NEW YORK STATE | Department of Agriculture and Markets

NEW YORK: A SUSTAINABLE DAIRY STATE

MILK MARKETING ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

JUNE 23, 2026

HOW DO WE FULFILL OUR VISION OF NEW YORK STATE AS THE MOST SUSTAINABLE DAIRY STATE?

PRIORITIZING RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus: Industry needs and supports to achieve vision of most sustainable dairy state

Goal: Identify top priorities within each theme from December 2025 meeting

Outcome: Define the ask – how do we move the “Sustainable Dairy State” vision to reality?

SUMMARY OF DECEMEBER 2025 MMAC MEETING DISCUSSION

The following slides contain concerns and recommendations directly from meeting attendees at the December 2025 MMAC meeting:

- Slide #5: Workforce Development and Labor Shortages
- Slide #6: Supply Chain Readiness and Infrastructure
- Slide #7: Sustainability and Environmental Practices
- Slide #8: Policy, Regulation and Innovation
- Slide #9: Market Access and Product Development

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LABOR SHORTAGES

Concerns Raised by Meeting Attendees:

- **Shortage of CDL Drivers:** A significant concern is the lack of qualified truck drivers, impacting the entire supply chain. The extensive time commitment required for CDL training is a barrier.
- **Aging Workforce:** The aging workforce across farms and service providers raises concerns about future labor availability.
- **Difficulty in Gaining Experience:** It's challenging for new workers to gain experience, especially in specialized roles like crop leadership.
- **Qualified Worker Shortage in Processing:** Some processors are experiencing a shortage of qualified personnel, leading to inaccurate results and wasted resources.
- **Immigration Policies:** Current federal immigration policies are seen as a barrier to accessing labor.

Recommendations:

- **Expand CDL Training Programs:** Need for more accessible and comprehensive CDL training programs.
- **Promote Agricultural Careers:** Efforts are underway to showcase the breadth of careers in agriculture beyond traditional perceptions. Programs like FFA and youth agriculture conferences are seen as vital for building future workforce pipelines.
- **Attracting and Retaining Talent:** There's a need to make trucking and dairy careers more appealing, considering work-life balance and addressing potential barriers for those wanting to enter the business.
- **Training and Skill Development:** Emphasis on the need for skilled workers in processing facilities, including those with knowledge of food safety and quality control. Support for training initiatives, potentially through institutions like Cornell.
- **Immigration Reform:** A strong desire to fix the federal immigration system to allow year-round H2A status for dairy immigrant workforce.

SUPPLY CHAIN READINESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Concerns Raised by Meeting Attendees:

- **Logistics and Hauling Challenges:** Concerns about the efficiency and safety of trucking operations, including the impact of regulations and potential for accidents.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Challenges related to three-phase power availability and cost in rural areas.
- **Broadband and Connectivity Issues:** Lack of reliable broadband and cellular service hinders the adoption of new technologies on farms.

Recommendations:

- **Investment in Processing Capacity:** Record investments in dairy processing are noted as positive developments.
- **Farm Modernization:** Support for farm modernization grant programs to improve infrastructure, storage, and transportation.
- **Address Broadband and Cellular Service:** Recognizing the increasing reliance on technology, there's a need to improve broadband and cellular service in rural areas to support farm operations.
- **Three-Phase Power Access:** Addressing the challenge of accessing three-phase power in rural areas, which is crucial for modern dairy farm technology.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

Concerns Raised by Meeting Attendees:

- **Environmental Impact of Expansion:** Be thoughtful of environmental implications of farm growth, particularly regarding water quality.
- **Greenhouse Gas Reporting:** The emergence of regulations for greenhouse gas reporting is a concern due to its perceived immaturity as a science and the administrative burden.
- **Water Access:** Ensuring access to water for rural communities and dairy production is becoming a growing concern.

Recommendations:

- **Environmentally Conscious Growth:** Ensuring that farm expansions are conducted in a responsible and environmentally conscious manner.
- **Water Quality Prioritization:** Developing strategies that prioritize water quality in farming practices.
- **Sustainable Feed Sourcing:** Planning for sustainable feed sourcing to support increased cow populations.
- **Energy Production:** Exploring opportunities for farms to generate energy and contribute to climate goals.

POLICY, REGULATION AND INNOVATION

Concerns Raised by Meeting Attendees:

- **Legislation Outpacing Innovation:** A concern that legislation may move faster than the industry's ability to innovate.
- **Packaging and EPR Legislation:** Monitoring Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation related to packaging.
- **Complexity of Regulations:** The complexity and perceived lack of clarity in some regulations, such as greenhouse gas reporting, are a concern.
- **Land Access and Use:** Pressure on current land base from solar and other energy projects create challenges to pursue growth or expansion.
- **Federal Grant Processes:** The process for obtaining federal grants for research and development can be challenging.

Recommendations:

- **Support for Innovation:** A willingness to innovate is present, provided there are appropriate timelines.
- **Streamlined Regulations:** A desire for regulations that are not overly burdensome and allow for industry growth.
- **Investment in Research:** Continued investment in agricultural research, particularly at institutions like Cornell, is seen as vital.
- **Preserve Farmland:** Ensure that farmland remains available for food production amidst competing land uses.
- **Federal Program Support:** Advocate for the revamping of federal grant programs to better support dairy farmers.

MARKET ACCESS AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Concerns Raised by Meeting Attendees:

- **Food Safety and Quality:** Maintaining high standards of food safety and quality, especially with extended shelf-life products.
- **Packaging Challenges:** The need for responsible and sustainable packaging solutions, while balancing shelf-life and food safety.
- **Food Waste:** Addressing food waste, such as in schools and senior living facilities.

Recommendations:

- **Promote Dairy Products:** Highlighting New York's success, including in cream cheese and cottage cheese production.
- **Focus on Quality and Value:** Emphasizing the importance of product quality and exploring opportunities for value-added products.
- **Support for Local Products:** Increasing demand for locally produced dairy products in schools.

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