

Dairy producers favor keeping farm programs

By Judy Brown

Regional Editor

MADISON — If it were up to Wisconsin milk producers, they would retain both the federal government's price support program and the Milk Income Loss Contract program in the next farm bill.

That's one of the findings in a survey probing producer preferences before the farm bill expires next year.

Northeastern dairy farmers join Wisconsin producers in retaining all dairy programs. However, based on the cost of the MILC, observers say it will be difficult to maintain both programs in the next farm bill.

In the University of Wisconsin's "Marketing and Policy Briefing Paper Number 92," UW-Madison agricultural economist Ed Jesse analyzes the survey and concludes farmers in the West "were least supportive of dairy programs, with a third favoring elimination."

The survey covered produc-

ers in 27 states, but not Minnesota. The National Public Policy Education Committee conducted the survey with Extension policy specialists contributing to the survey's design.

Paul Mitchell, UW assistant professor of cropping systems, co-authored the paper, "Producer Preferences for Agricultural, Food and Public Policy: A Wisconsin Perspective."

Although the survey sought views on government programs and not exclusively dairy policy, Wisconsin producers were asked two dairy policy questions and one nutrient management question not included in the national survey.

That sample of 283 respondents revealed dairy farmers favored keeping MILC by a 2 to 1 margin when asked to choose one or the other.

The authors said farmers of larger dairy operations tended to support MILC more strongly.

"While there were only 45

dairy farmers reporting more than \$250,000 annual gross receipts, they favored the MILC program over price supports at a higher rate than smaller farms," the authors said.

"This is somewhat surprising since some of these farms were likely subject to the MILC payment cap of 2.4 million pounds per year," they said.

Asked about eliminating federal milk marketing orders, Wisconsin producers were evenly split on the question.

Among those who had 75 percent of their farm income from dairy, there were few differences, the authors said.

"Operators of dairies with gross sales of over \$500,000 were the strongest supporters of orders," the ag economists said.

Half of the segment of large producers also felt all dairy plants should be able to offer forward contracting.

Of all those surveyed, "nearly a third said no plant should

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— One finding from a survey asking producers' preferences before the farm bill expires next year

be allowed to offer forward pricing contracts," the authors said.

Crop farmers, when asked how nutrient management standards should be developed, generally favored using certified crop advisers and university faculty rather than a committee of farmers.

Some other findings:

• About one-fourth of all Wisconsin farmers thought their farms would cease being used for farming when they retired, which was nearly double the percentage reported in the North-Central region.

• Food product traceability was strongly supported, but mandatory animal ID, which is necessary for traceability, was less so.

• 61 percent of Wisconsin farmers said small farms by definition should have \$100,000 in sales, while 20 percent felt "small" could not be defined by sales.

• On commodity programs, farmers supported targeted payments to small farmers, but were not in favor of lowering payment limits below current levels.

The authors said there was lukewarm support for tightening payment limitations by prohibiting multiple entities from receiving payments and by restricting LDP payments.

Copies of the national report are in the hands of staffers who will draft the next farm

bill, Mr. Jesse said.

"The survey is considered authoritative and is statistically valid," he said. "It provides some broad guidelines on farm preferences that should be useful on the margins—like picking among or between programs or implementation strategies—when required by budget restraints."

However, he said "when all is said and done, lobbying by commodity groups and other organizations and horse-trading among powerful ag committee members have more influence on the construction of the farm bill."

A report summarizing responses from all participating states was released in mid-September and can be downloaded at the Farm Foundation Web site at www.FarmFoundation.org.

The UW Marketing and Briefing paper is available at <http://www.aae.wisc.edu/pubs/mpbpapers/>.

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Companies promote new dairy genetics technology

By Jim Massey

Editor

MADISON — Select Sires and Merial are touting a new technology they say should give dairy producers another tool to understand and improve cow longevity.

For more information about Igenity, call (877) 443-6489 or visit www.igenity.com.

The two agribusiness firms were promoting a technology they call Igenity at their booths at World Dairy Expo.

Igenity is a DNA test that provides a profile of economically important traits to help producers make more confident selection, management and marketing decisions.

Select Sires is based in Plain City, Ohio, while Merial's headquarters are Duluth, Ga.

Eric Olstad, East Central Select Sires marketing director, said the companies are working together to help dairy producers develop longer lasting, more profitable cows.

"Now not only can we look at a bull's proof or look at a female and say she has these strengths and these weaknesses, but we can also get a snapshot of what her DNA really says," Mr. Olstad said. "We now have DNA markers for productive life and dairy form, which are leading indicators of cow longevity. It gives producers another tool to create higher-producing, longer-lasting cows."

Recent research released by Merial and Select Sires demonstrates a difference of 3.44 months of productive life between a female receiving a low score of 1 for the productive-life analysis and one receiving a score of 10. The analysis indicates the extra 3.44 months could mean an additional \$100 of income per cow.

"Multiplied over a herd, the additional dollars are significant," said Jennifer Daniels, Igenity business development manager.

The two companies unveiled the productive life component of the DNA test at World Dairy Expo.

"This will help producers get information sooner — information that never existed before," Mr. Olstad said. "It can help the producer increase reliability and reduce risk."

Mr. Olstad said Select Sires is working with a producer who breeds 100 heifers per month. The animals are tested at 4 months of age and the DNA test results are then used in future breeding decisions.

"They can take their elite heifers, based on pedigree and the DNA profile, and breed their very best heifers with sexed semen," he said. "Then they could get 90-plus percent heifers out of their best animals and our best bulls."

Other analyses available in an Igenity profile include milk production traits, coat color, genetic recessives and cheese production.

Mr. Olstad said the cheese-production analysis might be more important to Upper Midwest producers, where more milk is made into cheese. In the South, that analysis might not be that important.

The two companies are continuing to develop new components of the Igenity analysis.

"The future is limitless," Mr. Olstad said. "We can work on breeding a better animal that is less prone to ketosis. This technology is continually evolving."

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4-H dairy judges rank high in contest

WAUPACA — The Waupaca County 4-H dairy judging team earned high honors in national competition at the All-American Youth Dairy Judging contest held earlier this month in Harrisburg, Pa.

Members Danae Bauer, Sandra Kirchner, and Zachary and Brett Sawall placed first in linear evaluation, first in Jersey and second in Brown Swiss judging.

They also placed fifth in

reasons in the contest.

They earned the right to participate in the national contest by placing second in the state 4-H dairy judging contest.

Clint Beyer and Bruce Hoeft coached the team.

Dairy product auction raises \$22,395

MADISON — The 4th annual World Dairy Expo Championship Dairy Product Auction raised \$22,395.

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Dairy Products Association, auction proceeds will be donated to the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin's Educational Foundation.

Product donations were also made to the MATC Culinary Arts School, UW

Food Science Department, the Ronald McDonald House and Second Harvest Food Bank.

"We are absolutely ecstatic with the overall success of this year's contest," said Brad Legreid, WDPA executive director.

In just four years, the contest has grown by 60 percent, he said, with more than 330 entries.

"We look forward to an even bigger and better con-

test next year," he said.

Alto Dairy Cooperative, Waupun, captured the grand champion cheese on a Colby-jack entry.

Louis Trauth Dairy, Newport, Ky., was awarded the grand champion dairy product on its cottage cheese.

A 12-pound Michoacano cheese entered by the Wisconsin Cheese Group, Monroe, was the high seller at \$100 per pound.

Summit brings industry issues to frontline

FOX LAKE — Land use, animal welfare, water quality and other environmental issues will be the focus of the PDPW Dairy Policy Summit, Oct. 24-25 in Manitowoc.

Sponsored by the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, this annual two-day event brings together dairy producers, policymakers and elected officials to explore current business and industry issues, exchange ideas and seek solutions that can work for today's dairy industry.

Experts in research and animal welfare will share their insight and experience, and tours will allow attendees to explore new technologies being used on farms in northeastern Wisconsin.

Attendees will dive into the land issues on the first day. The Michigan State director for the American

Farmland Trust and a Wisconsin farmer will present Tuesday morning. Both will share insight into the future and recap land issues nationwide and in Wisconsin.

The afternoon will consist of tours at two dairies where diversity meets innovation and entrepreneurship leads to endless opportunities. Day one will conclude with a keynote speaker who brings a diverse perspective on animal rights and welfare. The co-founder and president of the Farm Sanctuary, Gene Bantson, will shorten the gap in animal agriculture between reality and what others believe is reality.

Day two will involve a variety of speakers who will bring tough topics to the foreground. Jumpstarting the day will be a panel of three animal welfare experts from around the world.

The next five speakers for the day will consist of top Wisconsin professors, business people and leaders who will discuss preserving working lands, water quality, ag policies impacting animal

agriculture and update attendees on the Wisconsin Discovery Farms. Topping off the conference will be Bruce Vincent, a third generation logger from Montana. This final keynote speaker shares insight into the importance of meeting consumer's expectations and being able to prove your worthiness.

Cost for both days of the PDPW Dairy Policy Summit is \$150 for PDPW members and \$225 for non members. Single day rates are \$100 for members and \$150 for non members. Registration includes meals and snacks.

Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin is a dairy-producer founded organization that provides educational programs and services to fellow dairy producers. PDPW's mission is "to share ideas, solutions, resources and experiences that help dairy producers succeed."

Registration materials are available for the Dairy Policy Summit and other PDPW programs online at www.pdpw.org or by calling (800) 947-7379.

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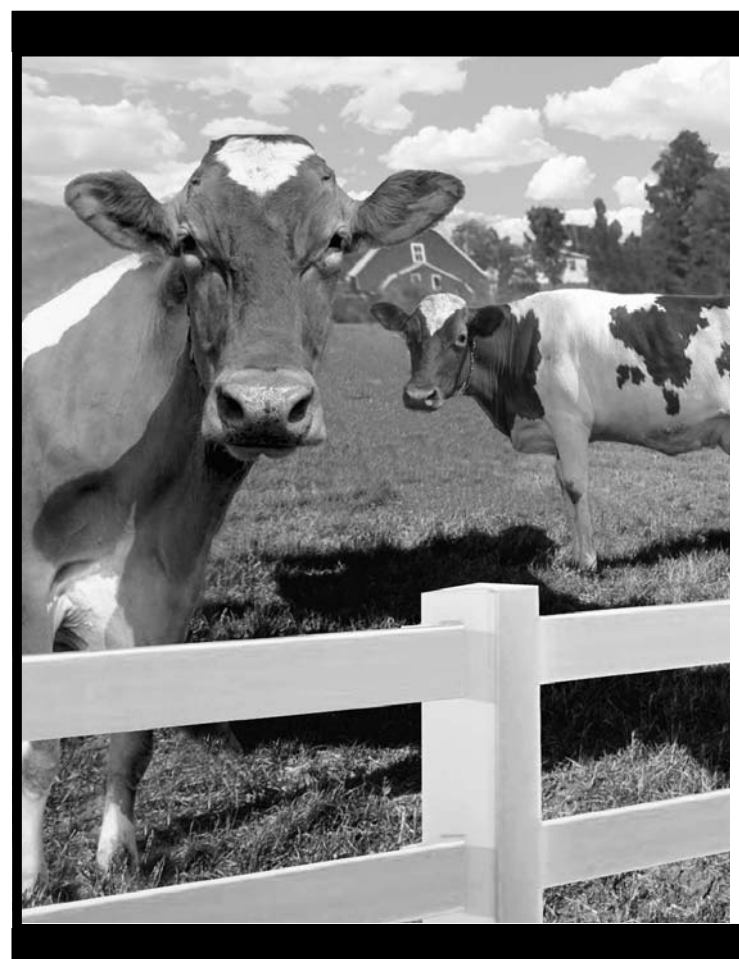
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