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Gearing Up for National Dairy Month

It's hard to believe, but next week we'll be kicking off National Dairy Month. This is one of my favorite times of the year. We have such a variety of ways Midwest Dairy, working with and through partners, will celebrate dairy and recognize dairy farmers throughout the coming month. In this issue, you'll read about some of the campaigns we're working on with partners to promote dairy. In addition, we highlight a national checkoff initiative introducing the next generation of dairy farmers to the next generation of dairy lovers through a video series, "I am a Dairy Farmer," which Midwest Dairy collaborated on to include Minnesota dairy farmer Shaina Kirckof.

While Midwest Dairy focuses on our work with partners to build trust and increased dairy sales, we know many of you will also use National Dairy Month as a platform to connect with consumers in your own communities. To support your efforts, check out our [Community Engagement Guide](#), which provides a variety of ideas to help you share the goodness of dairy this National Dairy Month – and every other month of the year!

Thank you for all you do, and happy National Dairy Month!

Live Calf Chats are Adopt a Cow finale

This spring, thousands of students have taken a virtual field trip to one of our Discover Dairy Adopt a Cow farms. As the program comes to an end, all classrooms had an opportunity to see their calf live and ask questions of the dairy farm host.

All of the sessions are available on YouTube if you would like to learn more about the program and see how students are responding.

- [Bunse Dairy](#) (Missouri) with farmer Amy Bunse
- [JJC Jerseys](#) (Nebraska) with farmer Jodi Cast
- [Mil R Mor Farm](#) (Illinois) with farmer Lorilee Schultz

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- [Prairie Moon Guernseys](#) (Iowa) with farmers Leslie and Dan Sivesind
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- [RJ Dairy](#) (North Dakota) with farmer Rita Mosset
- [Rokeyroad Holsteins](#) (Kansas) with farmer Dwight Rokey
- [Tauer Dairy](#) (Minnesota) with farmer Angie Tauer

Midwest Dairy had about 213,000 students participating in the program. This school year, the students learned more about where dairy foods come from and how farmers care for their animals and the land. Nationwide, there were nearly 1.5 million students involved in the program. In the past year, the program has experienced considerable growth as teachers looked for online learning opportunities, and we hope this growth will continue.

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Midwest dairy farmer leaders contribute to national sustainability goals

Three Midwest Dairy farmer leaders recently presented valuable insights during the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Alliance's spring meeting, sharing thoughts and committee updates on how the industry is working to be better environmental stewards and meet consumer expectations.

Suzanne Vold, a National Sustainability Award-winning dairy farmer from Glenwood, Minnesota, and co-chair of the biodiversity task force, outlined the team's work to date to define what biodiversity means and what metrics will be used to gauge success.

"Biodiversity, like sustainability before it, is a relatively new idea that will evolve over time," says Vold. "And while many are already implementing biodiversity practices, there aren't standardized methods or measurements in place."

To gain more consistency and understanding across the industry, the task force is recommending a common definition of biodiversity, which currently states "is the variety and variability of all living things within an agricultural ecosystem."

Aggregated data will be captured within the existing Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) [Environmental Stewardship](#) assessment, measuring efforts that preserve, restore, and/or improve biodiversity.

Steve Hoffman, a New Ulm, Minnesota dairy farmer, and [Associated Milk Producers Inc.](#) board member, shared how the FARM ES program is helping guide more sustainable dairy operations through his own personal experience.

"As an AMPI board member, I felt a commitment to be an early adopter with the FARM ES assessment to see how my own dairy could improve," says Hoffman. "The process was very quick and simple. After seeing the results, it helped us set a baseline for our greenhouse gas emissions and encouraged us to implement new initiatives, from better manure management, conservation tillage, lower energy consumption, and cover cropping."

Ending the meeting with a strong exclamation point was Alex Peterson, a Trenton, Missouri farmer and chair of the National Dairy Research and Promotion Board. Peterson served on a panel with other industry executives that addressed the future of dairy and how the value chain should innovate and evolve to meet the needs of tomorrow's consumers.

“With so many options available to consumers, we need to be more agile and anticipate what’s next to find new solutions that will earn their loyalty,” says Peterson. “The industry as a whole needs to be aligned on what motivates today’s shopper, with sustainability and transparency at the top of the list, to quickly deliver on those needs and remain relevant.”

The fall Dairy Sustainability Alliance conference will take place November 19 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Milking National Dairy Month

Spring has sprung and June is our time to shine! An entire month devoted to celebrating and sharing the goodness of dairy. It gives us an opportunity to collectively engage with consumers to shine a light on what we produce and how we produce it – providing sustainably nutritious food to our world.

For this year’s #NationalDairyMonth, a special focus will be placed on engaging the next generation of dairy lovers. Your dairy checkoff has created a variety of ***I Am a Dairy Farmer*** videos introducing the next generation of dairy farmers. Millennials and Gen Z are paying close attention to where their food comes from and we have a compelling story to tell. The videos can be viewed (and shared!) [here](#) and [here](#). Look for Minnesota dairy farmer Shaina Kirckof in the videos!

#WorldMilkDay will kick things off on June 1 with a special awareness campaign. Then, throughout the month, new information on U.S. Dairy Sustainability Award winners, sustainability infographics, and a virtual panel with media outlet [VOX](#) will all be available to assist with our storytelling and social sharing.

Finally, sharing branded badges on your personal social media channels is another way to generate awareness. These visual reminders are easy to use and help communicate the positive attributes surrounding dairy. You can find badges and other National Dairy Month assets in the “Undeniably Dairy Resources” section of the DairyHub.

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MDFRC Advisory Committee gathers to brainstorm research priorities

The 2021 MDFRC Spring Research Planning meeting was held virtually May 11-12. The advisory committee, consisting of industry members, farmer board members, checkoff representatives and researchers gathered to identify 2022-2023 technology needs of the dairy industry. A keynote presentation titled, "Dairy Transformation 2030", was delivered by Eve Pollet, senior vice president of strategic intelligence at DMI.

Followed by the keynote, participants discussed research needs in the four MDFRC focus areas listed below:

1. Exports - Increase the demand for U.S. dairy worldwide.
2. Consumer Solutions - Expand dairy product and ingredient consumption through technologies to measure and improve flavor, functionality, quality, perception, and education to meet current consumer needs.
3. Sustainability - Improve economic, social, and environmental impact of dairy.
4. Food Safety - Ensure the safety of dairy products and ingredients.

As part of the next steps, the problem statements proposed by the industry will be consolidated by the MDFRC team and then shared with MDFRC members to identify priority topics. The priority topics will then

be provided to the faculty in the six land-grant universities to invite pre-proposals which will then be presented at the MDFRC Annual Meeting on Wednesday, July 28.

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