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Midwest Dairy Continues to Work on Your Behalf to Drive Dairy Demand

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect everyday life for all of us, Midwest Dairy continues to focus our efforts on your behalf to promote dairy with school and food bank partners to increase access to dairy for those who need it most. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have provided coolers to schools for serving dairy products to students, partnered to create emergency menus that incorporate dairy for school food service teams and placed 90 refrigeration units in food banks. All of these initiatives helped to meet increased demand for dairy due to COVID-19.

Response to our \$500,000 food donation on behalf of Midwest dairy farmers has been overwhelmingly positive! We're continuing our work with the 29 food bank recipients by not only providing funds to food banks to purchase incremental dairy foods, but also by providing dairy promotional materials and nutrition education information to food bank patrons. We have asked the recipient food banks to share invoices to tabulate gallons of milk, pounds of cheese and total amounts of the other dairy products provided with your generous support. We look forward to being able to share more about the impact of the funding with you later this year. Read more about this grant placement in the articles below and how this grant will not only provide dairy to families in need, but also help to keep the supply chain moving for processors and dairy farmers.

Our thanks goes out to dairy farmers, processors and supply chain workers who have worked tirelessly to provide nutritious dairy foods to feed the nation and are [being recognized](#) for their essential roles during a challenging time. In the same way, the dairy industry's essential and ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship was also recognized as the Innovation Center for U. S. Dairy set Environmental Stewardship Goals supporting the environmental stewardship vision and 2050 goals. Read more about the goals and other checkoff successes in the article below.

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[Learn more](#) about your **checkoff investment at work!**

Midwest Dairy Donates \$500,000 to Food Banks

Food banks across Midwest Dairy's region have been seeing unprecedented need in recent weeks, setting records of daily and weekly food distribution and showcasing the urgency of finding resourceful ways to provide more food to those in need. On behalf of the 6,500 dairy farm families we represent, Midwest Dairy has donated \$500,000 to food banks to purchase dairy products. The contributions will be spread across the 10-state Midwest region to help meet the increased demand for dairy products during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This program also offers processors an opportunity to keep their supply chains active while navigating dairy demand shifts due to recent school, restaurant and other business closures. "This effort helps ensure the milk dairy farmers work so hard to produce continues to move through the supply chain and into the hands of those who need it," said Steve Schlagen, chairman of the board of directors for dairy farmer-owned processing cooperative Associated Milk Producers Inc. (AMPI) of New Ulm, Minnesota, and a dairy farmer from Albany, Minnesota.

Though dairy checkoff funds are not typically used to purchase dairy products, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has approved a proposal at the request of Midwest Dairy to help meet this need. We have executed letters of agreement with Feeding America food banks across our region who demonstrated tremendous demand for offering dairy to families in need and are able to use an increased supply through their feeding sites. This week, the recipient food banks received their donation checks from Midwest Dairy and have been reaching out to processors to purchase incremental dairy foods for their clients.

"We're grateful to Midwest Dairy and all the dairy farmers that are increasing access to these healthy foods by providing additional dairy products to help our neighbors in need throughout eastern Missouri and southwestern Illinois. This donation is a blessing for the Foodbank and everyone we serve," stated Meredith Knopp, President and CEO of the St. Louis Area Foodbank.



In addition to the donation, Midwest Dairy has mailed food banks and their local sites 2,200 resource kits that include recipe sheets and posters featuring dairy nutrition and sustainability information.

Media interest in the project has been strong with coverage in agriculture and consumer outlets including Dairy Business, Dairy Foods, Hoards, Ag Daily, RFD-TV, WCCO-TV (CBS) in the Twin Cities and WDRV-FM, a top classic rock station in Chicago.

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Virtual Dairy Experience Forum Registration Now Open

We are excited to announce that the third annual Dairy Experience Forum is right around the corner, and this year we are going virtual! This means you can hear from top industry leaders, network with others from across the supply chain and hear the latest insights into what is driving consumer demand for dairy, without ever leaving your home.

The virtual conference will be held on Wednesday, July 15 from 10 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. and includes:

- A consumer panel providing real-time insight into shopper attitudes, beliefs and behaviors
- Virtual breakout rooms to network with others across dairy supply chain
- An IRI speaker that will shed light on the post-COVID-19 dairy category
- A panel of industry leaders discussing sustainability
- A food futurist discussing what's next for the food and beverage industry

Check out the [event website](#) for a complete agenda. We also invite you to join the [Facebook Event Page](#).

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Register Now

 **The Dairy Experience**
July 15, 2020 | VIRTUAL

A Disruptive Forum on Today's Consumer and Dairy's Opportunities

USDEC Reports Dairy Export Volume is Up for Seventh Straight Month

In a recent [blog post](#), U.S. Dairy Export Council reported that dairy export volume is up for the seventh straight month in March, despite the novel coronavirus pandemic. Southeast Asia continues to be the main source of growth for U.S. suppliers. The value of exports to South America and the Middle East/North Africa region also was higher in March, and sales to the Caribbean (led by the Dominican Republic) reached a record high.



On a total milk solids basis, U.S. exports were more than 15 percent of U.S. milk solids production in March and in the first quarter of the year, exports were nearly 15 percent of production. For more information or to access historical trade data, visit USDEC's page on [U.S. export data](#).

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Menu Freedom for COVID-19 and Summer Meal Programs

Midwest Dairy is proud to support our food service partners in their work on the front lines of the COVID-19 response and during normal operations. Our partnership with NutriStudents K-12 has provided hundreds of districts across the country with COVID-19 emergency menus, and recently, NutriStudents K-12 has launched a summer meal program as an additional support resource for school districts nationwide.

The Summer Food Service Program menus includes six weeks of U.S. Department of Agriculture compliant hot and cold meals, as well as recipes, nutritional details and food production reports. The menus also provide options for grab-and-go and delivered meals.

This service is available free of charge. Medium to small school districts with 5,000 students or fewer may find the greatest benefit from the menu program. School districts may access the free menus [online](#).

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Survey Results Shed Light on Reaching Youth

Midwest Dairy was proud to partner with GENYOUth on their third youth insights survey, [Youth and the Future of Food](#), which explored the youth perspective on sustainable nutrition. The findings revealed disconnects that youth have between the environment and their food, a hunger among youth to know more and opportunities for stakeholders throughout the food ecosystem to do more to help ensure youth can lead, act and choose wisely in today's food environment.

The survey found that although youth care about food and the environment separately, they don't know much about how the two are interconnected, where their food comes from or why it matters. Sixty-five percent of youth say they regularly think about how healthy or nutritious their food is, while only 33 percent think about whether the food they eat has an impact on the environment. However, the study also revealed that



youth are personally interested in learning more about topics related to how their food is produced, including the issue of producing food in earth-friendly ways, how to feed the world's growing population and knowing where their food comes from.

Youth expect food companies, farmers and their schools to keep them informed and to help them make healthy, sustainable food choices, but a majority of youth do not feel that is currently happening. Within the food sector, only farmers were seen as allies in helping youth make healthy, sustainable food choices and 83 percent are interested in visiting a farm and/or talking to a farmer.

The report highlights new ideas around how to link sustainability to healthfulness with youth and will impact our long-term youth strategy. The information has been shared with the Dairy Management Inc., who is considering this data as part of the strategy for how to build trust in dairy with youth. In addition, Midwest Dairy is working in collaboration with National Dairy Council and GENYOUth to host a webinar in the coming weeks to share the insights with thought leaders.

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Students Learn about Dairy Farming through Virtual Calf Chats

Throughout the school year, nearly 50,000 students learned about dairy farming through a Midwest Dairy partnership with Discover Dairy's Adopt-A-Cow program. During the school year, students follow the growth of a calf while connecting with four dairy farm families from the Midwest to learn about how farmers care for the land, animals and local communities.

During the year, classrooms received regular updates on their adopted calf, along with dairy-themed curriculum and activities. The program's finale is typically a live chat with a dairy farmer and adopted calf. However, a pivot had to be made due to the COVID-19 pandemic and schools adopting distance learning. Instead of a live chat in the classroom, a YouTube Live video was used to connect students with Illinois dairy farmer Lorilee Schultz from Mil-R-Mor Farm in Orangeville, Illinois. The students were amazed by how much the calves had grown since they first met them at a few months old.

Students viewed a milking demonstration, saw where their calves lived and had a naming contest for a three-day-old calf. The virtual farm tour received more than 650 views on YouTube in the first week. The video of the event is available [here](#).



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Animal Agriculture and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone and every industry, including animal agriculture. We recognize all the work that dairy farmers are doing to help their local communities. Unfortunately, there are animal rights activist organizations that are trying to take advantage of the current situation to promote their own agenda and have even tried to link the COVID-19 virus to animal agriculture.



To help farmers and industry stakeholders be more prepared to answer questions, the Animal Agriculture Alliance shared articles that can be used as talking points for conversations that try to link animal agriculture with COVID-19. Read the articles below or visit the [Animal Agriculture Alliance website](#) for more information.

- [Don't be fooled by animal rights groups: COVID-19 has nothing to do with animal agriculture](#)
- [Setting the record straight: animal ag has nothing to do with COVID-19](#)
- [Agriculture isn't to blame for coronavirus outbreak](#)

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Ziplock Bags Donated to Midwest Dairy Schools

As a result of Midwest Dairy's support of the COVID-19 Emergency School Nutrition Fund, GENYOUth offered Midwest Dairy an in-kind offer from one of their vendors. The vendor donated 260 pallets of Ziplock sandwich and snack bags (approximately 6.5 million bags) to school districts who could use them to provide individual meals to students during COVID-19-related school closures. The resealable bag donation was divided between the following Midwest school districts; Chicago Public Schools, Des Moines Public Schools and Little Rock Public Schools.



Ziplock shared [inspirational activities](#) for reusing the bags at home along with some common household items to align with STEM curriculum.

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Midwest Dairy Shares Resources on Dairy Protein to Help Families During Pandemic

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, more consumers are cooking and baking from home. Statistics show that nearly 80 percent of eating occasions today take place in the home, and 65 percent of consumers say that after stay-at-home restrictions end, they plan to continue eating at home more often instead of at restaurants.

As busy families look for creative ideas to help inspire meals and snacks during this time of increased at-home eating, Midwest Dairy is sharing protein-packed recipes and resources to draw attention to dairy foods as a delicious, nutritious source of protein and a great way to help families meet their daily protein goals.

Midwest Dairy has created a new protein-focused [section](#) on its website that features a collection of dairy protein-packed recipes, including [Spinach Stuffed Shells](#), [Confetti Quesadillas with Cilantro Yogurt](#) and [Cheesy Broccoli Potato Soup](#). Undenially Dairy [resources](#) are also displayed on the page showcasing the [importance of dairy](#) in the diet, how dairy helps meet daily [protein needs](#), protein's role in [healthy aging](#), among others. These resources will also be posted now through National Dairy Month on Midwest Dairy's Facebook and Twitter accounts and will be shared them with partners for use on their social media channels.

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Food Safety Research Advances Dairy Export Efforts

Dairy exports have steadily risen in the last 10 years, with a large share of exports resulting from dairy powders. However, spore-forming bacteria (bacteria that can produce dormant-resistant structures called spores) pose an ongoing problem in dairy powders. There is no specific standard for microbial count in dairy powders, as they vary from country to country and customer to customer. Controlling the spore forming microbial levels in dairy powders is one of the important factors that may directly increase U.S. dairy powder exports.

Recently, there has been interest in non-thermal technologies (technologies not involving heat treatment) to kill spore-forming bacteria in dairy powders as the thermal processing of milk powders leads to undesirable flavor and quality attributes and becomes non-acceptable for industrial usage and exports. Dr. David Baumler and his team at the University of Minnesota have been testing the feasibility of specific non-thermal technologies to kill the most problematic and abundant spoilage spore-formers found in milk powders.

In this month's Midwest Dairy Food Research Center (MDFRC) [research webinar](#), Dr. Baumler will be presenting about his team's



progress on utilizing non-thermal technologies to reduce the levels of bacterial spores in dairy powders and the implication of the novel technology on functional properties of dairy powders. The webinar will also be available to watch on-demand on the [MDFRC website](#).

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Community Relief Grants Awarded Across Midwest Dairy Region

Dairy Farmers in all 10 Midwest Dairy states have made a difference in their local communities using Midwest Dairy's Community Relief Grant Program. This temporary program created in early April provided commercial-grade refrigeration to local food pantries to keep dairy foods safe and available to clientele. Midwest Dairy awarded 70 grants that helped serve nearly 200,000 individuals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One food pantry recently moved into a larger space and reported that this opportunity came at an ideal time. "Our clients were eager to take home perishable items like milk, cheese and yogurt and now we are able to meet that demand," stated Rachel Hanson, Decorah Iowa Community Food Pantry board member. "We also appreciate the fact that this unit is very energy efficient, and that will help us keep our monthly expenses down, so we can serve more families in need."

All food pantries were encouraged to share a press release with local media and asked to share Undeniably Dairy messaging with their clients including posters, recipes and clings that Midwest Dairy shipped to each location. Dairy farmers who received the grants were also encouraged to visit over the next month to build a relationship with the food pantry and see how the unit is being stocked with dairy foods.

Although the Community Relief Grant Program has come to an end, Midwest Dairy is still accepting applications for the [Undeniably Dairy Grant Program](#).

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