

Grow NYS Dairy – working with the New York dairy industry from farm to processor

Significant growth in existing and planned dairy processing capacity in New York State represents an opportunity to create business and production climates in New York to foster economic development of the total dairy industry. Grow NYS Dairy is a cross-industry group that was formed during Fall 2012 at the request of various groups in the New York dairy industry by Kathryn Boor, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University.

The overarching objectives of the group are to:

- Facilitate a high-level industry discussion, involving dairy producers, processors, and cooperatives, on the current state dairy industry in NY
- Develop a shared understanding and vision of the state of the NY dairy industry now and going forward (from farm to consumer)
- Set a foundation for ongoing productive discussions across the dairy industry in NY to mitigate changes in short- and long-term supply and demand
- Provide input to New York State on state-level changes/programs that would enhance the dairy production and processing industries

The activities of the group are described and updated regularly at a blog site located at <http://blogs.cornell.edu/grownysdairy/>

Initial membership of the group includes dairy farmers, dairy cooperatives, dairy processors, allied industry, advocacy groups, and representatives from New York State and Cornell University.

Kerry Adams – Black Brook Farm
William Byrne Jr. – Chairman, Byrne Dairy
Tom Eastham – President, New York State Cheese Manufacturers
Skip Hardie – New York State Milk Promotion Board, Hardie Farms Inc.
John Mueller, Willow Bend Farm & New York State Milk Promotion Board
Tim Harner – General Counsel, Upstate Niagara Cooperative

Patrick Hooker – Director of Agribusiness Development, Empire State Development
Jason Huck – General Manager, Dairy Operations, Cornell University, co-facilitator of group
Jay Jaskiewicz – Director of Commercial Operations, Upstate Niagara Cooperative
Benjamin Laine – Commodity Hedging Manager, Agri-Mark Cooperative
James McConeghy – CFO, Chobani
Brian Monckton – Vice-President, Farm Credit East
Matt Morgan – Deputy Commissioner, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
Andy Novakovic – Program on Dairy Markets and Policy, Cornell University
Chris Noble – Synergy Dairy, Consultant Linwood Management Group
Dean Norton, President, New York Farm Bureau
Tom Overton – Director PRO-DAIRY, Cornell University, co-facilitator of group
Caroline Potter – CALS Dairy Coordinator, Cornell University
Ron Rausch – Special Assistant, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
Neil Rejman – Chair, Northeast Dairy Producers Association, Sunnyside Dairy
Julie Suarez – Director of Public Policy, New York Farm Bureau
Michael Suever – Vice President Operations, HP Hood LLC
Greg Wickham – CEO, Dairylea Cooperative

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FYI

■ For more information on the group's activities and initiatives, check out <http://blogs.cornell.edu/grownysdairy/> or contact the group coordinator, Caroline Potter, at cjh42@cornell.edu

THE MANAGER

“In the initial phase of the NMP, Carl Bannon was the (Extension) Area Agronomist and he worked with us and the Cornell class to scrutinize the soil resource and manage our soil fertility differently,” McMahon said. “We began to treat the fields the way we do the cows; looking at them individually, matching crop choices to soil type and capability. We shifted from a general to a precision approach to nitrogen fertilization of the corn crop, using the PSNT (pre-sidedress nitrogen test) to determine applications.”

The effectiveness of E-Z Acres nutrient management practices is reflected in numbers calculated using the annual Whole Farm Nutrient Mass Balance (NMB) software tool. Several key measures from the NMB tell the story of the farm’s improvement in efficiency over time. Pounds per acre of N remaining per tillable acre receiving manure dropped from 265 in 2003 to 185 in 2008 and 158 in 2011. Similarly, phosphorus balances improved from 39 lbs. remaining per acre receiving manure in 2005, to 12 lbs. in 2008 and 4 lbs. in 2011.

Construction of a manure storage in 2006 contributed to the efficiency trend. Measures of feed nutrient efficiency reflect the efforts of Tylutki, now CEO of ration software company AMTS and minor asset holder in E-Z Acres. Purchased feed N remaining on the farm in lbs. per tillable acre moved from 237 in 2003 to below 150 in 2008 and was at 115 in 2011. Purchased feed P remaining on the farm in lbs. per tillable acre was at 39 in 2003, dropped consistently below 20 in 2007 and was at 13 in 2011. This high level of nutrient efficiency occurred while the herd size increased slightly from 624 to 645 cows and milk shipped per cow rose significantly from under 23,000 lbs. in 2003 to over 24,000 lbs. in 2011.

E-Z Acres is one of 161 NY farms who’ve participated in Cornell’s NMB program since its development in 2003. Collectively these farms now represent over 444 NY farm nutrient balance years in the database, providing powerful documentation of environmentally sound nutrient management practices.

Caroline Rasmussen, NMSP Research Support Specialist and coordinator of the NMB project, commented on the management



behind E-Z Acres numbers. “The McMahons are committed to the goal of superb management of the cows, creating a high degree of comfort so they produce very high levels of milk. To do this profitably requires super high efficiency through integration of all the areas of the farm and everyone working well together. There’s no magic bullet to this kind of success. It’s a bunch of little things all being done right.”

With a land base well matched to a highly effective feeding program, no major changes are planned for the future. A slight increase in herd size of 8%-9% will occur along with the building of a new barn to reduce crowding and enhance cow comfort.

Eddie McMahon is in charge of the farm’s bookkeeping and gathers the data each year for the NMB. “Participating in the NMB validates that we’re on the right track,” she said. “In the first few years we couldn’t be sure if the numbers were significant or just indicators of short term conditions. Over the years we can clearly see the trends are consistent. It’s gratifying to see the drop in purchased feed while increasing milk production, and the moderation of soil phosphorus levels. The NMB data show that our practices are a win-win for the environment, herd health and farm economics.” □

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The group is open to interested organizations – a current list of participating members is maintained on the blog site.

One of the group’s initial activities was to conduct an internal survey of the participants’ perceived strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities within the New York dairy industry. Below are summarized the top five strengths and opportunities and the top five weaknesses and threats.

Survey Respondents Shared Strengths and Opportunities

1. Favorable conditions for crops and cows – opportunities for production per cow
2. Close to population
3. Knowledgeable group of farmers with entrepreneurial spirit
4. Programs such as Cornell PRO-DAIRY
5. New York State interest in supporting growth in dairy

Survey Respondents Shared Weaknesses and Threats:

1. Labor Issue – need for reliable and stable workforce – relief and reform of immigration policies
2. Regulatory burden and policy changes – immigration, local zoning, supply management, CAFO
3. High costs of doing business in NY (workmen’s comp., unemployment insurance, taxes, etc.)
4. Availability of cropland
5. Costs of expansion

The group has also prioritized input to New York state on initiatives and policy changes that would foster development and growth of the dairy industry in New York. The group will also be targeting its efforts to provide information on specific aspects of the dairy industry in New York, particularly in comparison to other regions of the country, that illustrate both the competitive advantages and disadvantages of dairy production in the region in order to inform potential initiatives for the dairy industry in New York.