

## Dairy Farmers of America Feedback for Maine Dairy Task Force – Oct.4, 2024

- DFA presence in Maine
  - DFA's plant in Portland, Maine, operates under the Oakhurst Dairy brand. The facility produces buttermilk, cream, flavored and white fluid milk, fruit juice, sour cream and tea. We proudly employ about 150 employees in the state. In 2023, we had over 30 DFA farms in the state milking over 6500 cows.
- How can the State help keep the Maine dairy industry stable?
  - The dairy industry in Maine, as in every state in the country, is dependent on dairy farmers, their employees and their cows. As a cooperative owned by family dairy farmers, including 30 in Maine, DFA counts on the state to know, understand and support policy objectives that benefit dairy farmers and increase stability within the dairy industry
  - Particular to Maine, the milk price support provided by the Maine Tier Program is critical to dairy farmers in the state
  - Because of dairy's regionality in processing capability and raw milk production, it's important that the state works to support and encourage market opportunities for dairy throughout the Northeast
- How can the State help/support/benefit Oakhurst/DFA?
  - Closing Staffing Gaps —
    - Policies around immigration and affordable and efficient guest worker programs should enable a sufficient supply of labor for the operation of dairy farms and plants
    - Allow workers either currently employed or with a recent employment history in the U.S. to earn the right to work legally in the U.S., regardless of current legal status
    - Mandate responsibility for the ultimate verification of the legal status of workers to the federal government
  - Plant Expansion/Infrastructure improvement
    - Grant support for in-state processing — in the past, funds made available to processors or businesses in the state have been restricted if an entity is headquartered out-of-state and /or if total national sales exceed certain thresholds, as is the case with DFA. If such grants are made available in the future, it's important that in-state entities that support the Maine economy, no matter their corporate parent, be made available to these existing businesses already operating the state
- Trucking — some specific policy issues DFA needs support for include:
  - Adequate funding to provide safe and efficient highways, rural roads, streets, and bridges to facilitate the movement of perishable dairy products to market
  - Agricultural exemptions to allow efficient movement of farm goods
  - Using fuel taxes for highway program funding
  - Increased truck gross weights for shipment of agricultural products
  - Policies that increase efficient transport of dairy commodities

- Milk Supply/Food Safety — To ensure the safety of Maine’s milk supply and processed products, we support the following:
  - Tanker security measures for milk transport
  - Proactive measures for maintaining and enhancing security of processed milk products
  - Enhanced border security and inspection to protect the domestic dairy industry
  - Common sense food packaging regulations that incorporate an assessment of market availability of state identified “safer alternatives”
- Nutrition/food insecurity
  - Dairy plays a vital role in the nation’s fight against hunger and provides essential nutrition to our most vulnerable citizens. The state can help ensure dairy is accessible to those who need it most through state-funded, need-based programs that incorporate dairy products as a key component and making it efficient and cost-effective for dairy processors to participate
  - Food labeling provides consumers with accurate information regarding product ingredients and nutrient content, and the state should enforce labeling regulations for dairy products to ensure consumer confidence and promote fair trade in the marketplace
- Extended Producer Responsibility/Recycling
  - Dairy companies have a long history of sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of dairy product packaging is a key priority for the dairy processing industry
  - State policymakers, including in Maine, continue to pass legislation and regulation requiring sustainable packaging in order to sell products in a given jurisdiction; this is resulting in a patchwork of state-based regulation complicating how a company does business across the country, and increasing costs
  - Recycling targets and metrics set by these regulations must not be arbitrary nor overly prescriptive; they must be practical and achievable
  - As Maine continues to implement its EPR program, we would welcome the support of the Task Force to ensure any regulations set are achievable and do not unfairly burden dairy producers, processors, customers or consumers

Anne Divjak  
 VP, Government and Industry Relations  
 Dairy Farmers of America  
[anne.divjak@dfamilk.com](mailto:anne.divjak@dfamilk.com)