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Federal Trade Commission Sues To Block Kroger-Albertsons Deal

Proposed Deal Will Lead To Higher Grocery Prices, FTC Charges; Kroger Says It Will Produce Benefits

Washington—The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) on Monday sued to block The Kroger Company’s proposed acquisition of the Albertsons Companies, Inc., alleging that the deal is anti-competitive.

“If allowed, this merger would substantially lessen competition, likely resulting in Americans paying millions of dollars more for food and other essential household goods, as well as reducing the ability of hundreds of thousands of workers to secure better wages and benefits,” the lawsuit stated.

The offices of the attorneys general of Arizona, California, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wyoming are joining the FTC’s federal lawsuit.

Earlier this year, the attorneys general for the states of Colorado and Washington state separately filed lawsuits to block the merger.

The FTC vote to issue the administrative complaint and authorize staff to seek a tempo-

rary restraining order and preliminary injunction in federal district court was 3-0. The federal court complaint and request for preliminary relief was filed jointly with the state attorneys general in the US District Court for the District of Oregon.

Kroger and Albertsons are the number one and number two traditional supermarket chains in the US, the lawsuit noted. Their combined footprint includes approximately 5,000 stores, 4,000 retail pharmacies, and 700,000 employees across 48 states.

Today, Kroger and Albertsons “compete intensely for consumers and workers in hundreds of communities across the country,” the lawsuit continued. “The proposed acquisition would destroy this competition, leaving consumers to foot the bill.”

In addition to raising grocery prices, the FTC alleges that Kroger’s acquisition of Albertsons would also diminish their incentive to compete on quality. Today,

Kroger and Albertsons compete to improve their stores in many ways, including offering higher quality products and improved private label offerings.

The FTC charges that the deal would eliminate head-to-head price and quality competition, which have driven both supermarkets to lower their prices and improve their product and service offerings.

Kroger and Albertsons have proposed to divest a “hodgepodge” of several hundred of their more than 5,000 stores and cast off assets to C&S Wholesale Grocers, the lawsuit noted. Until “very recently,” C&S’s business model was that of a wholesale supplier specializing in grocery supply chain solutions.

“Divesting these individual assets to a grocery wholesaler with limited experience operating retail supermarkets will fail to mitigate the substantial harm to consumers and workers from lost competition between Kroger and Albertsons,” the lawsuit states. “C&S would be acquiring a patch-

• See **FTC Sues To Block**, p. 10

FDA Approves Qualified Health Claim For Yogurt, Reduced Risk Of Type 2 Diabetes

College Park, MD—The US FDA today announced, in a letter of enforcement discretion, that it does not intend to object to the use of certain qualified health claims regarding the consumption of yogurt and reduced risk of type 2 diabetes.

FDA won’t object to the use of those qualified health claims provided they are worded so as not to mislead consumers, and that other factors for the use of the claim are met.

A health claim characterizes the relationship between a substance and a disease or health-related condition, FDA explained. A qualified health claim (QHC) is supported by scientific evidence but does not meet the more rigorous “significant scientific agreement” standard required for an authorized health claim.

FDA’s letter of enforcement discretion was issued in response to a qualified health claim petition submitted in December 2018 by Danone North America.

In its petition, Danone said the proposed claim “is substantiated by the totality of scientific evidence on yogurt as a food.” Specifically, 10 of 12 of the analyses from high or medium quality prospective cohort studies that

• See **Yogurt & Diabetes**, p. 5

Enrollment Period Begins For Dairy Margin Coverage Program; Deadline Is Apr. 29

Washington—The enrollment period for the 2024 Dairy Margin Program year began on Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024, and ends Apr. 29, 2024, according to USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA).

For those who sign up for 2024 DMC coverage, payments may begin as soon as Mar. 4, 2024, for any payments that triggered in January 2024.

DMC continues to offer protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the

• See **DMC Sign-Up Starts**, p. 18

Dairy Groups Seek Agricultural Trade Improvements At WTO Ministerial

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates—Dairy organizations were advocating for agricultural trade improvements during this week’s World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference here.

The conference ended up being extended by one day, until today, in order to facilitate outcomes on the main issues at stake. WTO members on Tuesday had engaged in intense discussions to get closer to meaningful outcomes on agriculture and fisheries subsidies. Details on the final outcomes of the conference were unavailable at press time.

As the WTO conference kicked off, the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) stressed the importance of reform and highlighted ways that the US government can work to break the gridlock that

has hampered US dairy exports in recent years.

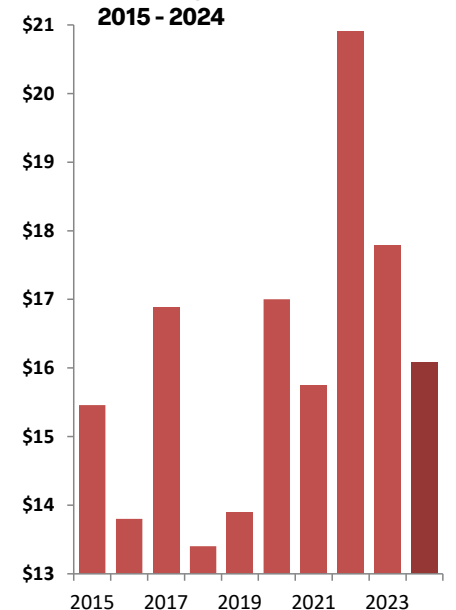
“Meaningful reforms that would improve market access for agricultural products and the WTO’s dispute settlement system have escaped recent WTO ministerial conferences. The US dairy industry is limited by this inaction as we seek to alleviate global food insecurity challenges through our nutritious and sustainable products,” said Becky Rasdall, IDFA’s vice president of trade policy and international affairs.

The US dairy industry and its partners across US agriculture were “hopeful” that the WTO conference “charts a path toward concrete, binding commitments,” consistent with recent proposals from IDFA

• See **WTO Conference**, p. 7

Class 3 Base Price

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EDITORIAL COMMENT



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Needless to say, there was no shortage of hearing witnesses detailing ongoing problems with the Class I market, not just in the southeastern region but around the US.

Class I Market Appears To Be A Real Mess

A year ago this week, the US Department of Agriculture held a hearing to consider various proposals to amend the inter-market transportation credits in the Appalachian and Southeast federal milk marketing orders and adopt distributing plant delivery credits in those two orders as well as the Florida order.

Proponents of those proposals contended that the three southeastern federal orders have a chronic milk deficit, creating challenging marketing conditions to ensure that the fluid milk needs of the orders are met.

That proceeding technically concludes today; the final rule amending the transportation credit balancing fund provisions in the Appalachian and Southeast orders and establishing distributing plant delivery credits in those two orders as well as the Florida orders is effective for milk marketed on and after Mar. 1, 2024.

Meanwhile, a federal order hearing that focused on various aspects of federal order milk pricing formulas finally concluded a month ago, and is now moving into the rulemaking steps in which parties file corrections to the hearing transcript (the deadline for this is Mar. 22), and post-hearing briefs must be submitted (by Apr. 1).

These two hearings are different in many respects, but they do have one important factor in common: they both received considerable testimony and input on the ongoing problems with the Class I market across the country.

The "input" on Class I problems dates to the beginning of the southeastern proceeding, when the Dairy Marketing Cooperative Association requested a USDA hearing to amend the three southeastern orders. DCMA is a common marketing agency consisting of

nine cooperative members; the DCMA noted that its members have long been the "predominant suppliers" of the Class I needs of distributing plants in the southeastern federal order markets.

DCMA's hearing request details problems with the fluid milk market in the southeastern region, specifically declining dairy farm numbers and falling milk production, coupled with rising population, "exacerbating the gap between supply and demand for fluid milk products."

Prairie Farms, a dairy cooperative with members located in all three southeastern orders and also the operator of nine pool distributing plants in the Appalachian and Southeast orders, submitted its own hearing proposals, and explained that, with the decreased milk production in the three southeastern orders, "there are longer routes and increased miles to deliver the milk from the remaining producers to fluid milk plants."

USDA itself discussed this Class I problem in its recommended decision and in its final decision. Here's just one sentence from the agency's final decision: "The record reveals a significant reduction in the number of Class I plants in each of the Southeastern orders and an increase in the distance milk travels to a Class I plant."

About six months after that hearing concluded, the national federal order hearing on milk pricing formulas got underway. That hearing focused on a total of 21 industry proposals, eight of which directly dealt with Class I issues, including the base Class I skim milk price and Class I differentials.

Needless to say, there was no shortage of hearing witnesses detailing ongoing problems with the Class I market, not just in the southeastern region but around the US.

One way to put this in some perspective is to note that, on Sept. 19, 2023, the 18th day of the hearing, testimony began on Proposal 13, from the National Milk Producers Federation, which would return to the "higher-of" Class I skim milk price mover.

While there was some additional testimony that week on earlier proposals, testimony in the weeks and months after that focused pretty much exclusively on Class I-related issues. And in particular, testimony beginning on Oct. 4 focused on proposals to amend Class I differentials, and it was during this testimony that considerable attention was paid to ongoing problems in the Class I market.

And some of this testimony came from the same dairy co-ops who advocated for Class I changes in the three southeastern orders earlier last year. For example, Jeff Sims, secretary and chief market analysis officer of Lone Star Milk Producers, a DCMA member, testified last October that, in Texas, the combination of manufacturing plants conveniently located near major milk production centers in eastern New Mexico and the Texas panhandle, coupled with the diminishing motivation to transport milk from these areas to Class I processing facilities, "has placed an enormous strain on milk supply for Class I."

So what's the bottom line with these ongoing Class I problems? Well, first of all, they aren't all going to be resolved with whatever USDA ends up deciding at the end of this national federal order proceeding.

And second, Class I problems are going to become less important in the overall federal order program, because Class I volumes continue to decline. That's not to diminish these problems, just to put it in some context of the overall program.

Store Brand Sales Set New Record; Milk, Cheese Among Top Categories

New York—Sales of store brands increased \$10.1 billion from 2022 to a record \$236.3 billion last year, according to the Private Label Manufacturers Association’s (PLMA) 2024 *Private Label Report*.

That represents a 4.7 percent increase in dollar sales in all outlets from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2023, versus the same period in 2022.

Compared to 2019, annual store brand dollar sales in 2023 increased by \$60.2 billion, a 34 percent gain, the PLMA reported. Store brand dollar share rose 1.2 points to a record 18.9 percent. Unit share improved 0.8 point to 20.7 percent, also a new high.

PLMA’s report analyzes store brand and national brand sales in unit and dollar sales in key categories. The report is based on sales figures from the PLMA/Circana Unify+ market data portal.

Among the 10 food and non-food departments that Circana tracks, all but tobacco (down 16 percent) experienced store brand dollar sales growth during 2023.

Among the department results in 2023, with comparisons to 2022: refrigerated, up 1.8 percent to \$48.3 billion; general food, up 10.0 percent to \$42.6 billion; frozen, up 4.4 percent to \$18.6 billion; and beverages, up 8.9 percent to \$12.9 billion.

Looking again at Circana’s 10 food and non-food departments, there were gains in store brand unit sales in four: general food (up 0.4 percent), as well as home care, beauty, and general merchandise. Marginal declines were recorded in refrigerated (down 0.3 percent), frozen (down 1.1 percent), and beverages (down 1.3 percent).

For store brand dollar sales, 2023 was a year of two very different halves, the PLMA noted. Much of the total annual increase was accrued in the first half of the year, as sales of all brands, both store brands and national brands, tailed off considerably in the closing months of 2023.

For the first six months of 2023, compared to the same period in 2022, store brand dollar sales increased by 8.1 percent, but over the last six months of last year, store brand dollar sales were up by only 1.4 percent.

As a result, there are signs that point to the end of the extreme sales volatility of the last three-plus years, and a return to the steady state the industry had become accustomed to, the PLMA explained. That is, modest, middle single digit increases year over year, a sweet spot where store brand sales have traditionally found themselves.

Fifteen of the top 20 edible store brand categories had dollar

sales growth in 2023, with salty snacks (25.3 percent), shortening/oil (13.7 percent) and fresh bread/rolls (12.5 percent) topping the list.

Refrigerated meat, fresh eggs, frozen seafood and refrigerated side dishes captured the top dollar share among the top 20 edible store brand categories.

Dairy milk is the number one edible store brand food in dollar sales, although dairy milk’s dollar sales, at \$8.6 billion, were down 5.5 percent from 2022. Store brands captured 56.2 percent of dairy milk sales in 2023.

Natural cheese is the number two edible store brand food in dollar sales, at \$8.5 billion in 2023,

up 2.9 percent from 2022. Store brands captured 48.6 percent of the natural cheese sales last year.

Store brand sales of butter/butter blends last year totaled \$2.0 billion, up 5.8 percent from 2022. Store brands captured 45.4 percent of the butter/butter blends sales last year.

Store brands are almost universally present in the US grocery space. During 2023, of the 179 food categories that Circana follows, there were store brand sales recorded in 175, or 98 percent.

“Overall, the industry is healthier than ever,” Peggy Davies, PLMA, states in the report. “One of every five food or non-food grocery products sold across the US carries the retailer’s name or own brand and was supplied by a store brand manufacturer.”

The future looks bright, with US consumers’ continuing affinity for store brands, particularly among the youngest cohort. In a 2024 PLMA study, more than half of the 907 Gen Z shoppers who participated said they “always/frequently” choose a place to shop due to its store brands; 67 percent are “extremely/very” aware of store brands; 64 percent buy store brands “always/frequently”; and 56 percent are “extremely likely/likely” to experiment with store brands to find “best value.”

Companies must ensure their offerings are “value-right,” providing strong perceived value for money and quality in categories where shoppers are targeting cut-backs, irrespective of their income.

For more information, visit www.plma.com.

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Dairy Processors' Advocacy Yields Results

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There are more than 12,000 registered lobbyists in Washington, DC, outnumbering members of Congress by approximately 22:1. In Wisconsin, more than 700 lobbyists roam the halls of our State Capitol in Madison. They have meaningful connections, valuable experience, and some have deep pockets, but I'd argue few can make an argument more compelling than you.

Every legislative success we have seen in this session came to be because dairy business leaders made time to advocate – and not out of self-interest, but in the interest of the industry's greater good.

Just a few weeks ago, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association (WCMA) held its annual Advocacy Day, with more than 60 dairy processors sending staff leaders to share their interests, from immigration reform to increased dairy hauling capacity. Their voices were heard – by Congressman Derrick Van Orden; members of the Evers administration cabinet, including high-ranking representatives

from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Transportation; and state lawmakers who've championed our industry's priorities – and a few who have not.

Events like this one, paired with personal meetings throughout the year, have helped WCMA members develop open lines of communication with elected officials, and earn positive results. That's especially clear, as we take stock of our "wins" as Wisconsin's 2023-24 legislative cycle draws to a close.

As a historic investment, Wisconsin lawmakers directed \$150 million to an agricultural roads improvement program, specifically targeting dollars for routes that are off-limits for heavier milk trucks during the spring thaw season, which taxes the infrastructure. Lawmakers in America's Dairyland have also just given the green light to a bill that will allow liquid dairy hauling at 98,000 pounds over six axles, a rare, special dispensation for our industry that offers labor relief, cost savings, and sustainability benefits. Special kudos go to Agropur, BelGioioso Cheese, Klondike Cheese, Milk Specialties Global, and Novonesis for their effective advocacy on transportation needs.

In 2023, cheese makers in Wisconsin also secured nearly \$8 million per year in support for the Dairy Innovation Hub, supporting industry research and development at the University of Wisconsin campuses in Madison, Platteville, and River Falls. Since its launch in 2019, the Hub has funded more than 200 impactful projects and 17 critical faculty positions.

WCMA member testimony helped to build an enhanced state dairy processor grant program, now offering \$1 million via the biennial budget for facility improvements, trainings, and consulting service. State lawmakers also agreed this cycle to extend \$1 million per year for agricultural export efforts, with half of all funds dedicated to dairy.

Late in the session, dozens of dairy processors picked up the phone, sent emails, or engaged in meetings, urging lawmakers to press pause on a dangerous proposal to legalize the retail sale of raw milk. I witnessed them illustrate their genuine concern for public health with story after story of illness outbreaks triggered by raw milk consumption. And, do you know what? The bill ended up with few co-sponsors, and no public hearing.

Every legislative success we have seen in this session came to be because dairy business leaders made time to advocate – and not out of self-interest, but in the interest of the industry's greater good. We need their work to continue, and to inspire others, because there is much to be done.

While Wisconsin lawmakers prepare to recess this month, negotiations continue in Washington

• See **Sweeney**, p. 6

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

50 YEARS AGO

March 1, 1974: Syracuse, NY—The Northeast Dairy Cooperative Federation has joined with the New York-New England Dairy Co-op in supporting a proposal that would result in at least a 30-cent per hundred-weight increase in producer milk blend prices in January.

San Francisco, CA—A counter-revolution under the banner of the "organic food myth" is leaving the public misinformed, said a panel of doctors and ag scientists here this week. Panelists said organic foods are no more nutritious than those grown by ordinary means, and cost between 62 and 99 percent more than conventional foods.

25 YEARS AGO

March 5, 1999: Springfield, IL—Following a record \$6.00 per hundredweight drop in the Basic Formula Price, Ag Secretary Dan Glickman announced a \$200 million Dairy Income Loss Assistance Program under which dairy farmers will receive payments up to \$5,000 each. Targeted to family-sized operations, the plan is based on the annual production of a 150-cow dairy herd.

Washington—The US dairy products trade "deficit" in 1998 was \$354.8 million, nearly three times the \$121.7 million trade "deficit" in 1997, USDA's Foreign Ag Service reported.

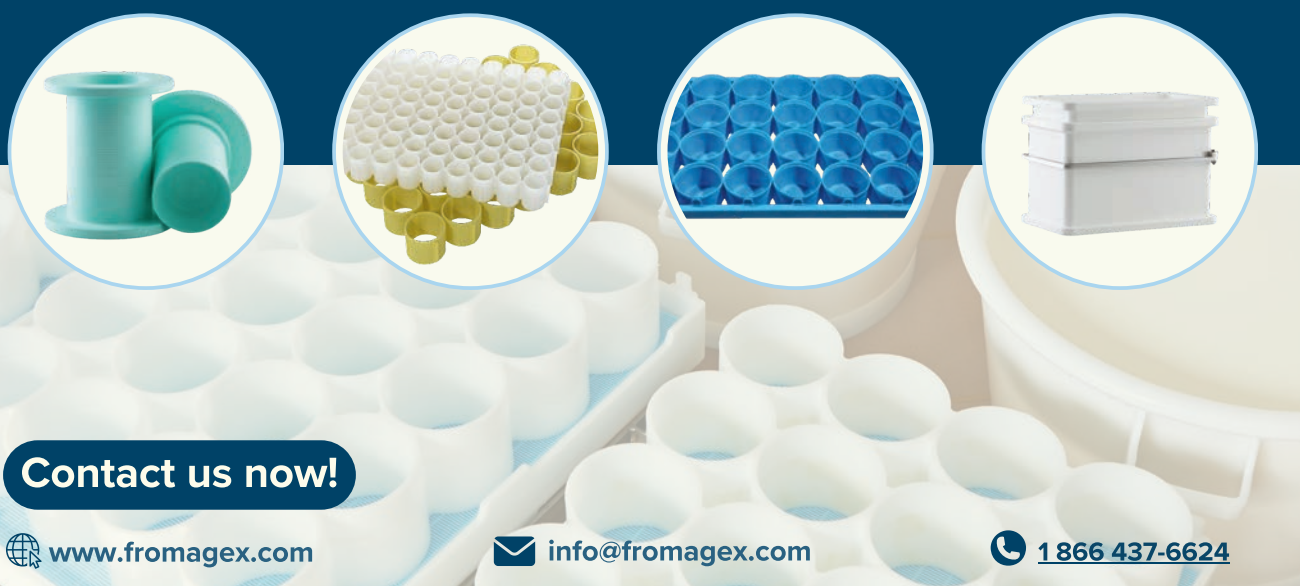
10 YEARS AGO

Feb. 28, 2013: Ithaca, NY—Is Greek yogurt a fad that will soon run its course or a new product category that will become an enduring part of the US food landscape? "All indications point to the latter," a new Cornell University study reported. Indeed, the bigger question is what the ongoing upside potential is for the Greek yogurt category.

Kenton, DE—Roos Foods here is recalling a variety of its Hispanic-style cheese products after a total of eight persons infected with an outbreak strain of *Listeria monocytogenes* were reported in Maryland and California. Seven of the eight ill persons were hospitalized, while one death was reported in California, according to CDC reports.

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Bill Introduced In Senate, House Would Crack Down On Price Gouging

Washington—Legislation recently introduced in both the House and Senate would crack down on what the legislation’s sponsors refer to as “price gouging.”

The Price Gouging Prevention Act of 2024 would:

Prohibit price gouging at the federal level. The legislation would clarify that price gouging is an unfair and deceptive practice under the FTC Act. It would allow the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and state attorneys general to stop sellers from charging a grossly excessive price, regardless of where the price gouging occurs in a supply chain or distribution network.

Create an affirmative defense for small businesses acting in good faith. Small and local businesses sometimes must raise prices in response to crisis-driven increases in their costs because they have little negotiating power with their price-gouging suppliers. This affirmative defense protects small businesses earning less than \$100 million from unjustified litigation if they show legitimate cost increases.

Target dominant companies that have exploited the pandemic to boost profits. The bill would create a rebuttable presumption of price gouging against firms that exercise unfair leverage and companies that brag about increasing prices during periods of inflation.

Require public companies to clearly disclose costs and pricing strategies. During periods of exceptional market shock, the bill requires public companies to transparently disclose and explain changes in their cost of goods sold, gross margins, and pricing strategies in their quarterly SEC filings.

Provide additional funding to the FTC. The bill appropriates \$1 billion in funding to the FTC to carry out its work.

The legislation was introduced in the House by US Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and in the Senate by US Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and has several co-sponsors on both chambers.

The legislation is endorsed by the American Economic Liberties Project, Consumer Federation of America, Groundwork Collaborative, Unrig Our Economy, Economic Security Project Action, Public Citizen, Farm Action Fund, and the National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients).

“As large grocery chains continue to rake in record profits, there are many families struggling to put food on the table. The cost of basic groceries has jumped by 25 over the past four years. Price gouging is harming consumers

and is fueling the elevated profit margins among greedy corporations,” Schakowsky said.

“We live in the richest country in the world at the richest moment in history. Yet, many Americans are unable to feel the full magnitude of our wealth,” Schakowsky continued. “Our bill empowers the FTC to hold these price gouging companies accountable when they take advantage of American consumers. People must always come before profits.”

This week, Warren joined US Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) in introducing the Shrinkflation Prevention Act to crack down on companies that they said deceive

consumers by selling smaller sizes of their products without lowering prices. The legislation has several co-sponsors, and is endorsed by Public Citizen, Consumer Federation of America, Groundwork Collaborative, and WorkMoney.

The would:

- Direct the FTC to promulgate regulations to establish shrinkflation as an unfair or deceptive act or practice and to prohibit manufacturers from engaging in shrinkflation. Under the bill, “shrinkflation” means the practice of downsizing, or reducing the amount or size of a consumer product, while not decreasing the price of such product by a commensurate amount.

- Authorize the FTC to pursue civil actions against companies engaging in shrinkflation.

- Authorize state attorneys general to bring civil actions against companies engaging in shrinkflation.

“Corporations are using deceptive practices like shrinkflation to increase profits on the backs of consumers,” said Lindsay Owens, executive director, Groundwork Collaborative. “Charging families the same price, or an even higher one, for smaller products should be illegal and the Shrinkflation Prevention Act is a first step to putting a stop to this deceptive practice once and for all.”

“When corporations reduce their product’s size while maintaining the same retail price, they are simply attempting to rip off their consumers,” said Lisa Gilbert, executive vice president, Public Citizen.



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Boise State To Lead Dairy NutriSols Consortium To Advance Processing

Alexandria, VA, and Boise, ID—The US National Science Foundation (NSF) is investing in new technologies that address the complex challenges in tackling food and nutrition insecurity from population growth, rising diet-related diseases and disparities and climate resilience.

This investment will particularly address the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and involve a new partnership with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the NSF noted.

A total of seven multidisciplinary teams from the NSF Convergence Accelerator's Track J: Food & Nutrition Security have been selected to advance from Phase 1 to Phase 2, each receiving up to \$5 million. NSF is funding six Phase 2 teams and the seventh team is funded by USDA.

Through this program, NSF aims to help transform food systems across the US to ensure access to healthy, safe and affordable food, as well as create sustainable agricultural food and forestry practices that consider the climate, regeneration and waste reduction.

Among the Phase 2 awardees is Dairy NutriSols, led by Boise State University. Dairy NutriSols is a research and innovation consortium committed to enhancing nutrition security and quality across the dairy supply chain.

The multi-disciplinary Dairy NutriSols consortium will leverage its convergence science and expertise to modernize dairy processing.

Led by Owen McDougal, Boise State chemistry professor and director of the Food and Dairy Innovation Center, Dairy NutriSols blends the unique expertise and capabilities of Boise State with the University of Idaho, Utah State University, University of Minnesota, Glanbia Nutritionals, Chobani, Daisy Brand, Food Physics, Agropur USA, Dairy West, and Ceres Dairy Risk Management.

Dairy NutriSols will utilize the power of artificial intelligence software and advanced manufacturing pulsed electric field and extruder technology to transform fluid milk into ingredients for nutrient-dense products to feed a hungry world.

The Dairy NutriSols consortium will seek to further increase the efficiency of traditional dairy processing methods by catalyzing the adoption of pioneering software and advanced manufacturing technologies to increase production capacity of high-quality nutritious ingredients and dairy products. In the process, Dairy NutriSols will:

- Catalyze technology and artificial intelligence adoption by industry partners who are the pioneers for change at a scale that will impact global food and nutrition security

- Advance dairy processing in areas such as: in-line monitoring of dairy proteins; implementing pulsed-electric fields to efficiently produce dairy protein powders; and developing extruder technology to provide the mechanisms to combine protein powder with recovered upcycled minerals

- Inspire the next generation of employees to pursue promising dairy industry careers back in their rural home communities

- Address the shortage of skilled workers in the dairy industry by creating an employee pipeline for more than 1,000 participants annually

- Reach K-12 children in rural communities through the implementation of microbiology and nutrition programs

- Engage minority and first-generation college and university students in industry-priority research projects

- Provide employee skill certification to enable upward mobility for existing food and dairy process workers

For more information about the program, visit new.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/convergenceaccelerator.

Sweeney

Continued from p. 4

DC on policy packages significant to American dairy operations, including federal funding for nutrition programs and the now long-overdue Farm Bill. With increasing dysfunction and decreasing productivity out of the nation's Capitol, advocacy is essential to securing support for the Dairy Business Innovation Initiative, the reauthorization and expansion of Healthy Fluid Milk Incentives Projects, for permanent adoption of the Dairy Forward Pricing Program, and more.

As we are doing at the state level, in the year ahead we must also work to build bridges with federal regulators. It is easy to complain amongst ourselves about agency officials' action or inaction, but far more productive to communicate directly. Dairy processors and American consumers need the Food and Drug Administration to enforce its standards defining dairy products as being made from the milk of dairy animals, and we must make FDA leaders hear our case, over and over, until that happens.

A lobbyist – or trade association – certainly plays a part in advocacy campaigns, but I would suggest it is a supporting role. We are here to help industry find common ground, organize outreach efforts, and, most importantly, amplify voices like yours. As you share your concerns and ideas with lawmakers, we will see more successes realized. **RS**

The views, thoughts and opinions expressed by Cheese Reporter columnists are theirs alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Cheese Reporter.



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Raw Farm Withdraws Voluntary Cheese Recall; FDA, CDC Keep Investigating

Fresno, CA—Raw Farm, LLC, this week withdrew the voluntary cheese recall it had announced on Feb. 16, 2024.

Raw Farm had agreed to initiate a recall of certain lots of Raw Farm-brand Raw Cheddar cheese in response to an investigation of a multistate outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 infections by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Raw Farm said it was “urgently pressured” into issuing a voluntary recall with no evidence of adulterated product connecting to any consumer illness.

“After an investigation and thorough review of hundreds of product samples and testing, no pathogens were found by FDA, multiple state health agencies or private laboratory testing,” Raw Farm stated. Therefore, Raw Farm publicly announced that the voluntary recall was unfounded and has been retracted.

All raw cheese product date codes are confirmed safe to consume, the company stated. “We now direct all stores, consignees, and consumers to freely consume our products with confidence.”

Two days after Raw Farm withdrew its voluntary cheese recall, FDA and the CDC stated that they are continuing to investigate a multistate outbreak of E. coli 0157:H7 in collaboration with state and local partners.

As this investigation is ongoing, FDA and CDC are continuing to recommend that people do not eat, sell, or serve Raw Farm-brand Raw Cheddar cheese made by Raw Farm, LLC. State and local public health officials have interviewed people about the foods they ate in the week before they became sick; seven out of nine reported eating Raw Farm-brand Raw Cheddar cheese, FDA said.

Health officials in Colorado, California, and Utah have collected various Raw Farm-brand products for testing, including raw milk, raw butter, raw Cheddar cheese, and raw kefir, FDA noted. So far, no product samples have detected E. coli.

While E. coli has not been found in product samples, epidemiologic evidence shows that Raw Farm-brand Raw Cheddar cheese made by Raw Farm, LLC, “is the likely source of this outbreak,” FDA stated. Additional testing is ongoing.

WTO Conference

(Continued from p. 1)

National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), US Dairy Export Council (USDEC), and a number of other dairy and agricultural organizations, to undertake a “proactive agriculture negotiating agenda” at the WTO that is focused on modernizing global agriculture trade policies.

The organizations had made their request in letters last November to US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai.

“In particular, we suggest that ongoing conversations around domestic support are balanced by commensurate market access discussions, and we urge the US government to work to restore a binding dispute settlement system at the WTO,” Rasdall said. In the event these reforms don’t reach consensus among the WTO’s 164 members, “we encourage the US government to pursue plurilateral negotiations to advance these and other critical reform priorities.”

USDEC and NMPF are backing efforts by US negotiators to advance an agriculture work plan and oppose trade-distorting proposals at the WTO conference.

As with prior ministerials, there is the concern that a small group of countries will attempt to extract concessions on one issue by withholding support on other broadly supported provisions, USDEC and NMPF noted.

While it is evident that most countries do not want the WTO to take a step backward, a select few members are leveraging unrelated issues to advance proposals that would expand agricultural trade distorting measures like public

stockholding. USDEC and NMPF said they strongly support the US government’s leadership in standing firm against any attempts to weaken trade disciplines.

“We should not allow one country to dictate the outcome of the negotiations in agriculture for concessions on other unrelated issues,” said Gregg Doud, NMPF’s president and CEO. “We are privileged to have strong negotiators in Abu Dhabi who are defending against attempts to introduce additional trade-distorting elements in the WTO.

“NMPF supports a holistic work plan on agriculture that includes an equal commitment to increasing market access and limiting domestic support,” Doud added.

“The WTO is an important organization that has served its members well. We need to protect its important function in governing a rules-based trading system while also pursuing needed reforms, particularly to improve the dispute settlement mechanism,” said Krysta Harden, USDA’s president and CEO.

“USDEC commends the US negotiating team for their strong stance to defend US interests and we encourage them to stand firm against any tradeoffs between agriculture and other sectors,” Harden continued. “We are also encouraged that WTO negotiations are highlighting the important role that trade has in addressing sustainability concerns, particularly given the US dairy industry’s leadership in growing sustainable production and feeding the world.”

As the WTO conference got underway, the Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand (DCANZ) called for an immediate capping of agricultural subsidies and urgency in reducing them to

prevent and correct production and trade distortion.

DCANZ said its call is informed by recent global dairy market distortions modelling that show farm subsidies are having a significant negative effect on dairy markets.

“The overall message is that farm subsidies are materially distorting agricultural trade and they are a beggar-thy-neighbor approach to policy,” said DCANZ executive director Kimberly Crewther.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, annual support by its members alone to their agriculture sectors is estimated at \$817 billion annually. Concerningly, DCANZ said, the trend for agricultural subsidies is upward.

The modelling work indicates that a 50 percent reduction of European Union (EU) farm subsidies would increase factory gate cheese prices for non-EU producers by 2.4 percent and international trade values for non-EU exporters by 8 percent, DCANZ stated. Producer prices within the EU would also increase by 3.9 percent and EU exports by 3 percent.

Crewther said the can has been kicked down the road for too long on addressing the trade-distorting impacts of agricultural subsidies.

DCANZ is concerned that WTO ministers not tackling the issue of subsidy distortion of markets would amount to them deciding not to progress the action within their ambit to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. Implementing target 2b refers to correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets.

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Byrne Dairy Marks 90 Years With New 'Essential' Processor At DeWitt Plant

DeWitt, NY—New York state's Byrne Dairy recently marked 90 years of operation and concurrent, steady growth with the purchase and installation of a new UHT processing system for its manufacturing facility here.

Launched in 1933, Byrne started out selling milk in glass bottles via horse-drawn wagons to area residents. Today, the fourth-generation, family-owned company is a producer and distributor of milk, cream and ice cream.

Byrne Dairy currently has three manufacturing facilities in central New York state, including an extended shelf-life (ESL) and ultra-high temperature (UHT) pasteurization plant in DeWitt, a manufacturing facility in Cortlandville, and an ice cream center in Syracuse.

Byrne also has warehouse facilities in Syracuse and East Syracuse, and the company's corporate headquarters is located in LaFayette.

Byrne's DeWitt plant was one of 35 recipients of a Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) Existing Dairy Processor Expansion Grant.

Late last year, NE-DBIC awarded a total of \$12,287,001 to dairy processors in eight Northeastern states. Grant funds support regional dairy processors in purchasing specialized equipment to maximize capacity and increase the use of regionally-sourced milk.

"We were awarded \$1 million to assist in the purchase and installation of a new UHT processing system that will result in a 20 percent increase in the amount of milk

processed at the DeWitt plant," said Byrne Dairy general counsel James Gosier.

"We had to provide information about the equipment we wanted – including a price quote – and how the purchase would impact farmers in the Northeast," Gosier said. "It was a really good end-to-end exercise that examined the region's milk supply and our sales strategy."

The team at NE-DBIC was wonderful to work with, he continued. They were always willing to answer questions, and were very responsive.

Processor: Small, But Essential

With its award of \$1 million, Byrne DeWitt will install an Ultra-High Temperature (UHT) processing system dedicated to current and future extended shelf-life (ESL) and aseptic production of milk and cream.

"The processor is just one piece of the system, but it's essential," Gosier said. "A plant's processing capabilities dictate further upgrades: silos, fillers, enhanced batching systems. The processor is the heart of the system."

Byrne anticipates it will begin commercial production at its DeWitt facility about one year from now.

"We've actually moved up the timeline a little bit," Gosier said. "We expect delivery of the machine later this year, and we'll be in production in February of next year."

"Byrne will continue to expand, and new processing facilities will be coming online across Upstate



Byrne Dairy received a \$1 million Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center grant to purchase and install a new UHT processing system at the company's DeWitt facility, resulting in a 20 percent increase in the amount of milk processed.

New York in the next couple of years," he said.

"This will give farmers opportunities to expand their herds, and increase production as well," Gosier continued.

"We're grateful to NE-DBIC for recognizing the importance of this processing expansion," added Byrne Dairy president Carl Byrne.

"Increasing our processing capacity is good news for farmers in the Northeast who supply the milk," he said.

"Milk and cream products made from milk supplied by Northeast producers will be sold to consumers throughout the eastern United States and beyond," Byrne continued.

Byrne Irish Mint Milk Returns

The New York state tradition of Byrne Dairy's Irish Mint Milk has returned for a limited time. Since 1976, Byrne has sold Irish Mint Milk in celebration of St. Patrick's Day.

The seasonal hit was first available in half-pint containers for area schoolchildren, and now is sold exclusively in half-gallon

glass bottles at all Byrne Dairy & Deli stores. The company sells about 14,000 gallons of its Irish Mint Milk during St. Patrick's Day season, from late February through March 17,

"We were awarded \$1 million to assist in the purchase and installation of a new UHT processing system that will result in a 20 percent increase in the amount of milk processed at the DeWitt plant."

— James Gosier,
Byrne Dairy

Byrne Mint Milk is so popular, several social media sites feature chats on where the milk is available in real time, when stock may be replenished and which city lays claim to it as their "thing" – Syracuse, Rochester and Albany residents currently sparring online.

For more information, visit www.byrnedairy.com.

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Probst Group Moves To New Office In Hartland, WI

Hartland, WI—The Probst Group, which offers wastewater treatment solutions for the dairy, food and beverage industries, recently completed its relocation to a new office in Hartland, WI.

"For years, we've made do with spaces that never quite fit. But we dreamed of something better, a place that could truly support our growth and nurture our talent," said Henry Probst, president and CEO of The Probst Group. "And now, that dream is a reality. This space isn't just an office; it's an extension of who we are. Every corner is designed to foster collaboration, creativity, focused work, and community."

The Probst Group's new location is 1120A James Drive, Hartland, WI 53029. For more details visit www.probstgroup.com.

USDA Buys 500-Pound Barrels, UHT, Evaporated Milk

Washington—The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Wednesday announced the awarding of contracts to two companies for a total of 1,346,400 pounds of natural American cheese in 500-pound barrels for delivery in April.

The total price of the barrel purchases is \$2,680,119.36. The barrels are being purchased in support of child nutrition and other domestic food distribution programs.

Contracts were awarded as follows:

Associated Milk Producers, Inc.: 979,200 pounds, for a total price of \$1,942,047.36.

Dairyland Trading Co., LLC: 367,200 pounds, for a total price of \$738,072.00.

Meanwhile, USDA recently announced the purchase of 12,726,727.2 pounds of UHT milk and 111,537 pounds of evaporated skim milk for delivery from April 1 through June 30, 2024.

The UHT milk and evaporated milk are being purchased in support of child nutrition and other domestic food distribution programs.

The total price of the purchases is \$5,566,003.87. The purchase includes 12,345,300 pounds of 1 percent milkfat UHT 1500 box 12/32 fluid ounce; 381,427.2 pounds of 1 percent milkfat UHT 2640 box 27/8 fluid ounce; and 111,537 pounds of skim evaporated milk, 24/12-fluid ounce cans.

Contracts were awarded as follows:

Diversified Foods Inc.: 1,350,599.04 pounds of UHT milk, at a total price of \$708,511.53.

Gossner Foods, Inc.: 8,047,928.16 pounds of UHT milk, at a total price of \$3,385,791.59.

Naturally Brand Inc.: 3,328,200 pounds of UHT milk, at a total price of \$1,359,885.03.

O-AT-KA Milk Products Cooperative: 111,537 pounds of skim evaporated milk, at a total price of \$11,815.85.

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

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

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

Yogurt & Diabetes

(Continued from p. 1)

furnish information for evaluation of the proposed claim provided direct or suggestive evidence that yogurt consumption is inversely associated with risk of type 2 diabetes in subjects who were free of this disease at baseline.

All five meta-analyses and systematic review papers published reported such an inverse association based on the pooled observational data, Danone stated.

This scientific evidence provides "compelling justification" for the proposed claim which has the potential to help consumers reduce their risk of type 2 diabetes through "a simple, realistic and achievable dietary modification," Danone added.

The incidence of type 2 diabetes has reached "epidemic proportions in the US, "and we respectfully ask FDA to exercise its enforcement discretion so that this practical, actionable information can be provided to US consumers through the highly effective means of a QHC," Danone said.

Based on its consideration of the scientific evidence and other information submitted with Danone's petition, and other pertinent scientific evidence and information, FDA said it "concludes that the current scientific evidence is appropriate for consideration of qualified health claims for consumption of yogurt and reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, provided that the qualified health claims are appropriately worded to avoid misleading consumers."

Danone's petition proposed the following claims to be used on the labels or in the labeling of conventional foods, FDA noted:

• "Eating yogurt regularly may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. FDA has concluded there is limited information supporting this claim."

• "Eating yogurt regularly may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes according to limited scientific evidence."

Qualifying language will inform consumers about the level of science supporting the claim and prevent them from being misled about the strength of the supporting evidence, FDA explained in its letter to Danone.

Also, FDA said it considers two cups (three servings) per week to be the minimum amount necessary to achieve the claimed effect of yogurt on the reduced risk of type 2 diabetes. This is based on data from two US prospective cohorts that reported that consumption of two servings per week of yogurt had a statistically significant association with reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes.

In these cohorts, one cup was equivalent to one serving. However, the RACC (reference amount customarily consumed) for yogurt is two-thirds cup, and thus, two cups is equivalent to three servings, FDA stated.

While Danone proposed including a recommended intake level as an optional phrase in the qualified health claims, "limiting our consideration of enforcement discretion to claims that recommend consumption of yogurt in amounts that have been observed to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes in some well-conducted scientific studies will ensure that consumers do not consume so little of the substance that it would be very unlikely to provide any health benefit," FDA stated in its letter to Danone.

Therefore, the claims for which FDA intends to consider enforcement discretion must include the phrase "at least 2 cups (3 servings) per week" after the word "regularly."

Thus, FDA told Danone that it intends to consider exercising its enforcement discretion for the following qualified health claims:

• "Eating yogurt regularly, at least 2 cups (3 servings) per week, may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. FDA has concluded that there is limited information supporting this claim."

• "Eating yogurt regularly, at least 2 cups (3 servings) per week, may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes according to limited scientific evidence."

FDA noted that scientific information is subject to change, as are consumer consumption patterns. In the event that new information is submitted to the agency, FDA said it intends to evaluate the new information that becomes available to determine whether it necessitates a change in its decision regarding Danone's qualified health claim.

For example, scientific evidence may become available that will support significant scientific agreement, that will no longer support the use of Danone's qualified health claims, or that may raise safety concerns about the substances that are the subject of the claims, FDA stated.

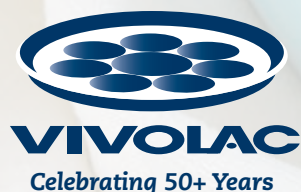
FDA had filed Danone's petition for comprehensive review in April of 2019, and posted it on the regulations.gov website with a 60-day comment period, consistent with the agency's guidance for procedures on qualified health claims.

FDA received seven comments regarding the petition.



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FTC Sues To Block

(Continued from p. 1)

work of assets cobbled together by Kroger's antitrust lawyers, not a standalone business likely to succeed."

C&S will face "multiple significant obstacles" stitching together a viable business, let alone a successful competitor, from the assortment of divested stores, and any operational shortcoming would imperil competition in many local markets, according to the lawsuit.

"Contrary to the FTC's statements, blocking Kroger's merger with Albertsons Companies will actually harm the very people the FTC purports to serve: America's consumers and workers," The Kroger Co. said in a statement issued in response to the FTC's lawsuit.

"Kroger's business model is to take costs out of the business and invest in lowering prices for customers," Kroger's statement continued. "This business model is immediately applied to merger companies. Kroger has a proven track record of lowering prices so more customers benefit from fresh, affordable food, and our proposed merger with Albertsons will mean even lower prices and more choices for America's consumers."

"The FTC's decision makes it more likely that America's consumers will see higher food prices and fewer grocery stores at a time when communities across the country are already facing high inflation and food deserts," Kroger's statement added.

"Every day, America's local independent supermarkets face economic challenges due to the influence of massive power buyer chains who use their leverage over

suppliers at the expense of smaller rivals in the marketplace," said Greg Ferrara, president and CEO of the National Grocers Association (NGA).

"NGA appreciates the FTC's commitment to a competitive grocery industry, and we look forward to the FTC taking further action to level the playing field, including enforcing antitrust laws like the Robinson-Patman Act that prohibit economic discrimination against independent grocers and their customers," said Chris Jones, NGA's chief government relations officer and counsel.

"A merger of Kroger and Albertsons would dramatically decrease competition within an already consolidated food retail market, which would result in fewer grocery stores and higher food prices, with predictable adverse consequences for food and nutrition security for consumers across the country," stated Dr. Peter G. Lurie, president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI).

"It is therefore good news for both consumers and the industry that the Federal Trade Commission will seek to block the merger in federal court," Lurie said.

Further, the proposed merger "could worsen existing anticompetitive retailer marketing practices to the detriment of smaller suppliers and consumers," Lurie continued. "Retailers and leading manufacturers already enter into cozy contractual relationships that place preferred brands of soda and other low-quality food items in multiple, desirable locations in the store, like check-out aisles, end caps, and floor displays. So-called category captains, appointed by retailers for a price, literally let one manufacturer decide where its competitors' products are shelved.

"These anti-competitive practices are also migrating online with prime placement on grocery store shelves replaced with premium placements in search results, pop-up ads, and email promotions," Lurie said. "The proposed merger would only exacerbate the anti-competitive nature of those practices as the combined company's buying power grows larger, leading to less bargaining power for smaller food companies and farmers and fewer choices for consumers."

The Center for Science in the Public Interest hopes the FTC and state attorneys general prevail in court, "and we look forward to the agency completing its work investigating current anti-competitive practices in the supermarket," Lurie added.

"We are thrilled to see the Federal Trade Commission stand up to dangerous grocery consolidation that would have harmed workers, farmers, and shoppers," said Claire Kelloway, food program manager for the Open Markets Institute. "For too long, the US government turned a blind eye to the dangers of super-powerful retailers. Today, antitrust enforcers made it clear that grocers cannot merge their way to dominance."

"The proposed mega-merger between Kroger and Albertsons would have been a disaster for American communities. We applaud the Federal Trade Commission for blocking it," said Stacy Mitchell, co-executive director at the Institute for Local Self-reliance.

"Concentration in grocery retail has already caused food prices to skyrocket. We know from past grocery mergers that this one would have sent prices for consumers even higher," Mitchell continued.

Danone North America To Again Fund Grad Students Researching Gut Microbiome, Yogurt

White Plains, NY, and Broomfield, CO—Danone North America recently announced that, for the 12th straight year, it will award two graduate students \$25,000 each for conducting research to further study the role of the gut microbiome, yogurt and probiotics for human health.

Scientists in the field have found that the microbial community, or microbiome, of the gut affects not only gastrointestinal health, but has links to the brain, immune system and even our circadian clocks, Danone North America explained. The health of the gut microbiome has also been associated with certain chronic disease risk, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

"Research plays a critical role in advancing our knowledge of the human gut microbiome," said Miguel Freitas, PhD, vice president of scientific affairs at Danone North America.

"Danone North America is a top food company in the US with a vast offering of essential dairy and plant-based foods," Freitas continued. "Over the past 12 years we have been pleased to award grants to further human health research to help us learn more about how the foods we eat impact our gut microbiome and our health."

The science behind understanding what a "healthy" human microbiome looks like, how it is controlled or how it can be changed is an evolving area of research, the company noted.

Recipients of the Danone North America Fellowship Grant support these efforts by exploring how the gut microbiome, yogurt and probiotics help sustain human health and wellness through growth, development, and longevity.

"Danone North America strives to bring health through food to the public," Freitas commented. "The research grants are a way to advance science and make meaningful progress in using food to nourish lives and sustain a healthier world for all."

The program is currently accepting applications until Mar. 1, 2024. To qualify, individuals must be incoming or current graduate students who have demonstrated an interest in exploring the gut microbiome, probiotics and yogurt to better understand how they help support and maintain human health and wellness.

For more information, visit www.danonenorthamerica.com.

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Dairy, Other White House Nutrition, Hunger Commitments Announced

Washington—The Biden administration announced 141 new commitments from stakeholders who have stepped up as part of the White House Challenge to End Hunger and Build Healthy Communities.

The Challenge was a nationwide call-to-action to stakeholders across all of society to make commitments to advance President Biden’s goal to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases by 2030, all while reducing health disparities.

The \$1.7 billion in new commitments announced Tuesday build on the \$8 billion in commitments announced at the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022, and complements the administration’s work to implement the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.

Among the commitments recognized at the White House: the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) will expand the Healthy School Milk Commitment, a pledge by 37 dairy companies to reduce added sugars and calories in nonfat and 1 percent flavored milk provided to schools and residential childcare institutions participating in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program by the 2025-26 school year, to include the USDA Summer Food Service Program beginning in 2026.

Just a handful of organizations and companies were invited to the White House to be recognized for their leadership on hunger, nutrition, and health. Michael Dykes, IDFA’s president and CEO, was joined by IDFA members HP Hood and Agri-Mark.

HP Hood team members Megan Delano, senior manager of regulatory affairs, and Linda Cote, senior manager of R&D, provided samples of the company’s newly reformulated nonfat chocolate to White House and administration officials.

Hood’s school milk products are sourced in part from Agri-Mark dairy farms, IDFA noted. Agri-Mark dairy cooperative board chair James “Cricket” Jacquier also joined the event.

“The Healthy School Milk Commitment ensures all children, especially our most vulnerable, have access to nutritious milk options throughout the year with less added sugar and fewer calories,” Dykes said. “School milk is the leading source of calcium, vitamin D, and potassium for American children. As the Biden-Harris administration recognized today, IDFA and our nation’s school milk processors have stepped up

in a big way to provide wholesome and healthy milk options with 13 essential nutrients to children all year around.”

“Hood’s longstanding partnership with local farm families allows us to bring nutritious milk products that taste great to schools across the Northeast with the highest degree of freshness and safety,” said Lynne Bohan, group vice president, communications and government affairs for HP Hood.

“The new chocolate milk we debuted today for schools exemplifies Hood’s ongoing commitment to quality, innovation, and nutrition,” Bohan continued.

“We’re grateful to participate in today’s event at the White House as part of the Healthy School Milk Commitment, and we look forward to continue bringing Hood’s highly nutritious dairy products to people of all ages for many years to come.”

“This new product checks the box of exceeding nutritional standards and is kid-approved,” Jacquier added. “Students have always reached for flavored milk, and now they’ll have even more nutritious choices thanks to the Healthy School Milk Commitment.”


Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) also applauded the administration for endorsing the Healthy School Milk Commitment.




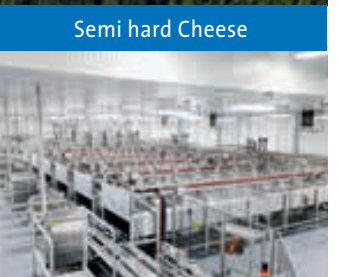
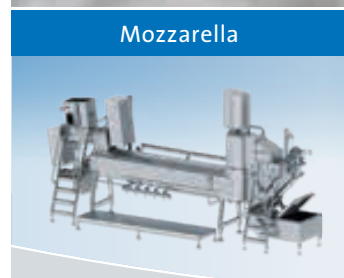



“We strongly support the Healthy School Milk Commitment and appreciate today’s


action by the White House,” said Dennis Rodenbaugh, DFA’s president and chief executive officer. “The Healthy School Milk Commitment is an important step in helping ensure our children continue to have choice and access to nutrient-rich milk on school breakfast and lunch trays.”

National Dairy Council has committed to supporting the next generation of health professionals and nutrition scientists through the establishment of an endowed Early Career Investigator Research Award development of a scientist professional mentorship program, nutrition education reaching at least 40,000 professionals, and expansion of paid internship and mentoring programs for dietetic students, interns, and new registered dietitians.

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Jamie Fahrney, Others Added To CDR Staff, Juan Romero Set To Retire

Madison—The Center for Dairy Research (CDR) has welcomed five new members to its employee roster, including one Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker.

Jamie Fahrney, a Master Cheesemaker with certifications in Limburger, Swiss, Baby Swiss and Brick, joins CDR with more than 45 years of cheesemaking experience.

Early on, Fahrney was hired by famed Wisconsin cheese maker Albert Deppeler. Fahrney was also mentored by Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker Myron Olson at Chalet Cheese Cooperative in Monroe.

As a research cheese maker, Fahrney will assist with all aspects of cheesemaking, especially cheese trials and troubleshooting.

Cheese maker Zachary Delfosse joins CDR with seven years of experience, specializing in Gouda and Cheddar. Delfosse will assist in trials and troubleshooting.

Katie Hilty has been hired as assistant coordinator, cheese industry and applications. Hilty has professional experience in corporate quality assurance at Emmi Roth and has worked with an array of dairy foods, including cottage cheese, smoked cheeses and ice cream.

Hilty will help companies manufacture the best products possible, and develop new products.

Rounding out the new hires are Ingrid Havlik and Brook McMahon, both serving as research specialists. With a strong interest in research and public service, Havlik previously worked as a quality assurance lab tech and associate analytical chemist. McMahon joins CDR with two years of dairy science experience, specializing in bovine genetics technology.

Also at the CDR, long-time research staff member Juan Romero, who joined CDR in 1997, has announced his retirement, with today being his last day in the office. During his CDR career, Romero served as coordinator of CDR's analytical services from 1998 to 2011, a researcher in CDR's Cheese Research Group from 2011 to 2017, and assistant coordinator of CDR's Cheese Industry and Applications Group from 2017 to 2024.

In 2014, Romero earned the International Dairy Federation's (IDF) Prize of Excellence for outstanding contributions to IDF's program of work. Romero's last at CDR is March 1, but he will be available for consultation on a limited basis, post-retirement.

PERSONNEL

DARYL SPORS has been tapped as the new vice president of product development at **Organic Valley**. Spors is a certified food science professional with experience in the dairy and baking sectors, specializing in frozen dairy desserts, cheese, yogurt, and dairy ingredients. Spors has been with Organic Valley for five years, most recently holding the leadership positions of senior director, product development strategy and innovation.

RICKY DICKSON has announced his retirement as president from **Blue Bell Creameries** after 43 years. JIMMY LAWHORN will replace Dickson as president. Lawhorn previously held the position of vice president of sales and marketing at Blue Bell.

AMANDA BOYCE has been promoted to senior director of human resources for **Prairie Farms**. Boyce comes to her new position from Prairie Farms' sister dairy company, Hiland Dairy Foods. Boyce spent her previous seven years transforming HR and payroll functions at Hiland Dairy. She will continue those responsibilities for Hiland while also leading transformation projects at Prairie Farms.

BRUCE FEIST has been named chief information officer at **Compeer Financial**, succeeding JERRY WIESE, who will retire from his role as CIO in April. Feist comes to his new post with 15 years of experience at Cargill, having served in division chief information officer roles and other leadership positions. He joins Compeer with global

experience technology, data and information, particularly in the agriculture sector.

CATHERINE TRUJILLO has joined **FoodLuma** as the company's new chief growth officer. Trujillo has over 20 years of food industry experience, with previous leadership roles at Whole Foods Market, Tony's Fine Foods, and La Boulangerie San Francisco Bakery & Cafe. Most recently, Trujillo served as vice president of marketing and sales at Rubicon Bakers, LLC.

The **American Dairy Products Institute (ADPI)** this week announced the appointment of eight new members to its board of directors: MATT MASON, Agri-Mark, Inc.; DALE MILLS, JR., Dairy Farmers of America; MARK SILVAS, Far West Distributors, Inc.; JAMES McVITTY, Fonterra Cooperative Group-Atlantic; JEFF CAMPBELL, FoodTec Canada, Inc.; SETH HANCOCK, Interra International, LLC; JEFF VANDEL, James Farrell & Co.; and GRANT PHILLIPS, Vitalus Nutrition, Inc.

JAY BRYANT, CEO of Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association (MDVA), was recently awarded the **National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) Robert B. Engel Farmer Co-op Manager of the Year Award**. The award recognizes individuals that oversee and manage their organizations effectively, and work to advocate for the cooperative model. Bryant also serves on the boards of the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), MilkPEP and the Innovation Center for US Dairy.

USDA News

A New Product that is officially accepted for use in Dairy Plants inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Dairy Plant Survey Program. *USDA Project Number 13377*

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USPTO Awards Patents For Several Cheese-, Dairy-Related Inventions

Washington—The US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has in recent weeks awarded patents for several cheese- and dairy-related inventions.

Chr. Hansen A/S Patent

This week, the USPTO awarded a patent for an invention relating to a process for making low-moisture Mozzarella cheese using recent developments in the technical knowledge about the interactions between cultures, coagulants and cheese technology to increase cheese yields and maintain the cheese quality and functionalities.

Inventors are Sebastien Roustel, Veronique Jactat, Ulf Mortensen, Viviana Ester Bruno, and Michael Mitsuo Saito. The patent was awarded to Chr. Hansen A/S.

The invention is based on an optimization of the cultures (type and dosage), of the coagulant (type and dosage), and the technology in order to modify the acidification and drainage kinetics pathway without changing the composition of the curd at the point of stretching, the patent description explained. This optimization leads to a higher pH and higher dry matter of the curd at the whey off step i.e. pH higher than 6.3 and ideally higher than 6.4 and solid nonfat content higher than 18 percent, without any modification of the curd composition at the stretching step.

This optimization also leads to a reduction in the processing time in the cheese vat (near 15 percent), so a real increase in the throughput and profitability of the cheese vats, the description noted.

Allied Blending LP Patent

Last week, the USPTO awarded a patent for a method for producing a package of cheese shreds.

The inventor is Andrea Stange. The patent was awarded to Allied Blending LP.

As described in the patent summary, the oxygen scavenging system of a reducing sugar, such as dextrose, and glucose oxidase has been used in the cheese industry to remove residual oxygen after gas flush, but it was not capable of replacing the gas flush step.

To the contrary, when an anticaking agent comprising oxygen scavenging system disclosed in the patent removes the oxygen in well-sealed packaged cheese, the gas flush step is entirely unnecessary, the patent summary detailed.

The invention provides a method for producing a package of cheese shreds. Cheese shreds and anticaking agent are mixed at a load between 2 wt. % and 10 wt. % in relation to the cheese shreds

to form anticake-coated cheese shreds.

The anticaking agent comprises 15-30 wt. % reducing sugar, 0.2-0.8 wt % glucose oxidase, and 0.5-2 wt % salt chosen from sodium chloride, calcium chloride, and magnesium chloride.

The anticake-coated cheese shreds are then sealed into a package without modifying the atmosphere in the package or using an inert gas flush.

FrieslandCampina Patent

FrieslandCampina Nederland B.V. recently received a patent for a shaped cheese product. Inventors are Herman Frank Burghout and Hein Van Den Borne.

The inventors found that with a method according to the invention a shaped cheese product is obtained with good organoleptic properties, such as a good taste, bite or mouthfeel and good microbial stability during cooled storage.

The invention, accordingly, relates to a method for making a cheese product, wherein ripened packed cheese is subjected to an antimicrobial treatment, the thus treated cheese is unpacked and extruded to form a shaped cheese product or shredded to form a shredded cheese product.

More specifically, the invention relates to a method for making a cheese product, comprising: subjecting ripened packed cheese, preferably a foil-ripened cheese, to an anti-microbial treatment; thereafter removing the packing material from the treated cheese; and thereafter extruding the treated cheese to form a shaped

cheese product or shredding the treated cheese to form a shredded cheese product.

Other Patents Awarded

The USPTO awarded a patent for dairy-like analog compositions and the methods of making the same using one or more recombinant proteins. The inventor is Inja Radman. The patent was assigned to New Culture Inc.

In some aspects, described in the patent is a cheese analog comprising a recombinant single variant of an alpha casein protein. In some embodiments, the recombinant single variant provides at least one dairy-like property selected from the group consisting of adhesiveness, stretch, texture, mouthfeel, melt, hardness, creaminess, and flexibility.

In some embodiments, the cheese analog is a vegan cheese analog. In some embodiments, the cheese analog further comprises one or more of: a plant-derived oil; a plant-derived starch; a sugar; and a salt.

A patent was awarded this week for food products comprising milk proteins and non-animal proteins, and methods of manufacturing the same.

Inventors are Timothy Geistlinger, Ravirajsinh Jhala, Kathryn Patricia Krueger, and Balakrishnan Ramesh.

The patent applicant was Perfect Day, Inc.

Provided in the patent are food products that comprise one or more native and/or recombinant milk proteins and one or more native and/or recombinant non-animal proteins and/or hydrolyzed non-animal proteins and that has desirable attributes. In some embodiments, the food products are dairy products.

US Foods To Open Five New CHEF'STORE® Locations In 2024

Rosemont, IL—US Foods Holding Corp., a leading foodservice distributor, recently announced its plan to open five new CHEF'STORE® locations in 2024.

The new stores, which are expected to open in the second half of 2024, will be in Beaverton, OR; Hampton and Virginia Beach, VA; Hickory, NC; and Sandy Springs, GA.

CHEF'STORE offers a one-stop shop for restaurant operators, food industry professionals, community groups and at-home chefs to stock up or replenish ingredients and supplies by the case and in individual quantities, US Foods explained. The new warehouse format stores will offer a wide assortment of products, including cheese and other dairy products, deli products, meat, beverages and fresh produce.

CHEF'STORE is open to the public seven days a week and no membership is required.

"We are thrilled to enhance our store footprint into new areas of the country where we can serve existing and new customers with exceptional value and service, and a vast selection of competitively priced restaurant-quality products and supplies," said Irfan Badibanga, president of CHEF'STORE.

Including the five new locations, US Foods will have a network of more than 95 CHEF'STORE locations across 14 states by the end of 2024, the company said.

For more information, visit www.chefstore.com.



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Perfect Day, Breyers Partner On 'Animal-Free Frozen Dairy Dessert'

Berkeley, CA—Perfect Day, a leading precision fermentation innovator and supplier, has partnered with Unilever's Bruyars to launch Breyers Lactose-Free Chocolate made with Perfect Day's dairy protein.

The product is described as an "animal-free frozen dairy dessert" on the principal display panel.

"We are thrilled to have developed this new product with Unilever, a hallmark example of how our second decade is focused on driving growth through collaboration with leading companies that share our mission of a kinder, greener tomorrow," said TM Narayan, Perfect Day's chief executive officer.

"We're inspired to see that more companies are turning to precision fermentation as a no compromise option to continue to maintain their leadership position as consumer demands evolve for the future of our planet," Narayan added.

"The launch of Breyers Lactose-Free Chocolate with animal-free dairy is an exciting and innovative addition to Breyers' growing better-for-you portfolio," says Lisa Vortsman, chief marketing officer for Unilever Ice Cream North America.

"As we've seen demand for alternative ice creams continue to grow, it is important to us to provide Breyers fans with frozen treats that meet their dietary needs and preferences, without compromising on the creamy taste and flavor that Breyers has offered for more than 150 years," Vortsman continued.

This frozen product joins Perfect Day's growing portfolio of partner brands using its whey protein ingredient as well as the companies who have turned to its enterprise biology business, nth Bio, to extend the impact of precision fermentation.

Perfect Day's flagship product, what the company describes as the world's first precision-fermented protein, debuted in 2020 and today can be found in animal-free frozen desserts, cream cheese, baked goods, and sports nutrition products.

Perfect Day said its protein is the same as the whey protein in milk, with all the flavor, texture, and functionality benefits and a lower environmental impact. The company utilizes microflora to create proprietary animal-free milk protein.

For more information about Perfect Day, visit www.perfectday.com.

Organizations Finalize A Refined Definition Of 'Precision Fermentation'

Washington and Brussels—The Precision Fermentation Alliance (PFA) and Food Fermentation Europe (FFE) this week announced what they are describing as a refined definition of "precision fermentation."

This collaborative effort aims to provide clarity on the unique characteristics of precision fermentation and its differentiation from other food production technologies, the organizations explained.

According to the definition, precision fermentation "combines the process of traditional fermentation with the latest advances in biotechnology to efficiently produce a compound of interest, such as a protein, flavor molecule, vitamin, pigment, or fat."

The definition then explains how precision fermentation works: "A specific molecular sequence is inserted into a microorganism to give it instructions to produce the desired molecule when fermented. These molecular sequences are derived from digitized databases rather than taken directly from the relevant animals or plants."

The definition continues "At the end of the fermentation process, the resulting compounds are filtered out, separating them from the microorganisms that produced them."

Precision fermentation "has been in use globally for over 30 years to make medicines (like insulin) and countless common food ingredients (such as human milk oligosaccharides or rennet," according to the definition.

According to the PFA and FFE, the refined definition of precision fermentation highlights key distinctions, including:

Leveraging bioengineering: Precision fermentation (PF) stands apart from traditional/wild fermentation and natural breeding techniques by leveraging the latest bioengineering techniques.

Producing specific compounds: Unlike cell cultivation, PF focuses on using microorganisms to produce specific compounds of interest, rather than growing an entire cell or biomass.

Sourcing from digital databases: Molecular sequences used in PF are sourced from digitized databases, eliminating the need for animal involvement in any part of the process.

This is different from cultivated meat, where a small sample of cells is taken from a live animal, PFA and FFE stated.

Filtered compounds: At the end of the fermentation process, the targeted molecules are isolated and filtered out from the fermentation broth, which is different from biomass fermentation, where the entire biomass (including the cells) is the product.

Established technology: While new molecules are now being produced using PF, the process itself has been safely utilized in food and medicine for decades.

"With so many new food technologies entering the market, we recognized the need to refine and expand the definition of precision fermentation to help educate consumers and food industry stakeholders," said Irina Gerry, PFA spokesperson.

"Our collaboration with FFE has resulted in a comprehensive definition that emphasizes the distinctive features of Precision Fermentation and its applications, as well as draws clear boundaries between precision fermentation and other fermentation-based technologies," Gerry added.

"While some applications of precision fermentation may be new, the technology itself has been safely used in food and medicine like producing insulin for over 30 years," commented Jevan Nagarajah, FFE president of FFE. "We are excited to contribute to the understanding of PF and its role in advancing food innovation."

PFA and FFE said their collaboration underscores the importance of clarity and education in the evolving landscape of food technology.

The Precision Fermentation Alliance, established in 2023, is a global coalition of precision fermentation leaders. The PFA shares a common goal of promoting precision fermentation as a reliable solution for a more resilient and sustainable food system. Members are dedicated to accelerating the industry's growth through communication, research, advocacy, regulation, and global outreach efforts.

For more information, visit www.pfalliance.org.

Food Fermentation Europe works to raise awareness and build a supportive, forward-looking policy framework to enable the rollout of innovative fermentation technology and products in Europe. FFE is also committed to working to ensure a smooth transition to more sustainable food systems.

For more information, visit www.foodfermentation.eu.

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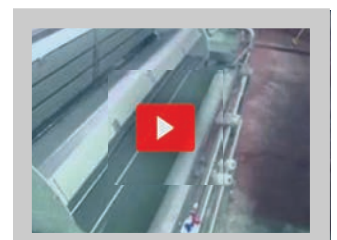


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New Detention, Demurrage Billing Practice Rules Set By FMC Final Rule

Washington—A final rule published Monday by the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) establishes new requirements for how common carriers and marine terminal operators (MTOs) must bill for demurrage and detention charges.

Specifically, the final rule requires common carriers and MTOs to include specific minimum information on demurrage and detention invoices, outlines certain detention and demurrage billing practices, such as determination of which parties may appropriately be billed for demurrage or detention charges, and sets timeframes for issuing invoices, disputing charges with the billing party, and resolving such disputes.

The final rule adopts, with changes, a proposed rule published by the FMC in October 2022. Substantive changes, according to the agency, allow consignees to be billed and clarify the timeframe for non-vessel-operating common carriers passing through demurrage and detention charges to issue their own invoices.

In February 2022, the FMC issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) to request industry views on potential demurrage and detention billing requirements.

In June 2022, after the FMC issued the ANPRM and received comments, the Ocean Shipping Reform Act of 2022 (OSRA) was signed into law. OSRA prohibits common carriers from issuing an invoice for demurrage or detention charges unless the invoice includes specific information to show that the charges comply with part 545 of title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and applicable provisions and regulations.

In October 2022, the FMC published a proposed rule that would require common carriers and MTOs to include specific minimum information on demurrage and detention invoices and outlined certain billing practices relevant to appropriate timeframes for issuing invoices, disputing charges with the billing party, and resolving such disputes. The proposed rule addressed considerations identified in the OSRA.

The FMC received two comments related to the phrase “marine terminal space” in the definition of “demurrage and detention.” The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) requested that the FMC include a provision in the final rule indicating that container dwell fees are “detention and demurrage charges,” since they are “related to the use of marine terminal space.”

In response to IDFA, the FMC noted that the common definition of “container dwell fees” is interchangeable with the definition of “detention and demurrage.” As a result, the FMC declined to add another provision stating that container dwell fees are included in the rule’s definition.

The FMC received several requests from commenters, including the US Dairy Export Council (USDEC) and National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) in comments filed jointly, to clarify what level of detail is necessary to satisfy the requirement that the invoice include the basis for why billed party is the proper party of interest and thus liable for the charge.

The FMC stated that there is no specific or set of specific documents or reference(s) that would meet the requirement of this section of the final rule. The purpose of the regulation is that billed parties must be able to identify why the billing party believes that they are responsible for paying the invoice and to refute that basis if they believe that they have been billed incorrectly.

A reference to the applicable tariff rule supporting the billing, specific reference to contractual provisions, or a reference number to identify the contract at issue might all, or might all not, meet this standard depending on the specific circumstances of a particular invoice, the FMC stated.

NMPF and USDEC said that the final rule should include a requirement on the invoice or the accompanying website a note that reminds the billed party that if the information is incorrect or details are missing, then the shipper is not obligated to pay the invoice.

“Not all dairy exporters are fully aware of the new rules under OSRA, and this would help inform them about their protections against paying incorrect invoices,” NMPF and USDEC commented.

FMC responded that, at this time, it will not impose additional mandatory certifications/disclaimers on top of those found in OSRA. Nonetheless, the agency said it recognizes the potential benefits of such a statement and does not object to the voluntary adoption of this practice.

A number of commenters requested the ability to correct an invoice that lacked certain information or contained incorrect data.

For example, USDEC and NMPF requested clarification regarding a carrier’s submission of a corrected invoice, and whether that must be completed within the

30-day timeframe, or whether it restarts the clock.

In the final rule, the FMC declined to add time for a billing party to correct its invoice. While billing parties have an obligation to issue accurate invoices, issuing an invoice that does not comply with the OSRA’s requirements does not permanently eliminate the billed party’s obligation to pay those charges.

The FMC proposed giving billed parties 30 days to dispute the demurrage and detention charges. Some 28 comments supported or supported with qualification the proposal, while 14 comments were in clear opposition. Three additional commenters submitted comments on the matter that did not fall neatly into either support or opposition.

Based on the input it received, the FMC has removed the language stating that a billed party was not required to pay an invoice if a billing party takes longer than 30 days to resolve a dispute. The Federal Maritime Commission also added language to allow the parties to agree to longer timeframes for the dispute resolution process.

The FMC proposed giving parties 30 days to resolve a disputed demurrage or detention invoice charge. Thirty comments supported or supported with quali-

fication the proposal, while six comments were opposed.

The FMC decided to maintain a 30-day dispute resolution timeframe, but in response to comments has created an exception to allow for resolution beyond 30 days when a later date has been agreed to by both parties. The Commission also clarified in the text that the 30-day deadline is 30 calendar days.

While many commenters expressed support for this rule-making, a number of them mentioned items they thought required further action by the Federal Maritime Commission.

In particular, the Cheese Importers Association of America (CIAA) noted that even with the regulation’s change to billing practices, there are operational practices that are still harming food importers.

This included charging detention and demurrage even when parties cannot access their shipping containers, when the ship did not go to the proper port, and when the carrier failed to properly notify that the container was available for pickup.

The CIAA requested that the FMC develop a reasonable standard regarding delivery practices, but the Federal Maritime Commission de the scope of this rule-making.

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Harwood Private Equity Acquires Dairy Stabilizer Company, Crest Foods

Chicago—Brown Gibbons Lang & Company (BGL) recently announced the sale of Crest Foods, a provider of dairy stabilizers, contract packaging, and branded and private label dry food manufacturing, to Harwood Private Equity.

Founded in 1946 and based in Ashton, IL, Crest Foods operates three business lines:

•Ingredients: The company develops proprietary stabilizer

formulations and recipes for dairy products, including cottage cheese, cream cheese, yogurt, and dairy protein- and plant-based beverages.

•Crest Foods Contract packaging: The company provides packaging services to branded and private-label dry food companies, the company said.

•Consumer products: The company specializes in outsource product development and turn-

key manufacturing services for branded food companies.

Harwood Private Equity is an investor in lower middle market companies with investment experience across a variety of industries, including food and beverage, life sciences, and precision manufacturing.

BGL is an independent investment bank and financial advisory firm focused on the global middle market.

Specific terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

For more information on Crest Foods, visit www.crestfoods.com

Ever.Ag Launches Cheese Yield Optimization

Lewisville, TX—Ever.Ag recently announced the launch of its newest product: Cheese Yield Optimization.

This solution leverages artificial intelligence and machine learning to help cheese manufacturers maximize efficiency, reduce waste, and increase profitability, Ever.Ag said.

The company said its Cheese Yield Optimization gives manufacturers unprecedented visibility into and performance of their operations. The Cheese Yield Optimization program digitizes the majority of the cheese production process, analyzes the data to provide actionable recommendations to make operators in real-time and provides suggested recipe changes for tomorrow's production.

“What is exciting about Cheese Yield Optimization is it learns from existing and new data sets to highlight operational improvements, without taking away the ‘art’ of making cheese. The system

does this with recommendations tailored to the user,” said Ryan Mertes, head of manufacturing solutions, Ever.Ag. “Using existing data sets means customers will receive results in as little as 90 days versus 12 to 15 months.”

This enables cheese plants to understand exactly what products they are making and optimize their processes accordingly, Ever.Ag stated.

Instead of relying on intuition built over decades, the company’s AI assistant enhances decision-making to improve product consistency, quality, and yield.

“By integrating AI into cheese production, we’re enabling manufacturers to not only maintain but also elevate the quality and consistency of their products,” said Simon Drake, EVP, data science solutions, Ever.Ag. “This technology represents a significant step forward in supporting the dairy industry’s move towards more sustainable and profitable practices, ensuring that the time-honored tradition of cheesemaking thrives in the modern era.”

For more information about Cheese Yield Optimization, contact Tom Filak, at tom.filak.ever.ag.

Corbion To Sell Emulsifiers Business To Private Equity Company

Amsterdam, Netherlands—Corbion, a global ingredient solutions provider, and Kingswood Capital Management, a private equity firm, have signed a binding agreement regarding the sale of Corbion’s emulsifiers business.

Based in Los Angeles, Kingswood will acquire the emulsifier business from Corbion for a cash purchase price of \$362 million. The transaction comprises, among other conveying assets, two US-based manufacturing plants and around 175 employees.

The divestment of Corbion’s emulsifiers business follows Corbion’s Advance 2025 strategy focusing on further growing a set of core competencies built around advanced expertise in fermentation that are essential to fulfilling the company’s central purpose, to “preserve what matters.”

The sale is contingent upon the satisfaction of certain conditions, including regulatory approvals, the companies noted.

KeHE Unveils Fresh Marketplace Brand For Cheese, Deli, Other Products

Naperville, IL—KeHE Distributors®, a distributor of specialty, organic and fresh products, recently unveiled its new Fresh Marketplace brand to connect consumers to more varieties of fresh product offerings from around the world.

The national distributor rolled out the KeHE Fresh Marketplace™ at the 2024 KeHE Summer Show. The brand focuses on driving consumers to retailers for an assortment of fresh products, including cheese, meat and seafood, bakery, bulk, and deli items, the company explained.

KeHE’s Fresh Marketplace offers 24,000-plus fresh products curated by category experts, all focused on helping “make stores worth leaving home for.”

“We have long been committed to fresh products, but the KeHE Fresh Marketplace launch really helps define what makes our approach distinct,” said Laura Stidham, specialty cheese category manager at KeHE. “In my category alone, we have grown to more than 9,500 SKUs that allow us to support retailers of nearly all sizes to help them better serve shoppers.

“Given that many shoppers choose a store based on its fresh products, we’re proud to support retailers in creating a memorable in-store experience,” Stidham added.

After the acquisition of DPI Specialty Foods last year, KeHE broadened its customer base and bolstered its existing warehouse infrastructure. The company strengthened its fresh and innovative product portfolio and advanced key strategic visions, including the KeHE Fresh Marketplace, to elevate consumers’ experience and empower retailers to distinguish themselves.

This approach maximizes routes and minimizes costs for KeHE’s retail partners, the company said.

KeHE distributes specialty, organic, natural and fresh products to more than 31,000 natural food stores, chain and independent grocery stores, e-commerce retailers, and other specialty products throughout North America.

For more information about KeHE Distributors, visit www.kehe.com.

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Standard Quality Test Used For Raw, Organic Milk Is Insufficient: Cornell Food Scientists

Ithaca, NY—Cornell University food scientists have shown that a standard quality test used for raw, organic milk is insufficient for distinguishing between specific groups of bacteria, suggesting that the criteria for determining milk quality at processing plants needs to be updated.

Their work was published earlier this year in the *Journal of Dairy Science*.

“Testing milk should not be one size fits all,” as tests should be used appropriately to give the best feedback to dairy producers, according to lead author Renee Lee, a master’s student who works in the laboratory of Martin Wiedmann, Ph.D., the Gellert Family Professor in Food Safety at Cornell.

The current test, called the Laboratory Pasteurization Count (LPC), looks for thermophilic bacteria (strong enough to endure pasteurization) and does not differentiate whether bacteria form spores or not — a key factor in determining both the quality of milk and how producers need to address milk-production hygiene.

The latest scientific literature on this test is more than two decades old.

“You have to know what’s in the milk before you can troubleshoot it and develop the right corrective action,” Lee explained.

Some types of thermophilic bacteria that form spores are ever-present in the farm environment, found in bedding, feed and the air, Lee said. These types of bacteria can cause dairy products like milk and cheese to spoil.

Non-sporeforming thermophilic bacteria can be found in improperly cleaned milking equipment and can be addressed by producers with improved maintenance and sanitation. Distinguishing between these two groups of thermophilic bacteria is important to reducing the time organic farmers spend troubleshooting elevated LPC results.

When dairies deliver organic milk to processors, the milk is sometimes tested for thermophilic bacteria using LPC. Under current standards, if thermophilic bacterial counts are high, the milk can be downgraded or even rejected by the processor.

In the paper, the researchers said that despite the test being used as a proxy for levels of bacterial spores in raw milk, there is limited knowledge of the types of organisms identified by this test in raw milk.

Bongards Awarded New Markets Tax Credit Financing To Aid Expansion

Perham, MN—National New Markets Fund, LLC (NNMF), an affiliate of Los Angeles-based SDS Capital Group, has invested \$17.5 million of its New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) allocation to Bongards Creameries.

As a result of the investment, Bongards’ milk intake capacity will increase by almost one-third, from 4.1 million pounds per day to 5.4 million pounds per day, NNMF noted.

The NNMF investment utilizes capital from the NMTC program, created by Congress in 2000 and administered by the US Treasury Department. Investment groups, such as NNMF, compete to be selected to receive NMTC awards each year.

The selected “allocates,” in turn, sell the tax credits to institutional investors, NNMF explained; the proceeds from the tax credit sale are then used as part of the investment into projects benefiting low-income communities, such as the Bongards’ expansion.

“The New Markets Tax Credit program has been and continues to be instrumental in our ability to provide the maximum value for the milk of our members, while ensuring we are building a cooperative that will be here for future generations,” said Bongards chief financial officer, Chris Freeman.

“The NMTC allocates that have partnered with us understand the need to support our farmers and build for the future. They are wonderful partners in our mission of long-term success and service to our farmer owners,” Freeman added.

“The local economic benefit resulting from the Bongards expansion cannot be underscored enough,” said Deborah La Franchi, NNMF’s president. “Family farms have truly struggled in America over the past decades.

“This NMTC financing enables more than 267 small and family-owned farms located in Minnesota to become more financially sustainable and to create more local employment,” La Franchi continued. “NNMF’s focus is to stimulate manufacturing projects, so we are proud to support Bongards’ growth through our NMTC investment.”

NNMF, founded in 2005, has invested \$752 million (48 investments) of its New Market Tax Credit allocations into projects located in the Great Lakes region and the Deep South. In 2013, NNMF narrowed its focus to invest only in manufacturing and food-processing companies (23 companies total).

Bongards received the NNMF allocation as part of a complex \$81 million New Markets Tax Credit financing package. Dudley Ventures is the investor purchasing the NMTCs from each of the participating NMTC allocates: NNMF, Mascoma Community Development, Waveland Community Development, Rural Development Partners, and DV Community Investment.

“Dudley Ventures is pleased to support Bongards’ expansion and upgraded production lines through our New Markets Tax Credit equity investment,” said Kyle Koupal, Vice President of Investments with Dudley Ven-

tures. “At Dudley, we are committed to supporting economic development and investing in projects that create quality jobs and impact their communities.”

Rural Development Partners (RDP) has awarded Bongards Creameries \$20 million in New Markets Tax Credit financing for equipment toward the expansion of the cooperative’s cheese and whey processing facility in Perham, MN.

The funding will allow Bongards to increase production capacity, improve efficiency and quality, and increase milk purchases, creating/retaining 158 direct jobs and stimulating 389 indirect jobs that support operations, RDP noted.

“RDP is honored to help Bongards expand its operations in Perham. The added capacity will allow them to continue to service their existing members while bringing on additional patrons,” commented Dan Helgeson, RDP’s CEO. “Bongards has always paid a premium to their members which is vital to the long-term viability of family farms in Minnesota.”

One of the 267 co-op members underscored the importance of this processing expansion relative to his operations.

“My family has owned our farm for five generations. The expansion of the co-op’s 1.3-million-pounds-a-day processing capacity is going to enable us to go from 500 cows to 1,200 cows and likely hire four people over the next few years,” said Kraig Krienke, Bongards co-op member.

Rural Development Partners is a Community Development Entity with a national service are eligible to apply for an annual allocation of federal New Markets Tax Credits.

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DMC Start-Up Starts

(Continued from p. 1)

producer. To participate in DMC, dairy producers: select a coverage level ranging from \$4.00 to \$9.50 per hundredweight, in 50-cent increments; and select a coverage percentage of the dairy operation's production history ranging from 5 percent to 95 percent, in 5 percent increments.

DMC enrollment for the 2024 coverage year will be effective retroactive to January 1. Eligible dairy operations that are approved for 2024 DMC enrollment will receive any applicable payments triggered after Jan. 1, 2024.

A final rule published in Tuesday's *Federal Register* revises the DMC regulations to allow eligible dairy operations to make a one-time adjustment to established production history.

This rule is necessary to implement statutory revisions to DMC to extend coverage for calendar year 2024 and update the production history for dairy operations with less than 5 million pounds according to a prescribed formula using 2019 marketings. This one-time adjustment allows for the production history for each participating dairy operation with less than 5 million pounds of production to better reflect the current production of the dairy operation.

The production history for DMC was previously based on the higher of 2011, 2012, or 2013 marketings. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, separately authorized supplemental payments to certain dairy operations that had supplemental production during DMC coverage years 2021, 2022, or 2023, based on actual 2019 marketings. These

payments were referred to as Supplemental DMC.

Amendments to DMC made by the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024, authorize a base production history adjustment for certain dairies using the same formula. Therefore, for ease of administration, for 2024 DMC enrollment, dairy operations that established supplemental production history during the coverage years of 2021 through 2023 will combine their supplemental production history with established production history to create one adjusted base production history.

Dairy operations that meet requirements for the adjustment but did not establish supplemental production history during the coverage years of 2021, 2022, and 2023 will have the opportunity to establish a base production history adjustment during 2024 DMC enrollment.

For those dairy operations enrolled in 2023 DMC under a multi-year lock-in contract, lock-in eligibility will be extended until Dec. 31, 2024. In addition, dairy operations enrolled in multi-year lock-in contracts are eligible for the discounted DMC premium rate during the 2024 coverage year.

Operations enrolled in multi-year lock-in contracts are eligible for the discounted DMC premium rate on all pounds of Tier 1 adjusted base production history.

For dairy operations with lock-in contracts that have an adjusted base production history that exceeds the 5-million pound Tier 1 threshold, the additional Tier 2 pounds will be automatically enrolled at the Tier 2, \$4.00 Catastrophic level unless the dairy operation chooses to opt out of lock-in coverage for 2024 DMC.

For 2024, dairy operations with lock-in contracts have the option to opt out of lock-in coverage and enroll in 2024 DMC through an annual contract with standard non-discounted premium rates applicable. For 2024, DMC-enrollment participating dairy operations with annual contracts and adjusted base production history will select a coverage percentage and level on their adjusted base production history and pay the standard premium rate.

National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) "urges every dairy farmer to strongly consider signing up" for DMC, said Gregg Doud, NMPF's president and CEO.

"DMC itself is improved from the previous farm bill, thanks to the permanent incorporation of updated production histories in the program, and recent low producer margins underscore just how critical DMC is for dairy farms of all sizes," Doud continued. "NMPF is eager to assist producers in any way they can with this program."

"The DMC program is an essential program that has become a beneficial tool for producers since its inception in the 2018 farm bill," commented Jeff Lyon, FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative general manager. "FarmFirst will continue to advocate for necessary enhancements to the DMC program in order to ensure that this program continues to be an efficient safety net for dairy producers."

"Dairy farming comes with unique challenges, and vital farm bill programs like Dairy Margin Coverage help farmers weather the storm in tough times," said Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

First Report On Investigations Of Foodborne Outbreaks Issued By FDA CORE Network

Silver Spring, MD—The US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Coordinated Outbreak Response & Evaluation (CORE) Network recently released its first annual report summarizing the investigations of foodborne outbreaks and adverse events in FDA-regulated human foods for the 2022 calendar year.

FDA's CORE Network was established in 2011 with the mission to find, stop, and aid in the prevention of foodborne illness outbreaks. This is accomplished through disease surveillance, outbreak response, post-response activities, and collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local public health agencies.

Every year, CORE evaluates and responds to numerous foodborne outbreaks related to FDA-regulated.

In 2022, CORE evaluated 65 incidents, responded to 28, and issued advisories for 11. These numbers are up from the number of incidents evaluated in recent years, with 59 incidents evaluated, 19 responses, and 10 advisories issued in 2021.

The 2022 investigations included E. coli, Cronobacter, hepatitis A virus, Listeria monocytogenes, and Salmonella, which were linked to a variety of products, including dairy, produce, and fish.

CORE investigations also resulted in numerous public health actions, including recalls, public health advisories, warning letters, FDA prevention strategies, a country-wide Import Alert, and a consent decree.

More specifically, in 2022, FDA issued public health advisories for 11 multistate outbreaks of foodborne illnesses or adverse events. Two of these actions were dairy-related: a multistate outbreak of Listeria monocytogenes infections linked to Brie and Camembert soft cheese products resulted in a recall and an FDA warning letter; and an outbreak of Listeria monocytogenes infections linked to ice cream also resulted in a recall and FDA warning letter.

The CORE Network has a publicly available Investigation Table, at www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/investigations-foodborne-illness-outbreaks, that is updated weekly and provides information about foodborne illness outbreak and adverse event investigations that are occurring across the US.

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USDA Makes \$26 Million Available For Local Ag Market Program Grants

Washington—The USDA announced the availability of approximately \$26 million for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) to help local and regional food entities develop, coordinate, and expand producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets, and local food enterprises.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service is accepting applications for this grant program until May 14. Applications must be submitted from www.grants.gov.

LAMP funds projects that increase the availability of locally grown food and develop new markets for local and regional food system stakeholders, farmers markets, and food hubs. LAMP includes the Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program, and the Regional Food System Partnerships.

Two of LAMP's funding opportunities, the Farmers Market Promotion Program and the Local Food Promotion Program, seek to develop, coordinate, and expand local and regional food systems.

The Farmers Market Promotion Program supports producer-to-consumer markets such as farmers markets, roadside stands, agritourism activities, community-supported agriculture programs, and online sales, while Local Food Promotion Program grants support local and regional food business enterprises that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer to consumer marketing.

This year, USDA is again offering a streamlined grants process for applicants applying for marketing and promotion focused projects and is adding an additional streamlined option for training and recruitment projects. The turnkey project type was designed to lift the burden of grant applicants applying for funding for this focal area.

Entities that are eligible to apply for Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) grants include, among others: agricultural businesses and cooperatives, food councils, economic development corporations, and producer networks or associations.

In fiscal 2024, AMS anticipates approximately \$10.5 million will be available to fund FMPP projects, and another \$10.5 million will be available to fund LFPP projects.

The Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) program supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems.

The program focuses on building and strengthening the viability and resilience of local or regional food economies through collaboration and coordination.

RFSP supports public-private partnerships that plan and develop relationships between local and regional producers, processors, intermediaries, and institutional markets or institutional food service operations through local and regional producers and local and regional food systems.

For more information on the FMPP, visit www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp; for information on the LFPP, visit www.ams.usda.gov/lfpp; and for information on the RFSP, visit www.ams.usda.gov/rfsp.

AMS noted that there are numerous local and regional food system resources available. The LAMP Navigator (www.ams.usda.gov/data/lamp-navigator) is an interactive tool that contains LAMP grantee data to demonstrate the impact the grant programs have had on local and

regional food systems. The tool allows users to explore LAMP grant inputs, activities, and project details.

The Local and Regional Food Systems Resource Guide (www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/LocalandRegionalFoodSystemResourceGuide.pdf) provides a comprehensive list of permanently available programs supporting local and regional food systems as well as one-time recent programs helping communities actively develop and fulfill their plans and visions for their local and regional food systems.

The guide organizes programs and services by steps in the supply chain: land conservation, production, processing, aggregation-distribution, markets-consumers, and food loss and waste reduction and recycling. It also includes a section on research, education, and technical assistance programming.

AMS is also offering Request for Applications webinars for new applicants to help walk them through the Request for Applications while also providing helpful hints on what has made past recipients successful.

Evaluation Of LAMP Grants

A December 2023 "Report to Congress" evaluates the LAMP programs, providing both quantitative and qualitative analyses of impacts from each grant program based on self-reporting on grant applications and grantee award reports from 2019 through the 2022 funding cycles.

LAMP grants serve the growing \$9 billion US market for local foods and have a long history of generating new income sources for small, beginning, veteran and historically underserved farmers, building stronger regional food supply chains, and creating new market opportunities for value-added products, the report noted.

The 2018 farm bill established LAMP by combining AMS's Farmers Market Promotion Program and Local Food Promotion Program, USDA Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and creating the new Regional Food System Partnerships at AMS.

From 2019 to 2022, USDA's combined LAMP grant programs awarded more than \$374 million to 1,566 projects.



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Course On Dairy Microbiological Lab Methods Is March 26-27 In Twin Falls

Twin Falls, ID—A workshop designed for microbiological lab technicians will be held here March 26-27 at the College of Southern Idaho campus.

The hands-on training covers key topics like basic principles of

food microbiology, identification of key pathogens, safety procedures in a dairy lab environment, and good laboratory practices.

Those benefitting from the curriculum include quality assurance/control managers or super-

visors; food laboratory employees; and those interested in food microbiological testing methods.

Although the focus will be on dairy products, anyone handling or managing food microbiologi-

cal testing should benefit from instruction. By adopting a hands-on approach, this training aims to equip technicians with practical skills and knowledge essential for conducting effective microbiological testing in a dairy laboratory.

Students will learn use of controls, media preparation, sterile techniques and sample preparation. Instructors will cover the basics of enumeration, including SPC, TPC, and APC, coliforms, yeast and mold.

Online Audit Course March 5

TechHelp will offer an online Internal Auditing Course, March 5, providing students the basic knowledge and skills to conduct an internal audit program.

Instructors will cover the fundamentals of auditing, including compliance criteria, importance of auditor ethics, gathering objective evidence, non-conformities, and reporting suggestions.

For registration, visit www.tech-help.org/events.

New Registration Discounts For Northeast Dairy Convention

Saratoga Springs, NY—This year's installment of the Northeast Dairy Convention will include discounts for early registration and multiple attendees.

The three-day, joint annual meeting of the Northeast Dairy Foods & Suppliers Association (NDFSA), New York State Cheese Manufacturers Association (NYSCMA), and Pennsylvania Association of Milk Dealers will take place here Sept. 25-27 at the Saratoga Springs Holiday Inn.

Early registration runs through May 3. Cost is \$675 for members and \$775 for non-members. A reduced rate of \$500 is available for students, government officials and members of academia.

Information on sponsorship opportunities and online registration is now available at www.ndfsa.org/events.

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Class Milk & Component Prices February 2024 with comparisons to February 2023

Table with 3 columns: Product Name, 2023 Price, 2024 Price. Includes Class III - Cheese Milk Price, Class II - Soft Dairy Products, and Class IV - Butter, MP.

Dairy Product Stocks in Cold Storage

TOTAL STOCKS AS REPORTED BY USDA (in 1000s of pounds unless indicated)

Table showing stock levels for Butter and Cheese (American, Swiss, Other) across various months (Jan 2023, Dec 2023, Jan 2024, Jan 2023, Dec 2023, Jan 2024).

DAIRY PRODUCT SALES

Feb. 28, 2024—AMS' National Dairy Products Sales Report. Prices included are provided each week by manufacturers.

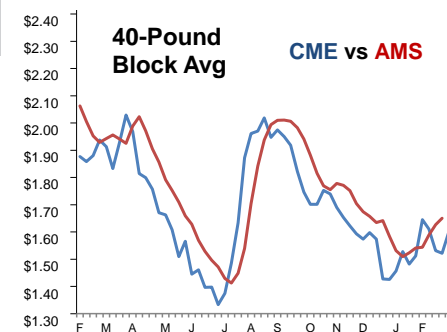


Table with 5 columns: Week Ending, Feb. 24, Feb. 17, Feb. 10, Feb. 3. Contains sections for 40-Pound Block Cheddar Cheese, 500-Pound Barrel Cheddar Cheese, AA Butter, Extra Grade Dry Whey, and Extra Grade or USPHS Grade A Nonfat Dry Milk.

DAIRY FUTURES PRICES

Table with 9 columns: Date, Month, Class III, Class IV, Dry Whey, NDM, Block Cheese, Cheese*, Butter*. Includes a summary row for Feb. 29 with totals: 20,226, 9,224, 3,125, 8,361, 2,105, 16,702, 8,392.

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DAIRY PRODUCT MARKETS

AS REPORTED BY THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WHOLESALE CHEESE MARKETS

NATIONAL - FEB. 23 : Eastern cheese plant managers share seasonally steady production schedules. Retail demand is seasonally strong. Foodservice demand is steady to lighter. Inventories are comfortable. Buying interest for cheese remains quiet in the Central region. Some contacts share orders outside of contracts have been sparse in recent weeks. Cheddar inventories have been growing slowly. Barrel producers say their orders are steady to stronger. Western contacts share Class III spot milk load availability varies from area to area. Cheese production schedules are noted to be steady. Contacts relay steady demand from international buyers. Spot cheese inventories are said to be tight.

NORTHEAST - FEB. 28: Milk production is trending slightly higher in the East. Cheese plant managers relay steady production schedules. Contacts share that block demand remains mellow. Inventories remain comfortable, namely of American-type cheeses.

MIDWEST AREA - FEB. 28: During week nine of 2023, spot milk prices were \$10-to \$2.50-under Class III. On Wednesday, spot milk prices range from \$0.25- to \$2.50-over Class. Some cheese makers say they are using internally-sourced milk supplies, but they say handlers' offers have been mum. Some fluid milk contacts do expect near-term spot offer growth in availability as Class I demand slows and milk production seasonally increases. Cheese demand remains lackluster according to a number of cheese maker contacts in the Midwest. Some, particularly barrel makers, say demand is better year-over-year, but most Cheddar and other varietal processors say it's slower. Market tones have begun to gather some bullish momentum.

WEST - FEB. 28: Domestic demand for varietal cheeses is mixed. Some manufacturers and distributors say retail demand is stronger, while others say it's flat. Stakeholders note foodservice demand as stronger to lighter. Some cheese convertors relay production has picked up recently due to strengthened customer needs. Industry sources indicate demand from international buyers is stronger. Availability of Class III milk is tighter in some parts of the region. However, cheese makers are securing enough Class III milk to accommodate strong to steady processing schedules. A few manufacturers say inventories for spot buyers are tight for the remainder of Q1, but plenty of cheese is available overall.

FOREIGN -TYPE CHEESE - FEB. 28: European cheese demand continues to be strong for the retail sector and mixed for the foodservice sector. Some stakeholders note foodservice demand as inconsistent, and others relay it is steady. Loads for contracted obligations are being filled steadily. Export demand is steady to stronger and inquiries from outside the European Union continue to increase. Industry sources indicate the United Kingdom imported more cheese in 2023 compared to either 2022 or 2021. European manufacturers are running strong to steady production. However, many manufacturers and distributors indicate stocks are at a low level and, in some cases, decreasing from demands outpacing production. Week-over-week milk production in Germany and France continues to strengthen. In Poland, January 2024 milk production was higher compared to January 2023 milk production. European cheese price market tones are stable. Stakeholders note somewhat lower priced loads have increasingly disappeared over recent weeks.

OCEANIA CHEDDAR - FEB. 29: Cheddar cheese prices fell during GDT event 350 during all contract periods with loads offered. The all contracts price for Cheddar cheese declined 7.6 percent, the largest percentage drop for any commodity traded during the event. Sales of Cheddar cheese were lower compared to the previous event and compared to a year ago, as buyers in all regions but South Asia purchased fewer loads than during those prior events. Milk output is declining in Oceania, following seasonal trends, and contacts say this is contributing to softer cheese production. In Australia, recently released data showed cheese production was down in December 2023, compared to a year earlier. This data also illustrated a decline in cheese production from the start of the season in July through December, when compared to the prior season.

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

Variety	Date:	2/28	2/21	Variety	Date:	2/28	2/21
Cheddar Curd		\$2.00	\$2.00	Mild Cheddar		\$2.00	\$2.01
Young Gouda		\$1.95	\$1.93	Mozzarella		\$1.80	\$1.78

WHOLESALE BUTTER MARKETS - FEBRUARY 28

NATIONAL: Retail and foodservice demands are seasonally steady to stronger. Cream is plentiful throughout most of the US. Slower ice cream production, in some parts of the country, remains a factor in abundant cream availability for butter makers. Manufacturers are running busy at-or-near capacity production schedules. Unsalted butter loads for spot buyers are somewhat tight. Some contacts say overall butter supplies are tighter compared to the last couple years.

CENTRAL: Butter makers had expectations in late January that cream would be full through the second month of the year. Their expectations have materialized as Leap Day nears. Cream multiples have held from flat market to around 1.20 for the month. Some butter plant runners have booked cream for the upcoming month at similar multiples. That said, cream handlers say demand is slowly starting to tick higher for milkfat and not specifically from just butter makers. There are expectations that churning activity, which has been very busy this year, will take a step back in coming weeks. Butter demand is holding somewhat steady at a seasonally light pace. Bulk butter is available, but customers/end users reported increasing price points.

WEST: Stakeholders continue to say plenty of cream is available throughout most of the West. Butter makers are drawing cream volumes, and many are running at-or-near capacity production schedules. Manufacturers are churning to ensure supplies for later quarter demands and during planned summer downtime related to churn maintenance projects. Domestic demand is reported as strong to steady. Some butter makers and distributors note orders for spring holiday demands are starting. Loads are available to meet the needs of most spot buyers. Some manufacturers indicate unsalted butter loads and bulk butter loads are tight for spot purchasing. Processors and distributors note export demand as steady to lighter.

NORTHEAST: Cream remains readily available in the East. Butter plant managers continue to relay robust churning schedules. Some contacts share they are churning seven days a week in order to build bulk inventory and freeze it for later in the year. Butter markets continue to see some bullish movement as butter closed at \$2.7750 last week and rose to \$2.8350 as of Wednesday. Contacts share retail demand is seasonally steady. Foodservice demand is mostly quiet in the Northeast.

NATIONAL - CONVENTIONAL DAIRY PRODUCTS

Both total conventional dairy ads and total organic dairy ads decreased this week. Cheese easily led the pack as the most advertised dairy commodity. Conventional 6- to 8-ounce sliced cheese, 6- to 8-ounce shredded cheese, and 6- to 8-ounce block cheese had average advertised prices of \$2.72, \$2.29, and \$2.26, respectively. Shredded style cheese in 6- to 8-ounce packages decreased in price by 7 cents. Block cheese in 6- to 8-ounce packages and sliced cheese in 6- to 8-ounce packages increased in price by 1 cent and 26 cents, respectively. Total conventional butter ads were ahead of total conventional milk ads.

Yogurt was the second-most advertised dairy commodity. Conventional yogurt ads increased by 14 percent. Conventional Greek yogurt had more prevalence than conventional regular yogurt. The average price for conventional Greek yogurt in 4-6 ounce containers is \$1.05, which represents a 6 cent decrease from the price last week.

RETAIL PRICES - CONVENTIONAL DAIRY - MARCH 1

Commodity	US	NE	SE	MID	SC	SW	NW
Butter 8 oz	2.44	3.39	2.26		2.38	3.86	
Butter 1#	4.65	4.21	4.86	3.42	4.89	3.03	2.96
Cheese 6-8 oz block	2.26	2.54	2.21	2.39	2.01	2.45	1.79
Cheese 6-8 oz shred	2.29	2.35	2.24	2.46	2.21	2.35	1.79
Cheese 6-8 oz sliced	2.72	2.92	2.81	2.89	2.56	2.13	1.84
Cheese 1# block	3.99	3.99	3.99			3.98	
Cheese 1# shred	3.96	4.59	3.98		3.98	3.27	3.99
Cheese 1# sliced	3.97					3.97	
Cheese 2# block	10.56	9.99	12.48			7.11	8.02
Cheese 2# shred	7.42			5.99	7.44	7.53	
Cottage Cheese 16 oz	2.36	2.52	2.32	2.50	2.50		
Cottage Cheese 24 oz	3.38	2.99	3.25		3.72		
Cream Cheese 8 oz	2.42	2.73	2.49	2.78	1.85	2.49	3.29
Flavored Milk ½ gallon	1.92		1.92	2.99	1.82		
Flavored Milk gallon	3.03		3.03		3.03		
Ice Cream 14-16 oz	3.27	3.64	3.69	3.18	2.88	2.95	3.09
Ice Cream 48-64 oz	3.82	3.56	3.99	3.65	3.92	3.47	3.49
Milk ½ gallon	1.96		1.82		1.82	2.71	1.52
Milk gallon	3.69	3.70	4.00	2.66	4.03	3.45	2.50
Sour Cream 16 oz	2.18	2.28	2.23	2.30	2.07	2.17	
Sour Cream 24 oz	2.62		2.56	3.88	2.56	3.69	2.88
Yogurt (Greek) 4-6 oz	1.05	1.12	1.05	1.01	1.01	1.00	0.94
Yogurt 4-6 oz	0.61	0.64	0.69	0.56	0.67	0.40	0.46
Yogurt (Greek) 32 oz	4.25	5.31	4.12		3.54	4.58	3.79
Yogurt 32 oz	2.79	2.77	2.63	4.57	2.67	3.09	

ORGANIC DAIRY - RETAIL OVERVIEW

National Weighted Retail Avg Price:

Butter 1lb:	\$4.99	Ice Cream 48-64 oz	
Cheese 6-8 oz shred:	\$3.81	Flavored Milk ½ gallon:	
Cheese 6-8 oz block:	\$4.99	Flavored Milk gallon:	
Cheese 6-8 oz sliced:	\$3.24	Milk ½ gallon:	\$4.31
Cottage cheese 16 oz:	\$4.59	Milk gallon:	\$5.00
Cream Cheese 8 oz:	\$3.68	Yogurt 4-6 oz:	
Sour Cream 4-6 oz:		Greek Yogurt 4-6 oz:	
Ice Cream 14-16 oz		Greek Yogurt 32 oz:	\$5.58
		Yogurt Greek 32 oz	\$4.49

DRY DAIRY PRODUCTS - FEBRUARY 29

WPC CENTRAL/WEST: Contacts report demand for WPC 34% is strong, but waning somewhat. Some stakeholders note softer interest from animal feed purchasers this week, as prices have recently declined for some other dairy proteins. Demand for loads of WPC 34% which meet specific purchasers' needs is unchanged, and spot inventories of these loads are tight. Contacts relay spot inventories of WPC 34% remain somewhat tight overall. Production of WPC 34% is limited as manufacturers continue to focus their schedules on higher whey protein concentrates.

NDM CENTRAL/EAST: Low/medium heat NDM availability is somewhat firm in the Midwest. Contacts say Eastern supplies, in a somewhat atypical week, are more available, and eastern trading activity was a little busier. Condensed skim availability is growing. Contacts say processing plant downtime and upticks in farm milk production are catalysts for the growth in spot skim supplies and decreases on skim pricing.

DRY WHEY/CENTRAL: Dry whey prices moved lower at every point this week. There are a number of factors at play, according to contacts, regarding the bearish turn Central whey markets have taken in the past week. Some contacts relay more less-than-recent production is moving into end users' warehouses somewhat aggressively in recent weeks. Some contacts also suggest Asian needs are being met by competitive European dry whey pricing, keeping more stocks in the US in general. On the flip side, milk load prices moving into Class III facilities are ticking higher week to week.

NDM/WEST: Domestic demand is steady to lighter. Demand from international buyers is stronger. Production schedules and draws on Class IV milk are steady. Industry sources indicate low heat stocks are tighter than medium heat stocks. Both ends of the high heat NDM price range held firm. High heat production schedules vary. Some manufacturers say high heat NDM production will start up again when milk production is seasonally lower.

WEEKLY COLD STORAGE HOLDINGS

SELECTED STORAGE CENTERS IN 1,000 POUNDS - INCLUDING GOVERNMENT

DATE	BUTTER	CHEESE
02/26/24	54,334	83,834
02/01/24	43,767	81,963
Change	10,567	1,871
Percent Change	24	2

CME CASH PRICES - FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 1, 2024

Visit www.cheesereporter.com for daily prices

	500-LB CHEDDAR	40-LB CHEDDAR	AA BUTTER	GRADE A NFDM	DRY WHEY
MONDAY February 26	\$1.6700 (+5½)	\$1.5900 (+4)	\$2.8500 (NC)	\$1.1975 (-¼)	\$0.5000 (-2½)
TUESDAY February 27	\$1.6700 (NC)	\$1.6100 (+2)	\$2.8350 (-1½)	\$1.1800 (-1¼)	\$0.4525 (-4½)
WEDNESDAY February 28	\$1.6700 (NC)	\$1.6150 (+½)	\$2.8000 (-3½)	\$1.1900 (+1)	\$0.4400 (-1¼)
THURSDAY February 29	\$1.6500 (-2)	\$1.6050 (-1)	\$2.7650 (-3½)	\$1.1900 (NC)	\$0.4275 (-1¼)
FRIDAY March 1	\$1.6500 (NC)	\$1.5500 (-5½)	\$2.7575 (-¾)	\$1.1975 (+¾)	\$0.4250 (-¼)
Week's AVG \$ Change	\$1.6620 (+0.0520)	\$1.5940 (+0.0721)	\$2.8015 (-0.0016)	\$1.1910 (-0.0053)	\$0.4485 (-0.0659)
Last Week's AVG	\$1.6100	\$1.5219	\$2.8031	\$1.1963	\$0.5144
2023 AVG Same Week	\$1.5675	\$1.9160	\$2.3940	\$1.1830	\$0.4500

MARKET OPINION - CHEESE REPORTER

Cheese Comment: Five cars of blocks were sold Monday, the last at \$1.5900, which set the price. Two cars of blocks were sold Tuesday, the last at \$1.6100, which set the price. No blocks were sold Wednesday; the price increased on an unfilled bid for 1 car at \$1.6150. Two cars of blocks were sold Thursday, the last at \$1.6050, which set the price. Three cars of blocks were sold Friday, the last at \$1.5500, which set the price. The barrel price rose Monday on a sale at \$1.6700, then fell on a sale at \$1.6500.

Butter Comment: The price declined Tuesday on a sale at \$2.8350, fell Wednesday on a sale at \$2.8000, dropped Thursday on a sale at \$2.7650, and declined Friday on a sale at \$2.7575.

Nonfat Dry Milk Comment: The price declined Monday on a sale at \$1.1975, fell Tuesday on an uncovered offer at \$1.1800, increased Wednesday on a sale at \$1.1900, and rose Friday on a sale at \$1.1975.

Dry Whey Comment: The price dropped Monday on an uncovered offer at 49.75 cents, fell Tuesday on a sale at 45.25 cents, declined Wednesday on an uncovered offer at 44.0 cents, dropped Thursday on a sale at 42.75 cents, and fell Friday on an uncovered offer at 42.50 cents.

WHEY MARKETS - FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 1, 2024

RELEASE DATE - FEBRUARY 29, 2024

Animal Feed Whey—Central: Milk Replacer:	.3500 (NC) – .3700 (NC)
Buttermilk Powder:	
Central & East:	1.1000 (NC) – 1.1500 (NC) West: 1.0900 (+1) – 1.2500 (-1)
Mostly:	1.1500 (+2) – 1.2350 (+1½)
Casein: Rennet:	3.6000 (NC) – 3.9000 (NC) Acid: 3.7000 (+10) – 4.0000 (NC)
Dry Whey—Central (Edible):	
Nonhygroscopic:	.4000 (-1) – .5000 (-2½) Mostly: .4400 (-3½) – .4750 (-2½)
Dry Whey—West (Edible):	
Nonhygroscopic:	.4550 (+1) – .5600 (+1) Mostly: .4700 (NC) – .5350 (+½)
Dry Whey—NE:	.4625 (NC) – .5350 (NC)
Lactose—Central and West:	
Edible:	.1375 (+½) – .3975 (NC) Mostly: .2400 (NC) – .3400 (NC)
Nonfat Dry Milk —Central & East:	
Low/Medium Heat:	1.1700 (NC) – 1.2250 (-1½) Mostly: 1.1900 (NC) – 1.2100 (-1)
High Heat:	1.3250 (NC) – 1.3700 (NC)
Nonfat Dry Milk —Western:	
Low/Med Heat:	1.1600 (-½) – 1.2500 (NC) Mostly: 1.1800 (NC) – 1.2300 (NC)
High Heat:	1.3000 (NC) – 1.4675 (NC)
Whey Protein Concentrate—34% Protein:	
Central & West:	.9500 (NC) – 1.1750 (NC) Mostly: .9600 (NC) – 1.0600 (+1)
Whole Milk:	2.0000 (NC) – 2.2000 (NC)

HISTORICAL CME AVG BLOCK CHEESE PRICES

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
'09	1.0883	1.2171	1.2455	1.2045	1.1394	1.1353	1.1516	1.3471	1.3294	1.4709	1.5788	1.6503
'10	1.4536	1.4526	1.2976	1.4182	1.4420	1.3961	1.5549	1.6367	1.7374	1.7246	1.4619	1.3807
'11	1.5140	1.9064	1.8125	1.6036	1.6858	2.0995	2.1150	1.9725	1.7561	1.7231	1.8716	1.6170
'12	1.5546	1.4793	1.5193	1.5039	1.5234	1.6313	1.6855	1.8262	1.9245	2.0757	1.9073	1.6619
'13	1.6965	1.6420	1.6240	1.8225	1.8052	1.7140	1.7074	1.7492	1.7956	1.8236	1.8478	1.9431
'14	2.2227	2.1945	2.3554	2.2439	2.0155	2.0237	1.9870	2.1820	2.3499	2.1932	1.9513	1.5938
'15	1.5218	1.5382	\$1.5549	1.5890	1.6308	1.7052	1.6659	1.7111	1.6605	1.6674	1.6175	1.4616
'16	1.4757	1.4744	1.4877	1.4194	1.3174	1.5005	1.6613	1.7826	1.6224	1.6035	1.8775	1.7335
'17	1.6866	1.6199	1.4342	1.4970	1.6264	1.6022	1.6586	1.6852	1.6370	1.7305	1.6590	1.4900
'18	1.4928	1.5157	1.5614	1.6062	1.6397	1.5617	1.5364	1.6341	1.6438	1.5874	1.3951	1.3764
'19	1.4087	1.5589	1.5908	1.6619	1.6799	1.7906	1.8180	1.8791	2.0395	2.0703	1.9664	1.8764
'20	1.9142	1.8343	1.7550	1.1019	1.6704	2.5620	2.6466	1.7730	2.3277	2.7103	2.0521	1.6249
'21	1.7470	1.5821	1.7362	1.7945	1.6778	1.4978	1.6370	1.7217	1.7601	1.7798	1.7408	1.8930
'22	1.9065	1.9379	2.1699	2.3399	2.3293	2.1902	2.0143	1.8104	1.9548	2.0260	2.1186	2.0860
'23	2.0024	1.8895	1.9372	1.7574	1.5719	1.4039	1.6209	1.9752	1.8549	1.7216	1.6279	1.5111
'24	1.5173	1.5768										

USDA Raises Fiscal 2024 Dairy Export Forecast, Reduces Import Forecast

Washington—The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), in its quarterly *Outlook for US Agricultural Trade* report released Wednesday, raised its forecast for US dairy exports for fiscal year 2024, and reduced its dairy import forecast.

The dairy export forecast for fiscal year 2024, which runs from Oct. 1, 2023 through Sept. 30, 2024, is raised by \$500 million from the previous forecast, to \$7.7 billion, as strong domestic and international demand and tighter stocks for several dairy products drive prices higher for nonfat dry milk, whey, and butter.

Fiscal year 2023 dairy exports were valued at \$8.5 billion. During the first three months of fiscal 2024 (October-December 2023), dairy exports were valued at \$1.86 billion, down 20.5 percent, or \$479 million, from the first three months of fiscal 2023.

USDA's dairy import forecast for fiscal 2024 is lowered \$200 million from the previous forecast, to \$5.2 billion, as US domestic prices for cheese, butter, and whey have become more competitive relative to the international market.

Fiscal 2023 dairy imports were valued at \$5.3 billion. During the


first three months of fiscal 2024, dairy imports were valued at \$1.3 billion, down 8.2 percent, or \$116 million, from the first three months of fiscal 2023.

USDA's forecast for fiscal 2024 cheese imports is unchanged from its previous forecast, at \$1.8 billion. Cheese imports during fiscal 2023 were valued at \$1.7 billion.

During the first three months of fiscal 2024, cheese imports were valued at \$508 million, up 15.2 percent, or \$67 million, from the first three months of fiscal 2023.

US ag exports in fiscal 2024 are projected at \$170.5 billion, up \$1.0 billion from the November forecast but down \$8.2 billion from fiscal 2023. US ag imports in fiscal 2024 are forecast at \$201.0 billion, an increase of \$1.0 billion from the November project. Fiscal 2023 agricultural imports were valued at \$195.4 billion.


These projections would mean a fiscal 2024 agricultural trade deficit of \$30.5 billion, unchanged from the November forecast but up from the \$16.7 billion deficit in fiscal 2023. The US had run an agricultural trade surplus of \$1.9 billion in fiscal 2022 and an agricultural trade surplus of \$8.5 billion in fiscal 2021.




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Schedule at a Glance

Tuesday, April 16

Tetra Pak Welcome Reception
5:00-7:00 p.m.

Young Professionals Reception*
7:00-9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 17

Amtor Continental Breakfast
7:00-8:00 a.m.

Opening Keynote sponsored by RELCO
8:00-9:00 a.m.

Collegiate Dairy Products Evaluation Contest
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Concurrent Seminars
9:15-11:30 a.m.

Exhibits
11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Complimentary Lunch
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Collegiate Contest Awards Ceremony
3:30-4:30 p.m.

Novonesis Reception & Championship Cheese Auction
5:00-7:00 p.m.

Thursday, April 18

WCMA Recognition Breakfast exclusively sponsored by dsm-firmenich
8:00-9:15 a.m.

Concurrent Seminars
9:30-11:30 a.m.

Exhibits
11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Complimentary Lunch
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

World Champions Reception exclusively sponsored by Ever.Ag
5:00-6:00 p.m.

World Champions Awards Banquet*
6:00-8:30 p.m.

Custom Fabricating & Repair Afterglow Reception
9:00-11:59 p.m.

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ABB	700	dsm-firmenich	519	Key Resin Company/Flow Resin	1550	RWS Design And Controls, Inc.	725
Ace Chemical Products, Inc.	127	E.A. Bonelli + Associates, Inc.	1836	Keyence Corporation of America	603	Saldesia Corporation	130
Advanced Detection Systems	1038	Ecolab, Inc.	925	KING-GAGE, A NOSHOK Company	1810	Sani-Matic, Inc.	1447
Advanced Process Technologies - APT	1001	Endress+Hauser	712	KJ Cold Storage, LLC	1539	Sanitary Solutions Group	550
AGC Heat Transfer, Inc.	1854	Energenex	1504	Koss Industrial, Inc.	612	Sanitube LLC	1808
Air Quality Process	135	Energy Panel Structures, Inc.	1036	Kraemer Brothers, LLC	936	Schenck Process FPM	1421
Airgas, an Air Liquide company	1502	Enerquip Thermal Solutions	835	Krohne Inc.	1327	Schneider & Schneider Mechanical	1451
Alfa Laval Inc.	510	Engineering Specialists	1872	Kurita America Inc.	1430	Select Custom Solutions	1862
Allied Blending LP	1209	Equipment Specialists LLC	248	Kusel Equipment Co.	418	Separators, Inc.	1114
ALPMA USA	501	ErgonArmor	438	Lallemand Specialty Cultures	226	SEW-EURODRIVE	1820
ALS Food Safety	1503	Evaporator Dryer Technologies, Inc.	539	Laporte Consultants Corporation	1521	SGS	1870
Amtor	1019	Evoqua Water Technologies	1039	LETICO Inc.	1866	Shambaugh & Son, L.P.	535
American Packaging Corporation	601	Excel Engineering, Inc.	413	Liftrac	1840	SoftTrace Ltd	634
Americold	300	Extrutech Plastics Inc.	435	Liquid Process Equipment	1546	SOMIC Packaging, Inc.	825
AMETEK MOCON	808	F.N. Sheppard & Co.	1351	Loos Machine & Automation	801	Sonoco	1151
Ampco Pumps Company Inc.	326	FBF North America, LLC	1806	Lyras North America inc.	1551	SPX Flow, Inc.	416
AMS Steam Products, LLC	121	Fiberglass Solutions LLC	839	M4 Control Systems	1814	Staab Construction Corp.	551
Anderson Chemical Co./ Sanitation Technologies	708	Flair Flexible Packaging Corporation	346	MANN+HUMMEL Water & Fluid Solutions Inc.	1139	Stainless Technologies LLC	749
Anderson Chemical Co./Water Management	710	FlexLink Systems, Inc.	544	Martin Milk Service And Martin Warehousing	538	Staubli Robotics	1415
Anderson-Negele	837	Flexopack USA Inc.	1822	Marchant Schmidt, Inc.	735	Steriflow Food & Beverage	240
Antares Vision Group	229	FoodSafe Drains	247	Martin Milk Service And Martin Warehousing	538	Sterilix	451
Applied Science, Inc.	709	Fortress Technology, Inc.	317	Massman Automation, a Massman Company	241	StoneX Financial Inc.- FCM Division	246
Arena Products	228	FOSS North America	943	Masters Gallery Foods, Inc.	617	Strategybytes, LLC	1515
Associated Milk Producers Inc.	1802	Foth	1138	Matrix Sciences	1217	Stuart W. Johnson & Company Inc.	1112
Astro Pak Corporation	147	Fredman Bag Company	1834	McFinn Technologies	124	Suedpack Oak Creek Corporation	1537
AWI Manufacturing	1448	Fresh-Lock by Presto	1426	McMahon Associates, Inc.	151	SupplyOne Wisconsin	1150
Axiflow Technologies, Inc.	1441	Fristam Pumps USA	613	Mead & Hunt, Inc.	1405	Sweetener Supply	1111
Baer Insurance Services, Inc.	105	Fromagex	1049	Membrane Process & Controls, Inc.	1214	TC Transcontinental Packaging	1309
Baldwin Supply Company	1860	FSNS, A Certified Group Company	610	Membrane System Specialists, Inc.	817	TDI Packsys	1818
Bassett Mechanical	1113	GEA Systems North America	743	MHM AUTOMATION	328	Teclad	132
Batzner Pest Control	101	GF Piping Systems	144	Middleby Food Processing	1848	Teel Plastics, Inc.	1523
Baumer Ltd.	1336	G-M-I, Inc.	638	Midwest Rubber Service & Supply Co.	1884	Tetra Pak Inc.	425
BELL-MARK	118	Gray	1824	Miron Construction Co., Inc.	512	The Boldt Company	443
Bentley Instruments	337	Great Northern Corporation	934	Mohawk Technology	1435	The Bosc Company	231
BFR Systems	136	Green Bay Packaging Inc.	1235	Multi-Conveyor	1500	The Haskell Company	1880
BIOIONIX	325	GS PlantOptics	511	MULTIPOND America Inc	1335	The Probst Group, LLC	1334
bioMerieux, Inc.	143	Handmann	1427	Multivac, Inc.	1101	TH-Turbo GmbH	704
Bruker Optics	1400	Harpak-Ulma Packaging, LLC.	1201	Munters Corporation	1236	TMI Coatings	122
Burkert Fluid Control Systems	1035	HART Design & Manufacturing, Inc.	1329	Nelson-Jameson, Inc.	419	Toray Membrane USA	411
BW Flexible Systems	1401	Heritage Manufacturing, Inc.	938	Nercon Conveyor Systems	401	Translation Services, LTD	305
Caloris Engineering	230	Hilmar Cheese Company	209	Northfield Corporation	1428	Triangle Package Machinery	848
CEM Corporation	1149	Hitachi Industrial Equipment & Solutions America, LLC	302	Novasina AG	1886	Trilogy Essential Ingredients	348
Center for Dairy Research	200	Hixon Architecture, Engineering & Process	1878	Novonesis	917	Tweet/Garot Mechanical	810
Charter Next Generation	1519	Hood Packaging Corporation	1250	Optek-Danulat, Inc.	1237	Urschel Laboratories, Inc.	1225
Cheese Market News	1110	Hurckman Mechanical Industries Inc.	1449	Packaging Corporation Of America	609	Valcour Process Technologies	437
Cheese Reporter	335	Hydrite	309	Page & Pedersen International, Ltd	120	Valgroup	203
Chem-Aqua, Inc.	1137	Hydro-Thermal	251	Paul Mueller Company	534	Vandstrom	1509
Chemco Products Company	1541	Hygiena	131	PBBS Equipment Corporation	129	VDG (Van der Graaf)	109
ChemStation International	115	ID Technology	1210	Pentair	1034	Viking Masek Packaging Technologies	1409
Chubb	205	IFF	221	Powder Process-Solutions	1830	Vivoloc Cultures Corporation	434
Clauger Sotek	215	IFM Efector, Inc.	1234	POWER Engineers, Inc.	1219	VNE Corporation	537
Clean Water Technology, Inc.	404	IML Containers	1517	Precision Drive & Control	350	Watson-Marlow Fluid Technology Solutions	402
Compeer Financial	204	Immel Construction	128	ProActive Solutions USA, LLC	1013	Wayland Industries	1535
Complete Control Solutions	1525	Ingredion	1135	Protective Coating Specialists, Inc.	227	WDS Construction	1505
Complete Filtration Resources	1321	Integrated Packaging Machinery	1527	Provisur Technologies	235	Weber, Inc.	637
Coperion K-Tron Salina Inc	1421	International Machinery Exchange	321	Q-Interline	343	Weimer Bearing & Transmission	103
Coprodev Plus	1148	International Media & Cultures, Inc.	1868	QLC, Inc.	937	Wells	939
CRB	1533	Intralox	1545	Quadbeam Technologies Ltd.	1248	Werner Electric Supply	1134
Custom Fabricating & Repair, Inc.	1025	ISG	542	QualiTru Sampling Systems	650	Westfalia Technologies, Inc.	304
Cybertrol Engineering	1115	Ivarson, Inc.	501	Quality Tank Solutions, LLC	1548	Wila A/S	140
Dahmes Stainless Inc.	1315	J&W Instruments	1812	Quest Industrial	1210	Winpak	1341
Dairy Connection Inc.	711	J. Reitenmaier USA	1238	R.W. Baron Process Equipment, Inc.	149	Wisconsin Aging & Grading Cheese Inc.	1011
Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin	202	Jasper Engineering & Equipment Co.	242	RathGibson	250	Witt Gas Controls	1347
DCI, Inc.	935	JLS Automation	543	Reflectronics, Inc.	1864	World Water Works, Inc.	141
Definox Inc.	1850	Kagetec Industrial Flooring	201	Reiser	901	WOW Logistics	1501
Delkor Systems, Inc.	809	Kalt Maschinenbau AG	142	RELCO, A Kovalus Company	1043	Zee Company a division of the Vincit Group	301
Delta 3 Engineering, Inc	114	Karl Schnell Inc.	1316	Revela Foods, LLC	1446	Zepnick Solutions, Inc.	849
Detectapro Products	1844	KDV Label, LLC	303	Rieger Flow Products, LLC	339		
Deville Technologies Inc.	701	KEI Steam Solutions, Inc.	651	River Valley Logistics, LLC.	146		
Divine Industrial Sales, Inc	605	Keller, Inc.	116	Rocket Industrial	1221		
Dixon	751	Kelley Supply, Inc	625	Rohde Brothers	400		
Doral Corporation	445	Kerres USA, LLC	1243				
Dorner Manufacturing Corp.	1858						



Advanced Registration ends **April 8.**

After April 8 all registrations will take place on-site.

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