

PA Milk Marketing Board
Carol A. Hardbarger

PMMB and the 4-legged Stool

One of the most difficult things that Rob, Jim and I have to do is navigate through the decision-making process keeping in mind that we serve farmers, processors and retailers. The 4th leg of the stool is the consumer and even though people may think we don't care about retail pricing in the state, we do.

Imagine yourself in a situation at work or with your family in which you must make a decision that takes "the group" into consideration. The decision you make must be the best one for all and will require some give and take—one person or team or office area may appear as more favored than the other(s). Yet, you know that your responsibility involves what is best in the long run for the entire group.

This situation is how PMMB operates in many of the decisions we must make. Our responsibility is to the Commonwealth's entire dairy industry. We are often conflicted if our options involve choices in which one of our constituent groups will appear to be favored over another. One recent example involved PMMB itself when we were considering which of our fees to increase. We did not increase one current fee rate because we feared the additional cost might be passed on to dairy farmers. We need the money, but not at the expense of our farmers.

It is imperative that PMMB members think holistically about the dairy industry. We may, at times, appear to not do so, but our commitment is to make the best decision in each situation, considering its impact on all parties concerned. We ask those we serve—farmers, processors, retailers and consumers—to trust that we have their interests at heart, and we are aware that is difficult given past experiences. This is a new Board. We care about agriculture and the dairy industry in Pennsylvania. We truly believe that if we all work together, we can solve at least some of the current issues. The Board has changed. Individual farmers, processors, retailers and consumers may also have to change in order to react to the current market and competition. It isn't easy, we know.

The greatest help each of you can provide to us as we move forward is to communicate your thoughts, questions and concerns. Misinformation has caused a lot of problems in the past. Please work with us to provide trust, information and grass-roots efforts to make the dairy industry in Pennsylvania a shining example of cooperation. That is definitely in the best interests of everyone.

PMMB is always available to respond to questions and concerns. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 or by email at chardbarga@pa.gov.