Dairy Business Builder grants administered by the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA) opened on Monday, Feb. 5.

The DBIA is a partnership between the Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) and the Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research (CDR).

Small- to medium-sized dairy farmers, manufacturers, and processors in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and South Dakota may apply for the funding.

The reimbursement grants of up to $100,000 each aim to support recipients in diversifying on-farm activity, creating value-added products, enhancing dairy byproducts, and creating or enhancing dairy export programs.

The deadline for submitting applications is April 4. Applications will be scored individually by a grant review committee comprised of representatives from each of the DBIA states, Midwest Dairy, CDR, and WCMA.

"Dairy Business Builder awards have helped kick-start growth for dairy farmers and processors all over the Midwest. These grants are ideal for any dairy business owner looking to expand and improve their business," said John Umhoefer, WCMA executive director. "We look forward to seeing more innovative funding proposals this spring."

"These grants have helped small businesses with the support they need to grow and diversify. This program helps strengthen our cheese and dairy industry by supporting more value-added products and diversification," commented John Lucey, CDR director.

Application materials for the Dairy Business Builder grants will be available online at cdr.wisc.edu/dbia. Prospective applicants are encouraged to join an informational webinar hosted by DBIA staff at 1:00 p.m. (Central time) on Tuesday, Feb. 7. The webinar will be recorded and accessible throughout the application period.

The DBIA is supported by funding from the US Department of Agriculture and was created in the 2018 farm Bill. Since then, the DBIA has administered over $13 million to 129 dairy farms and businesses.

The program also offers technical assistance to dairy farmers and dairy processors in participating states.

# Maine Cheese Guild Marks 20 Years; Festivals, Events Are Key To Success

**Sidney, ME**—One of the country's first-ever cheese guilds is celebrating 20 years in operation, crediting collaborative, promotional events like cheese festivals for its steady growth and enduring success.

The Maine Cheese Guild first launched in 2003 with 12 members, and has grown to include roughly 150 members at present. Of that number, between 50 and 60 members are cheese makers.

Among the Guild's primary services, member training sessions, communication initiatives and discussion groups are the most impactful for cheese makers and other representatives of Maine's artisan dairy industry.

## Community, Networking Events Critical For Longevity, Success

Hosting the annual Maine Cheese Festival is a major initiative, according to Guild executive director Ron Dyer.

"People want to go to the Cheese Festival and see what we have to offer; to have a whole new experience and get away from it all for a day; and have the old-world experience of enjoying local food with the artisans who actually produce it," Dyer said.

Guild board member Caroline Gander said visitors to the festival will be able to sample more cheeses than ever, along with live music, cows and goats – all in a beautiful riverside atmosphere.

"People love to sample all these cheeses, but also talk to the producers," Gander said. "Everyone who's making cheese will be there selling their cheese."

Cheese experts will be available to help consumers create the perfect cheese board, and find a Maine version of a favorite imported cheese, said Guild secretary Heather Donahue.

"Maine's a special place, and its flavors come out in the cheeses that we make," Donahue said.

The annual Open Creamery Day, set for Oct. 13, is another important, Guild-sponsored event. Participants open their doors to fellow cheese makers and consumers, giving members the opportunity to meet in person to discuss common issues, share recipes, brainstorm business plans and collaborate on new ideas in cheesemaking.

Maine Cheese Guild 20th Anniversary est. 2003

The Guild recently launched the 2023-24 Maine Dairy Leadership Cohort – a year-long dairy operations and leadership program, combining workshops, site visits and technical assistance, supported with funding from the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC).

The program is for value-added and fluid milk producers who want to increase marketing opportunities through increased collaboration, coordination and communication.

Creating and maintaining a space for Guild members to share information and feedback was one of the biggest challenges the group faced over the past 20 years.

Keeping members informed was an obstacle, Dyer said. Based on members that issue has improved with addition of a new executive director role in 2022.

Expanding the Guild and subsequently, growing the Maine Cheese Festival count as one of the organization's greatest accomplishments over the past 20 years, according to Dyer.

For cheese guilds still in early development, Dyer said events like the festival and Open Creamery Day are winning strategies to promote local cheese and offer networking opportunities to members.

"These events give members the chance to meet and talk in person," he said. "Our makers love to share and learn."

Over the last two decades, Maine's artisan cheese industry has grown steadily, but has witnessed ebbs and tides.

The Guild and overall industry "has become one of the leading voices for dairy and cheesemaking in Maine," Dyer said.

"Across the board, there's a lot of interest by consumers in buying and supporting local foods, and that has been a big help, along with a strong focus on food safety and quality," Dyer continued.

"Consumers today are much more likely to support local cheese makers, and often will spend a bit more for artisan quality cheese," he said.

Looking ahead, MCG would like to achieve sustainable, steady growth, Dyer said. I'd also like to see an increase in both the fostering of small local cheese makers, and in scaling up for those ready to sell at a more regional or national level.

For more information, visit *www.mainecheeseguild.org*.




# Sign-Up Open For IDF Cheese Science & Technology Symposium June 4-6

**Bergen, Norway**—The International Dairy Federation (IDF) has kicked off registration for its Cheese Science & Technology Symposium here June 4-6 at the Radisson SAS Bergen.

Discounted early registration rates end March 5.

The educational program begins Tuesday morning with a keynote session on sustainable cheese production by Julien Chamberland with Canada's Universite Laval Quebec.

Chamberland will cover optimized milk utilization; utilization of side streams; optimization of cheese composition; cheese yield and efficiency; cheese technology and processing; and factors related to energy and water consumption.

Luc De Vuyst of Brussel's Vrije Universiteit will lead a session on the influence of starter and adjunct cultures on cheese ripening and quality.

After lunch, Céline Delbès, INRAE, France, will look at factors related to indigenous microbiota, the presence of altering microflora in cheese, and the development of microbial ecology during ripening.

Wednesday morning will begin with a session on how chemical and microbial elements can affect milk quality and subsequently, cheese quality.

Speakers for this session include Diarmuid Sheehan of Ireland's Teasgasc, and Davide Porcellato, Norwegian University of Life Sciences.

Photis Papademas with the Cyprus University of Technology will lead a session on cheese made from non-bovine milk.

Sally Gras of Australia's University of Melbourne will examine how different factors may affect cheese structure, functionality and texture.

Rani Govindasamy-Lucey with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Dairy Research (CDR) will share the latest innovations in cheese production, including process innovations in the digital sector such as automation and sensors.

Thursday begins with a session on sustainable packaging – specifically how packaging can contribute to waste reduction in cheese production by using biodegradable packaging, plastic ripening bags, and developing new ripening procedures.

Didier Dupont with INRAE, France, will discuss cheese as a nutritious food commodity, and efforts to alter the nutritional benefits of cheese.

The symposium will wrap with two technical tours. The tour on ancient Norwegian cheeses will include a ferry ride to a dairy farm in Vik that produces heritage Norwegian cheeses like Gamalost and Pultost.

A second tour will visit Myrdal Gård farmstead goat dairy. Guests will be treated to gourmet pizza made with Myrdal Gård goat's milk cheese.

For full schedule, educational program and online registration, visit *www.fil-idf.org/idf_events/idf-cheese-science-technology-symposium-2024*.

# IAFP Microbial Challenge Testing For Foods Workshop Is May 21-22

**Chicago**—The International Association for Food Protection (IAFP) will host the 14th installment of the its Microbial Challenge Testing for Foods Workshop takes place here May 21-22 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Chicago O'Hare Rosemont.

To help food industry members navigate appropriate use of challenge studies for food safety, the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) has issued guidance on the topic of challenge studies and their use.

This workshop will present the NACMCF report and instructors will teach students to develop actual challenge study protocols based on NACMCF recommendations.

It's designed for food industry professionals, testing lab personnel and regulators.

Instructors include Kristin Schill, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Linda Harris, University of California-Davis; and Rutgers' Don Schaffner.

The workshop will look at challenge study design: purpose of study, product description, product assessment, pathogens of concern, sampling intervals, test conditions, and pass/fail criteria.

Instructors will highlight examples of challenge testing models, applicability of models to different foods, and pathogen growth ranges used in modeling programs.

The early registration deadline is April 23. Cost to attend is $695 for IAFP members and $895 for nonmembers. Registration after Oct. 6 is $795 for members and $995 for nonmembers, respectively.

To sign up online, visit *www.foodprotection.org*.

# Registration Open For ADPI/ABI Joint Meeting April 28-30

**Chicago**—Members of the American Dairy Products Institute (ADPI) and American Butter Institute (ABI) are invited to register for this year's annual meeting here April 28-30 at the Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk.

Attendees will hear about timely issues like "The Case for Butter in 2024;" dairy economics and policy; value-added dairy ingredients; quality assurance, food safety and regulatory compliance; sensory evaluation of dairy products; and how yogurt and cheese are an ideal fit for "modern wellness."

Early registration runs through March 1. Cost to register before the deadline is $699 for ADPI/ABI members and $899 for nonmembers. For online registration, agenda and complete educational program, visit *www.adpi.org*.

## PLANNING GUIDE

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

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

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**International Pizza Expo & Conference:** March 19-21, Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV. Visit www.pizzaexpo.com.

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**Ice Cream Technology Conference** and **Yogurt & Cultured Innovation Conference**: April 9-10, Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort, Clearwater, FL. Visit www.idfa.org for more information.

•

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

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**ADPI/ABI Joint Annual Conference:** April 28-30, Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk, Chicago, IL. Visit adpi.org/events for updates.

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**National Restaurant Show:** May 18-21, McCormick Place, Chicago, IL. Visit www.nationalrestaurantshow.com for more information.

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**IDDBA 2024:** June 9-11, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, TX. Visit iddba.org.

•

**ADSA Annual Meeting:** June 16-19, West Palm Beach, FL. For details visit www.adsa.org.

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**WDPA Dairy Symposium:** July 8-9, Landmark Resort, Egg Harbor, WI. Check www.wdpa.net for updates and registration.

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

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**IFT Meeting & Expo:** July 14-17, Chicago. Check www.iftevent.org for updates and registration.

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## Equipment for Sale

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## Equipment Wanted

**WANTED TO BUY:** Westfalia or Alfa-Laval separators. Large or small. Old or new. Top dollar paid. CONTACT: Dave Lambert at **Great Lakes Separators,** (920) 863-3306 or e-mail Dave at *drlambert@dialez.net.*

## Replacement Parts

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## Real Estate

**DAIRY PLANTS FOR SALE: https://dairyassets.weebly.com/m--a.html**. Contact Jim at 608-835-7705; or by email at **jimcisler7@gmail.com**

## Interleave Paper, Wrapping

**SPECIALTY PAPER MANUFACTURER** specializing in cheese interleave paper, butter wrap, box liners, and other custom coated and wax paper products. Made in USA. Call Melissa at **BPM Inc.**, 715-582-5253. **www.bpmpaper.com**.

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## Cheese & Dairy Products

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## Warehousing & Storage

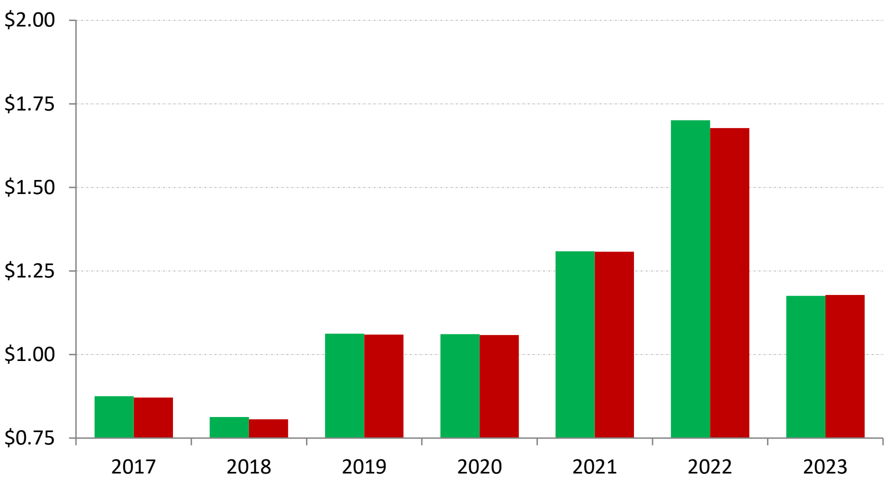
**COLD STORAGE SPACE AVAILABLE: Sugar River Cold Storage in Monticello, WI.** has space available in it's refrigerated buildings. Temperature's are 36, 35 and 33 degrees. Sugar River Cold Storage is SQF Certified and works within your schedule. Contact Kody at 608-938-1377. Or, for information including new services, visit Sugar River's website at **www.sugarrivercoldstorage.com.**

## Promotion & Placement

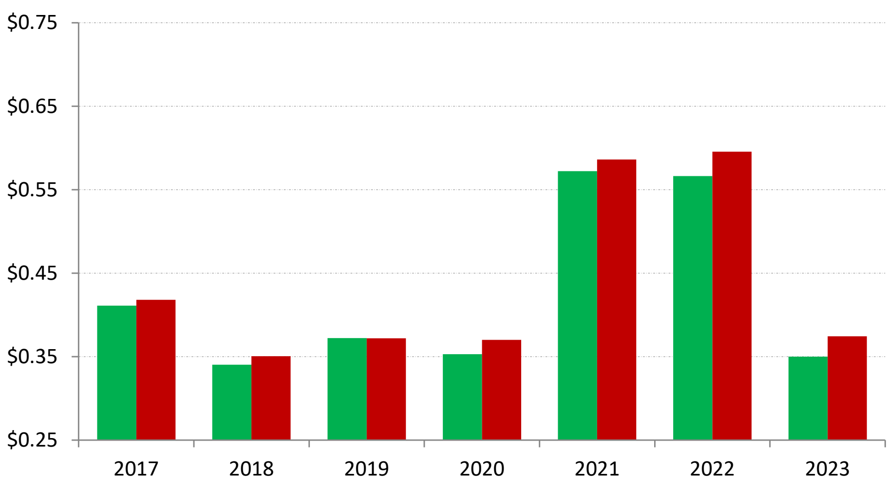
**PROMOTE YOURSELF** - By contacting **Tom Sloan & Associates.** Job enhancement thru results oriented professionals. We place cheese makers, production, technical, maintenance, engineering and sales management people. Contact Dairy Specialist David Sloan, Tom Sloan or Terri Sherman. **TOM SLOAN & ASSOCIATES, INC.,** PO Box 50, Watertown, WI 53094. Phone: (920) 261-8890 or FAX: (920) 261-6357; or by email: tsloan@tsloan.com.

## Positions Wanted

## NDM (Central/East & West) Mostly Prices:
**Year-End Averages:** Since 2017




## Dry Whey (Central & West) Mostly Prices:
**Year-End Averages:** Since 2017



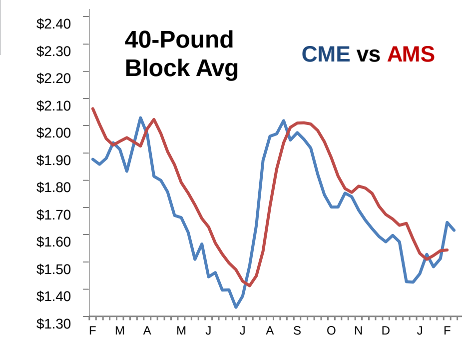

## AVG MONTHLY ANIMAL FEED PRICES: USDA

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| '18 | .1980 | .1888 | .1836 | .1907 | .1915 | .2326 | .2346 | .2767 | .3042 | .3384 | .3263 | .3275 |
| '19 | .3655 | .3376 | .3105 | .2852 | .2718 | .2725 | .2657 | .2598 | .2550 | .2509 | .2446 | .2924 |
| '20 | .2900 | .2997 | .2973 | .2968 | .3098 | .2914 | .2680 | .2540 | .2767 | .2895 | .3142 | .3416 |
| '21 | .3784 | .3913 | .4752 | .5469 | .5613 | .5255 | .4719 | .4168 | .4024 | .4643 | .4853 | .5100 |
| '22 | .5638 | .6624 | .6586 | .5525 | .5138 | .4873 | .4435 | .3863 | .3664 | .3308 | .3250 | .3159 |
| '23 | .2967 | .2895 | .3375 | .3438 | .2784 | .2257 | .2076 | .1974 | .2285 | .2476 | .2583 | .2943 |
| '24 | .3169 | | | | | | | | | | | |

## DAIRY PRODUCT SALES

**Feb. 7, 2024**—AMS' National Dairy Products Sales Report. Prices included are provided each week by manufacturers. Prices collected are for the (wholesale) point of sale for natural, unaged Cheddar; boxes of butter meeting USDA standards; Extra Grade edible dry whey; and Extra Grade and USPH Grade A nonfortified NFDM.

•Revised




| Week Ending | Feb. 3 | Jan. 27 | Jan. 20 | Jan. 13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **40-Pound Block Cheddar Cheese Prices and Sales** | | | | |
| **Weighted Price** | | **Dollars/Pound** | | |
| US | 1.5436 | 1.5415 | 1.5235 | 1.5098 |
| **Sales Volume** | | **Pounds** | | |
| US | 10,247,352 | 9,943,733 | 11,376,044 | 11,586,124 |
| **500-Pound Barrel Cheddar Cheese Prices, Sales & Moisture Contest** | | | | |
| **Weighted Price** | | **Dollars/Pound** | | |
| US | 1.5850 | 1.5776 | 1.5672 | 1.5553 |
| **Adjusted to 38% Moisture** | | | | |
| US | 1.5080 | 1.5038 | 1.4914 | 1.4807 |
| **Sales Volume** | | **Pounds** | | |
| US | 12,616,798 | 13,407,377 | 11,997,329 | 12,432,955 |
| **Weighted Moisture Content** | | **Percent** | | |
| US | 34.84 | 34.96 | 34.85 | 34.88 |
| **AA Butter** | | | | |
| **Weighted Price** | | **Dollars/Pound** | | |
| US | 2.6591 | 2.6114• | 2.6160• | 2.6467• |
| **Sales Volume** | | **Pounds** | | |
| US | 4,056,726 | 4,,889,856• | 4,613,888• | 4,850,236• |
| **Extra Grade Dry Whey Prices** | | | | |
| **Weighted Price** | | **Dollars/Pound** | | |
| US | 0.4393 | 0.4362• | 0.4384 | 0.4304 |
| **Sales Volume** | | **Pounds** | | |
| US | 4,757,260 | 5,169,323 | 6,384,593 | 4,613,355 |
| **Extra Grade or USPHS Grade A Nonfat Dry Milk** | | | | |
| **Average Price** | | Dollars/Pound | | |
| US | 1.2115 | 1.2124 | 1.2117• | 1.2069• |
| **Sales Volume** | | Pounds | | |
| US | 15,075,775 | 16,357,765• | 15,771,977• | 16,258,689• |

## DAIRY FUTURES PRICES

SETTLING PRICE *Cash Settled

| Date | Month | Class III | Class IV | Dry Whey | NDM | Block Cheese | Cheese* | Butter* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2-2 | Feb 24 | 16.27 | 20.00 | 47.600 | 121.175 | 1.630 | 1.6050 | 274.500 |
| 2-5 | Feb 24 | 16.35 | 20.10 | 47.600 | 121.600 | 1.630 | 1.6140 | 274.500 |
| 2-6 | Feb 24 | 16.26 | 20.13 | 47.075 | 122.000 | 1.630 | 1.6030 | 274.500 |
| 2-7 | Feb 24 | 16.23 | 20.13 | 46.525 | 122.000 | 1.630 | 1.6040 | 274.500 |
| 2-8 | Feb 24 | 16.12 | 19.80 | 46.250 | 122.000 | 1.630 | 1.6030 | 274.000 |
| 2-2 | Mar 24 | 17.38 | 19.91 | 51.000 | 121.900 | 1.738 | 1.7000 | 272.500 |
| 2-5 | Mar 24 | 17.77 | 20.00 | 51.250 | 123.000 | 1.763 | 1.7360 | 273.500 |
| 2-6 | Mar 24 | 17.45 | 20.19 | 50.750 | 122.400 | 1.732 | 1.7100 | 275.500 |
| 2-7 | Mar 24 | 17.33 | 20.19 | 50.250 | 122.675 | 1.729 | 1.7020 | 276.000 |
| 2-8 | Mar 24 | 17.19 | 19.90 | 50.175 | 122.400 | 1.717 | 1.6920 | 275.500 |
| 2-2 | April 24 | 17.70 | 19.99 | 52.000 | 122.775 | 1.795 | 1.7270 | 273.650 |
| 2-5 | April 24 | 18.01 | 20.15 | 52.000 | 124.150 | 1.779 | 1.7560 | 275.570 |
| 2-6 | April 24 | 17.73 | 20.34 | 51.750 | 126.000 | 1.775 | 1.7260 | 277.500 |
| 2-7 | April 24 | 17.63 | 20.35 | 51.475 | 124.025 | 1.771 | 1.7200 | 277.500 |
| 2-8 | April 24 | 17.49 | 19.99 | 50.775 | 123.750 | 1.759 | 1.7090 | 277.000 |
| 2-2 | May 24 | 17.93 | 20.16 | 53.000 | 124.375 | 1.786 | 1.7500 | 275.625 |
| 2-5 | May 24 | 18.15 | 20.37 | 53.000 | 125.800 | 1.799 | 1.7740 | 278.000 |
| 2-6 | May 24 | 17.95 | 20.56 | 53.000 | 127.425 | 1.785 | 1.7450 | 279.475 |
| 2-7 | May 24 | 17.86 | 20.55 | 52.225 | 125.500 | 1.785 | 1.7500 | 279.500 |
| 2-8 | May 24 | 17.87 | 20.20 | 50.000 | 125.000 | 1.799 | 1.7610 | 279.000 |
| 2-2 | June 24 | 18.19 | 20.35 | 51.000 | 126.425 | 1.812 | 1.7830 | 277.500 |
| 2-5 | June 24 | 18.35 | 20.35 | 51.000 | 127.775 | 1.812 | 1.7850 | 278.750 |
| 2-6 | June 24 | 18.24 | 20.72 | 52.025 | 129.000 | 1.812 | 1.7830 | 281.500 |
| 2-7 | June 24 | 18.18 | 20.72 | 51.000 | 128.475 | 1.812 | 1.7800 | 281.500 |
| 2-8 | June 24 | 18.22 | 20.35 | 51.250 | 127.275 | 1.812 | 1.7810 | 281.250 |
| 2-2 | July 24 | 18.40 | 20.60 | 48.025 | 127.000 | 1.841 | 1.8000 | 280.500 |
| 2-5 | July 24 | 18.48 | 20.78 | 48.025 | 128.750 | 1.841 | 1.8050 | 281.500 |
| 2-6 | July 24 | 18.40 | 20.88 | 50.000 | 130.000 | 1.841 | 1.8020 | 282.500 |
| 2-7 | July 24 | 18.39 | 20.87 | 50.000 | 127.375 | 1.841 | 1.8020 | 283.025 |
| 2-8 | July 24 | 18.30 | 20.60 | 50.000 | 129.200 | 1.841 | 1.8030 | 283.000 |
| 2-2 | Aug 24 | 18.50 | 20.70 | 48.000 | 128.750 | 1.860 | 1.8250 | 280.925 |
| 2-5 | Aug 24 | 18.50 | 20.92 | 49.000 | 126.900 | 1.860 | 1.8300 | 283.000 |
| 2-6 | Aug 24 | 18.50 | 21.06 | 50.000 | 130.850 | 1.860 | 1.8250 | 285.000 |
| 2-7 | Aug 24 | 18.45 | 21.08 | 50.000 | 129.600 | 1.860 | 1.8250 | 285.750 |
| 2-8 | Aug 24 | 18.45 | 20.70 | 50.000 | 130.825 | 1.860 | 1.8250 | 286.500 |
| 2-2 | Sept 24 | 18.60 | 20.88 | 49.000 | 130.325 | 1.866 | 1.8290 | 283.000 |
| 2-5 | Sept 24 | 18.65 | 21.03 | 50.000 | 130.050 | 1.866 | 1.8370 | 283.000 |
| 2-6 | Sept 24 | 18.65 | 21.16 | 50.000 | 131.825 | 1.866 | 1.8350 | 286.500 |
| 2-7 | Sept 24 | 18.63 | 21.18 | 50.000 | 130.500 | 1.866 | 1.8360 | 287.025 |
| 2-8 | Sept 24 | 18.64 | 20.88 | 50.000 | 131.825 | 1.866 | 1.8360 | 287.500 |
| 2-2 | Oct 24 | 18.51 | 20.94 | 49.000 | 130.825 | 1.868 | 1.8290 | 282.650 |
| 2-5 | Oct 24 | 18.60 | 20.94 | 49.000 | 130.825 | 1.868 | 1.8360 | 283.500 |
| 2-6 | Oct 24 | 18.72 | 21.19 | 49.000 | 132.575 | 1.868 | 1.8350 | 287.100 |
| 2-7 | Oct 24 | 18.60 | 21.19 | 49.000 | 131.350 | 1.868 | 1.8360 | 287.025 |
| 2-8 | Oct 24 | 18.60 | 20.94 | 49.000 | 131.800 | 1.868 | 1.8250 | 288.750 |
| 2-2 | Nov 24 | 18.20 | 20.95 | 48.000 | 131.250 | 1.859 | 1.8200 | 283.550 |
| 2-5 | Nov 24 | 18.58 | 21.03 | 48.000 | 132.000 | 1.859 | 1.8200 | 283.550 |
| 2-6 | Nov 24 | 18.65 | 21.11 | 48.000 | 133.000 | 1.869 | 1.8200 | 283.550 |
| 2-7 | Nov 24 | 18.56 | 21.16 | 48.000 | 131.350 | 1.869 | 1.8200 | 286.500 |
| 2-8 | Nov 24 | 18.56 | 20.90 | 48.000 | 133.000 | 1.869 | 1.8250 | 286.500 |
| 2-2 | Dec 24 | 18.10 | 20.24 | 47.000 | 131.500 | 1.839 | 1.7980 | 266.500 |
| 2-5 | Dec 24 | 18.28 | 20.30 | 47.000 | 132.500 | 1.839 | 1.7980 | 266.650 |
| 2-6 | Dec 24 | 18.28 | 20.40 | 47.000 | 132.500 | 1.839 | 1.7980 | 269.675 |
| 2-7 | Dec 24 | 18.24 | 20.50 | 47.000 | 132.500 | 1.839 | 1.7980 | 269.675 |
| 2-8 | Dec 24 | 18.27 | 19.80 | 47.000 | 133.800 | 1.839 | 1.8030 | 269.675 |
| **Feb. 8** | | **23,514** | **9,542** | **3,171** | **8,398** | **2,295** | **18,033** | **8,685** |

# DAIRY PRODUCT MARKETS

AS REPORTED BY THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## WHOLESALE CHEESE MARKETS

**NATIONAL - FEB. 2 :** Cheese plant managers relay steady production schedules in the East. Some contacts reported overages for Class III spot milk loads. Cheese inventories are noted to be comfortable. Foodservice demand is seasonally strong. Retail demand is steady to stronger. Milk availability has tightened for cheese processors in the Midwest. Spot milk prices were reported at Class to $1 above Class III. Cheese plant managers relay active production schedules, with some reporting an extra day of manufacturing per week. Cheese demand is noted to be mixed. Class III spot milk loads are readily available in the West, where demand from cheese makers is strong. Retail demand is steady to stronger. Foodservice demand is reportedly strengthening. Spot loads of cheese are available for purchasers.

**NORTHEAST - FEB. 7:** Milk volumes are steady in the eastern region. Contacts relay overages for spot milk loads, as well as increased interest in condensed skim. Contacts relay cheese production schedules are seasonally steady. Some contacts share labor issues have caused some plants to run below capacity. American-type cheese inventories are noted to be steady. Italian-type cheese inventories are noted to be growing steadily week over week. Foodservice demand is steady to stronger. Retail demand is unchanged.

**MIDWEST AREA - FEB. 7:** Cheddar demand is slower according to cheesemaking contacts in the Upper Midwest. Grocers' orders are reportedly seasonally quieter. Curd processors say spring demand negotiations are promising following a subdued 2023 ordering season. Some cheese makers say inventories are growing, though. Milk availability is snug compared to just a few weeks ago. Some cheese makers noted a marked downturn in component levels in that time-frame. Additionally, cheese makers are busier. Even this week, some who have been running limited schedules have said they are running full schedules. Some say they are expecting to run full through the spring holiday season, as they prepare for holiday packages and special orders. Cheese market tones are viewed with both bullish and bearish viewpoints. That said, more contacts are expecting bullish runs as milk availability, at least in the near-term, has settled lower.

**WEST - FEB. 7 :** In the West, retail demand for varietal cheeses is steady to weaker. Manufacturers and convertors indicate steady to moderate foodservice demand. Demand from international purchasers is steady. Although some processors relay milk volumes are tighter, Class III spot loads are available to accommodate demands from cheese makers. Manufacturers indicate stronger to steady production schedules. However, some cheese makers continue to have heavy focuses on contractual obligations for production schedules. That said, stakeholders say loads are readily available for spot buyers.

**FOREIGN -TYPE CHEESE - FEB. 7:** European cheese demand is strong in retail markets. Industry sources note sales continue to trend higher than what has been historically typical for this time of year. Stakeholders continue to relay mixed foodservice demand for European cheese. Manufacturers anticipate demand to strengthen in coming weeks with some spring holidays falling at the end of March for 2024. Manufacturers are running strong to steady production schedules to ensure enough cheese stocks to cover Q1 demand. Cheese inventories are indicated as being neither tight or loose and able to meet the needs of most immediate and contracted buyers. Cheese exports out of the European Union are somewhat inconsistent, partially due to persistent transport delays and conflict around the Red Sea. Strengthening week-over-week milk production continues in Germany. However, compared to the same week last year milk output is weaker. In France, milk output compared to the same week last year was stronger. European cheese price market tones are noted as stable.

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

| Variety | Date: 2/07/24 | 1/31 | Variety | Date: 2/07/24 | 1/31 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cheddar Curd | $2.00 | $2.06 | Mild Cheddar | $1.89 | $2.05 |
| Young Gouda | $1.93 | $1.93 | Mozzarella | $1.76 | $1.79 |

## WHOLESALE BUTTER MARKETS - FEBRUARY 7

**NATIONAL:** Retail demand varies from strong in the western region to steady in the Central and eastern regions. Foodservice demand is stronger throughout the country with minimal weather-related disruptions in the Pacific Northwest this week. Although stakeholders note slightly tighter cream volumes in a few parts of the nation, spot loads are readily available overall. Loads are moving into southern butter plants at multiples ranging from .90 to 1.10. Manufacturers relay steady to strong production schedules. However, some stakeholders indicate unsalted bulk butter loads are tighter.

**NORTHEAST:** The weekly average price for butter on exchanges was $2.7720 last week. This is the highest weekly average price since November 6, 2023, when the weekly average was $2.8010. Milk components remain strong, as do spot cream volumes. Butter plant managers report running churns at full capacity with the intent of freezing bulk butter for later in the year. Other contacts relay churning solely for contractual obligations and selling cream on the spot market. Retail demand is steady. Foodservice demand is strong.

**CENTRAL:** Butter plant managers' churning schedules are active, as readily available amounts of cream continue to be reported throughout the region. Class II activity remains somewhat muted, seasonally, and as plant contacts suggest multiples are at favorable values for spring inventory building. Demand is steady. Bulk inventories continue to move at above-market prices, but unsalted higher milkfat availability is still noted as tight. Butter market tones are firm. Contacts' viewpoints are mixed. Some expect a range-bound status to take hold, while others expect to see more bullish pressure moving through Q1 and into Q2.

**WEST:** In the West, cream volumes are readily available, and stakeholders note varied cream demand interest from buyers. Manufacturers are running strong to steady production schedules. With some spring holidays coming at the end of March this year, butter producers are working to build adequate inventories for the later part of Q1. Some stakeholders note unsalted bulk butter is tight. That said, unsalted and salted loads are available for most spot buyer needs. Retail butter demand is strong to steady overall. Foodservice demand is stronger than in previous weeks. Butter makers indicate export demand is light, aside from some stronger demand from Canadian purchasers.

**OCEANIA:** Oceania butter production is steady to lighter, following seasonal trends. December 2023 export data for New Zealand was recently released showing total butter export volumes declined compared to the same month a year prior by 16.8 percent. Despite declining during December, the total volume of butter exports in 2023 were 4.7 percent higher than in 2022.

## NATIONAL - CONVENTIONAL DAIRY PRODUCTS

Cheese remained the most advertised conventional commodity. Conventional cheese ads increased by 3 percent from last week, while organic cheese ads increased by 266 percent. This week's survey contained 50 percent more ads for conventional 6- to 8-ounce shred style cheese than last week, with an average price of $2.40. Ads for organic shred style cheese in 6- to 8-ounce packages increased 35 percent, with an average price of $4.72.

The most advertised conventional dairy item was ice cream in 48- to 64-ounce containers. Ads increased 16 percent, while the average price declined by 34 cents. The number of Cream cheese ads increased by 110 percent from last week, more than any other conventional commodity. Conventional yogurt ad numbers fell below those of ice cream, causing yogurt to become the third-most advertised conventional commodity. Conventional yogurt ads declined by 25 percent, while organic yogurt was present in 57 percent fewer ads.

## RETAIL PRICES - CONVENTIONAL DAIRY - FEBRUARY 9

| Commodity | US | NE | SE | MID | SC | SW | NW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Butter 8 oz | 2.78 | | 2.26 | 3.49 | | 3.53 | 3.49 |
| Butter 1# | 4.53 | 4.28 | 4.55 | 4.14 | 4.87 | 3.87 | 4.42 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz block | 2.28 | 2.48 | 2.25 | 1.96 | 2.04 | 2.54 | 2.47 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz shred | 2.40 | 2.22 | 2.54 | 2.28 | 2.33 | 2.68 | 2.22 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz sliced | 2.69 | 2.77 | 2.41 | 2.77 | 2.76 | 2.77 | 2.60 |
| Cheese 1# block | 3.60 | 3.99 | 3.57 | 3.50 | 3.64 | 3.99 | 3.50 |
| Cheese 1# shred | 3.66 | | 3.73 | 3.62 | 3.50 | 3.99 | 3.50 |
| Cheese 2# block | 9.29 | 7.99 | | 8.49 | 12.48 | 5.98 | 6.61 |
| Cheese 2# shred | 7.37 | 9.99 | 7.48 | 8.29 | 7.48 | 6.07 | 6.49 |
| Cottage Cheese 16 oz | 2.43 | 2.59 | 2.41 | 2.00 | 2.41 | 2.99 | 1.29 |
| Cottage Cheese 24 oz | 3.29 | 3.99 | 3.31 | 3.40 | 3.22 | | |
| Cream Cheese 8 oz | 2.37 | 2.57 | 2.41 | 2.20 | 2.27 | 2.41 | 2.29 |
| Flavored Milk ½ gallon | 2.33 | | 1.66 | 3.00 | 2.68 | | |
| Flavored Milk gallon | 2.89 | | 2.76 | | 3.03 | | |
| Ice Cream 14-16 oz | 3.24 | 3.79 | 3.07 | 4.02 | 3.00 | 2.84 | 4.49 |
| Ice Cream 48-64 oz | 3.81 | 3.26 | 4.36 | 3.15 | 3.90 | 3.60 | 3.40 |
| Milk 8 oz | | | | | | | |
| Milk ½ gallon | 2.31 | | 2.52 | 2.04 | 1.96 | 2.73 | 1.58 |
| Milk gallon | 3.63 | 3.31 | 2.76 | 2.70 | 4.26 | 3.72 | |
| Sour Cream 16 oz | 2.16 | 2.31 | 2.09 | 1.82 | 2.26 | 2.25 | 1.91 |
| Sour Cream 24 oz | 3.03 | | 2.56 | 2.50 | 3.46 | 3.73 | 3.49 |
| Yogurt (Greek) 4-6 oz | 1.13 | 1.06 | 1.12 | 1.18 | 1.18 | 1.10 | 1.20 |
| Yogurt 4-6 oz | 0.65 | 0.75 | | 0.60 | 0.60 | 0.57 | 0.70 |
| Yogurt (Greek) 32 oz | 4.32 | 5.45 | 3.78 | 4.53 | 3.63 | 6.12 | |
| Yogurt 32 oz | 2.81 | 2.66 | 2.81 | 5.99 | 2.36 | 2.93 | |

## ORGANIC DAIRY - RETAIL OVERVIEW

**National Weighted Retail Avg Price:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Butter 1 lb: | | Ice Cream 14-16 oz | $5.99 |
| Cheese 6-8 oz shred: | $4.72 | Ice Cream 48-64 oz | |
| Cheese 6-8 oz block: | $2.98 | Flavored Milk ½ gallon: | |
| Cheese 6-8 oz sliced: | $3.67 | Flavored Milk gallon: | |
| Cottage cheese 16 oz: | $4.78 | Milk ½ gallon: | $4.84 |
| Cottage cheese 24 oz: | | Milk gallon: | $6.99 |
| Cream Cheese 8 oz: | $3.99 | Yogurt 4-6 oz: | $1.25 |
| Sour Cream 16 oz: | $3.80 | Greek Yogurt 4-6 oz: | |
| | | Yogurt 32 oz: | $4.44 |

## DRY DAIRY PRODUCTS - FEBRUARY 8

**WPC CENTRAL/WEST:** Demand is strong for WPC 34%, as contacts say it remains a good value compared to other dairy proteins. This is, reportedly, contributing to persistent interest from animal feed end users. Inventories of WPC 34% are somewhat tight, and some manufacturers note having limited availability for spot purchasers. Production of WPC 34% is limited as stakeholders say continued bullishness for WPC 80% and whey protein isolate has contributed to manufacturers focusing more of their production time on these commodities.

**DRY WHEY/WEST:** Stakeholders note domestic demand as steady to stronger. Demand from international purchasers is moderate. Some manufacturers and distributors indicate inventories are tight. A few producers indicate bleached whey inventories will be tight throughout the remainder of Q1. That said, preferred and non-preferred brand loads are available for most spot buyer needs. Cheese makers are providing plentiful amounts of liquid whey for drying. Manufacturers note steady to stronger production schedules. However, some producers remain focused on production schedules for whey protein concentrates much more than dry sweet whey.

**LACTOSE CENTRAL/WEST:** . Demand for lactose is strong from contract purchasers, and some contacts note strong interest from potential purchasers looking to secure Q2 contracts. Manufacturers report robust interest from spot purchasers, but some note they have limited to no spot inventory available through the remainder of the quarter. Contacts report spot inventories of lactose continue to grow tighter.

**DRY WHEY/EAST:** Spot milk loads were once again reported to be selling above Class, and regional cheese manufacturers have noted seasonally steady to lighter production schedules. Condensed whey volumes have waned in recent weeks, and processors note drying schedules that match the rate of liquid whey production. Domestic dry whey demand is moderate.

## WEEKLY COLD STORAGE HOLDINGS

**SELECTED STORAGE CENTERS IN 1,000 POUNDS - INCLUDING GOVERNMENT**

| DATE | BUTTER | CHEESE |
|---|---|---|
| 02/05/24 | 43,142 | 81,931 |
| 02/01/24 | 43,767 | 81,963 |
| Change | -625 | -32 |
| Percent Change | -1 | 0 |

## CME CASH PRICES - FEBRUARY 5 - 9, 2024

Visit www.cheesereporter.com for daily prices

| | 500-LB CHEDDAR | 40-LB CHEDDAR | AA BUTTER | GRADE A NFDM | DRY WHEY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MONDAY** February 5 | $1.5900 (+4) | $1.6500 (NC) | $2.7450 (NC) | $1.2250 (NC) | $0.5075 (NC) |
| **TUESDAY** February 6 | $1.5750 (-1½) | $1.6150 (-3½) | $2.7700 (+2½) | $1.2400 (+1½) | $0.5000 (-¾) |
| **WEDNESDAY** February 7 | $1.5750 (NC) | $1.6150 (NC) | $2.7700 (NC) | $1.2200 (-1) | $0.4900 (-1) |
| **THURSDAY** February 8 | $1.5675 (-¾) | $1.6025 (-1¼) | $2.7450 (-2½) | $1.2025 (-1¾) | $0.5200 (+3) |
| **FRIDAY** February 9 | $1.5775 (+1) | $1.5700 (-3¼) | $2.6900 (-5½) | $1.2000 (-¼) | $0.5200 (NC) |
| **Week's AVG $ Change** | $1.5770 (+0.0390) | $1.6105 (-0.0345) | $2.7440 (-0.0280) | $1.2175 (-0.0105) | $0.5075 (+0.0310) |
| **Last Week's AVG** | $1.5380 | $1.6450 | $2.7720 | $1.2280 | $0.4765 |
| **2023 AVG Same Week** | $1.5800 | $1.8585 | $2.3980 | $1.2455 | $0.4250 |

## MARKET OPINION - CHEESE REPORTER

**Cheese Comment:** Monday's block market activity was limited to an unfilled bid for 1 car at $1.6500, which left the price unchanged at that level. On Tuesday, 1 car of blocks was sold at $1.6525; an uncovered offer of 1 car at $1.6150 then set the price. There was no block market activity at all on Wednesday. No blocks were sold Thursday; the price declined on an uncovered offer of 1 car at $1.6025. One car of blocks was sold Friday at $1.5700, which set the price. The barrel price increased Monday on a sale at $1.5900, declined Tuesday on an uncovered offer at $1.5750, fell Thursday on an uncovered offer at $1.5675, then rose Friday on an uncovered offer at $1.5775 (following a sale at $1.5850).

**Butter Comment:** The price increased Tuesday on a sale at $2.7700, declined Thursday on an uncovered offer at $2.7450, and fell Friday on a sale at $2.6900.

**Nonfat Dry Milk Comment:** The price rose Tuesday on a sale at $1.2400, fell Wednesday on an uncovered offer at $1.2200, dropped Thursday on a sale at $1.2025, and declined Friday on a sale at $1.2000.

**Dry Whey Comment:** The price fell Tuesday on a sale at 50.0 cents, declined Wednesday on an uncovered offer at 49.0 cents, then rose Thursday on a sale at 52.0 cents.

## WHEY MARKETS - FEBRUARY 5 - 9, 2024

RELEASE DATE - FEBRUARY 8, 2024

**Animal Feed Whey—Central: Milk Replacer:** .3300 (+3) – .3700 (+2)

**Buttermilk Powder:**
Central & East: 1.1200 (+2) – 1.1550 (NC) West: 1.1000 (NC) –1.2600 (NC)
Mostly: 1.1500 (-1) – 1.2100 (-1)

**Casein: Rennet:** 3.6000 (NC) – 3.9000 (NC) Acid: 3.6000 (-10) – 4.0000 (NC)

**Dry Whey—Central (Edible):**
Nonhygroscopic: .4250 (+3½) – .5000 (+5) Mostly: .4400 (+2¾) – .4725 (+3¾)
**Dry Whey–West (Edible):**
Nonhygroscopic: .4200 (+½) – .5200 (+2) Mostly: .4400 (+1) – .4900 (+2)
**Dry Whey—NE:** .4100 (+2¼) – .4800 (+2)

**Lactose—Central and West:**
Edible: .1725 (NC) – .3800 (NC) Mostly: .2400 (NC) – .3400 (+1)

**Nonfat Dry Milk —Central & East:**
Low/Medium Heat: 1.1800 (+2) – 1.2400 (-3½) Mostly: 1.1900 (NC) – 1.2300 (NC)
High Heat: 1.3200 (+¾) – 1.3700 (+3)
**Nonfat Dry Milk —Western:**
Low/Med Heat: 1.1650 (+1) – 1.2700 (+1) Mostly: 1.1800 (NC) – 1.2300 (NC)
High Heat: 1.3175 (+2¾) – 1.4775 (+¼)

**Whey Protein Concentrate—34% Protein:**
Central & West: .9300 (+1) – 1.1500 (NC) Mostly: .9500 (+1) – 1.0300 (NC)

**Whole Milk:** 2.0000 (+3) – 2.2000 (NC)

## HISTORICAL MONTHLY AVG BARREL PRICES

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| '08 | 1.8774 | 1.9560 | 1.7980 | 1.8010 | 2.0708 | 2.0562 | 1.8890 | 1.6983 | 1.8517 | 1.8025 | 1.6975 | 1.5295 |
| '09 | 1.0832 | 1.1993 | 1.2738 | 1.1506 | 1.0763 | 1.0884 | 1.1349 | 1.3271 | 1.3035 | 1.4499 | 1.4825 | 1.4520 |
| '10 | 1.4684 | 1.4182 | 1.2782 | 1.3854 | 1.4195 | 1.3647 | 1.5161 | 1.6006 | 1.7114 | 1.7120 | 1.4520 | 1.3751 |
| '11 | 1.4876 | 1.8680 | 1.8049 | 1.5756 | 1.6902 | 2.0483 | 2.1124 | 1.9571 | 1.7010 | 1.7192 | 1.8963 | 1.5839 |
| '12 | 1.5358 | 1.4823 | 1.5152 | 1.4524 | 1.4701 | 1.5871 | 1.6826 | 1.7889 | 1.8780 | 2.0240 | 1.8388 | 1.6634 |
| '13 | 1.6388 | 1.5880 | 1.5920 | 1.7124 | 1.7251 | 1.7184 | 1.6919 | 1.7425 | 1.7688 | 1.7714 | 1.7833 | 1.8651 |
| '14 | 2.1727 | 2.1757 | 2.2790 | 2.1842 | 1.9985 | 1.9856 | 1.9970 | 2.1961 | 2.3663 | 2.0782 | 1.9326 | 1.5305 |
| '15 | 1.4995 | 1.4849 | 1.5290 | 1.6135 | 1.6250 | 1.6690 | 1.6313 | 1.6689 | 1.5840 | 1.6072 | 1.5305 | 1.4628 |
| '16 | 1.4842 | 1.4573 | 1.4530 | 1.4231 | 1.3529 | 1.5301 | 1.7363 | 1.8110 | 1.5415 | 1.5295 | 1.7424 | 1.6132 |
| '17 | 1.5573 | 1.6230 | 1.4072 | 1.4307 | 1.4806 | 1.3972 | 1.4396 | 1.5993 | 1.5691 | 1.6970 | 1.6656 | 1.5426 |
| '18 | 1.3345 | 1.4096 | 1.5071 | 1.4721 | 1.5870 | 1.4145 | 1.3707 | 1.5835 | 1.4503 | 1.3152 | 1.3100 | 1.2829 |
| '19 | 1.2379 | 1.3867 | 1.4910 | 1.5925 | 1.6278 | 1.6258 | 1.7343 | 1.7081 | 1.7463 | 2.0224 | 2.2554 | 1.8410 |
| '20 | 1.5721 | 1.5470 | 1.4399 | 1.0690 | 1.5980 | 2.3376 | 2.4080 | 1.4937 | 1.6401 | 2.2213 | 1.8437 | 1.4609 |
| '21 | 1.5141 | 1.4442 | 1.4811 | 1.7119 | 1.6923 | 1.5639 | 1.4774 | 1.4158 | 1.5319 | 1.8008 | 1.5375 | 1.6548 |
| '22 | 1.8204 | 1.9038 | 2.0774 | 2.3489 | 2.3567 | 2.2077 | 2.0581 | 1.8741 | 2.0690 | 2.1285 | 1.9454 | 1.8395 |
| '23 | 1.6803 | 1.5761 | 1.8175 | 1.5921 | 1.5073 | 1.5037 | 1.5404 | 1.8190 | 1.7065 | 1.6400 | 1.5816 | 1.4815 |
| '24 | 1.4629 | | | | | | | | | | | |

## Higher Prices

(Continued from p. 1)

pace of disappearance during the fourth quarter of 2023 carries over into 2024.

Fat basis dairy exports are raised, based on higher expected cheese and butter exports, as the US is expected to be competitive on the international market for those products. Fat basis imports are lowered.

Skim-solids basis domestic use is also raised by USDA based on higher-than-expected disappearance in fourth-quarter 2023. Skim-solids basis exports are lowered to reflect the strength of domestic prices as domestic demand is stronger.

Cheese, butter, nonfat dry milk and dry whey prices for 2024 are all raised based on recent price strength, tighter milk supplies, and stronger domestic use.

The USDA's latest dairy product price forecasts, with comparisons to last month's price forecasts, are as follows: cheese, $1.6900 per pound, up seven cents; butter, $2.7700 per pound, up 10.5 cents; dry whey, 48.0 cents per pound, up five cents; and nonfat dry milk, $1.2350 per pound, up 4.5 cents.

In 2023, product price averages were as follows: cheese, $1.7593 per pound; butter, $2.6170 per pound; nonfat dry milk, $1.1856 per pound; and dry whey, 36.18 per pound.

Also for 2024, Class III and IV pries are raised on higher product prices.

USDA now expects the Class III price to average $17.10 per hundredweight this year, up $1.00 from last month's forecast; and the Class IV price to average $20.20 per hundred, up 85 cents from last month's forecast.

In 2023, the Class III price averaged $17.02 per hundred, while the Class IV price averaged $19.12 per hundred.

The all milk price estimate for 2023 is reduced by 12 cents from last month, to $20.48 per hundred, on reported data through December. The all milk price forecast for 2024 is raised by 95 cents from last month, to $20.95 per hundred.

This month's 2023/24 US corn outlook is for lower food, seed, and industrial use and larger ending stocks.

The season-average corn price received by producers is unchanged, at $4.80 per bushel.

The USDA's latest 2023/24 US soybean outlook is for lower soybean exports and higher ending stocks.

The US season-average soybean price for 2023/24 is forecast at $12.65 per bushel, down 10 cents from last month, while USDA's soybean meal price is forecast unchanged, at $380 per short ton.