



Stand Up For Dairy

In the past two months two important dairy-related bills have been reintroduced in Congress. The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2021 would allow for flavored and unflavored whole milk to be offered as an option in school nutrition programs. The DAIRY PRIDE Act would prohibit non-dairy products from being labeled with dairy terms such as milk, cheese and yogurt. Both bills can offer a boost to dairy and deserve the support of producers and the dairy industry.

Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2021 H.R 1861

U.S. Representatives Antonio Delgado (D-N.Y.) and Glenn 'GT' Thompson (R-PA) introduced legislation to expand school milk choices to include flavored and unflavored whole milk. Current regulations adopted in 2017 only allow for fat-free and low-fat (1%) milk. The 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans reiterated dairy's role in providing critical nutrients. The Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee reported that 79% of 9- to 13-year-olds do not meet the recommended intake for dairy. Data show that from 2014 to 2016 schools served 232 million fewer half pints of milk and milk was among the most discarded items in school waste studies.

While announcing the bill Rep. Thompson cited a project conducted at a Pennsylvania school during the 2019-2020 school year. Working in conjunction with the Grassroots PA Dairy Project Advisory Committee, students were offered milk at all butterfat levels. Whole milk was preferred 3 to 1 over low-fat milk, milk sales grew by 65%, and the volume of discarded milk declined by 95%. Making whole milk available in schools provides the opportunity to bring a generation of youth back to consuming fluid milk.

The DAIRY PRIDE Act H.R. 2828 and S. 1346

U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Jim Risch (R-ID) along with U.S. Representatives Peter Welch (D-VT) and

Mike Simpson (R-ID) reintroduced the DAIRY PRIDE simultaneously in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Data from the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans found that most Americans are not meeting the recommended intake for dairy. While consumers know that dairy products provide key nutrients, the labeling of plant-based alternatives using dairy terms conveys an equivalency that is not accurate. Plant-based alternative products contain a variety of ingredients that often are not equivalent to the nutrition content of dairy products.

Current Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations define dairy products as being from dairy animals. Though existing federal regulation on the issue is clear on this subject, the FDA has not enforced to ensure accurate labeling, and as a result the incorrect use of the terms "milk," "yogurt" and "cheese" has increased rapidly. The DAIRY PRIDE Act would require FDA to issue guidance for nationwide enforcement of mislabeled imitation dairy products and to report to Congress two years after enactment.

"Dairy farmers and processors work hard every day to ensure that milk and real dairy products meet the highest standards for quality and nutrition. Manufacturers and marketers of imitation products are fully aware of dairy's excellent reputation and have been hijacking dairy terminology to their benefit. It's past time for the FDA to abide by their own definitions and stop the mislabeling of products that do not originate from milk," stated Erick Metzger, National All-Jersey General Manager.

Anyone involved in the dairy industry can help to advance these bills through Congress by contact their Senators and Representatives and encouraging them to become co-sponsors. Information on how to identify and contact your Members of Congress, along with each bill's current co-sponsors, can be found on page 52 of this Jersey Journal. If we don't take advantage of this opportunity to promote our industry, who will?

