

THE FOLLOWING TESTIMONY IS BEING SUBMITTED
TO THE
PENNSYLVANIA MILK MARKETING BOARD
BY ARDEN TEWKSBURY, MANAGER
OF THE PROGRESSIVE AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION

AUGUST 30, 2022

Progressive Agriculture Organization (Like us on FACEBOOK!)

1300 Rattlesnake Hill Road Meshoppen, PA 18630 Phone 570-833-5776

progressiveagricultureorg@gmail.com

August 30, 2022

My name is Arden Tewksbury from Meshoppen, Pennsylvania (Wyoming County).

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board:

I want to thank you one more time for continuing to have open hearings involving the level of the special over-order premium on Class I milk.

My appearance today is being supported by the Elk Lake School in Dimock, PA, the Susquehanna Career & Technology Center, Farm Women United, and in full support from the Northeast Intermediate Unit, Scranton, PA. I am appearing here today in full support of the continuation of the over-order premium of \$1 per cwt. on Class I milk.

I am not supporting any attempt to place a hold on this premium without a full-scale hearing being conducted by the board.

Mr. Chairman, I find it necessary that we have over-order premiums only because neither the US Congress or the USDA have not done anything about creating a new pricing formula for dairy farmers that would consider a dairy farmers' cost of producing milk. Lacking a new pricing system for dairy farmers is why I joined with others in helping to develop the present over-order premium in Pennsylvania.

I fully realize that a premium on the value of Class I milk is necessary. However, we in Pro-Ag have always known of the problems that outside milk can interrupt the sovereignty of special premiums. That is the reason why we helped create the regional cooperative marketing association (RCMA).

If we are not able to obtain a new pricing formula for dairy farmers, then in all probability we will be more dependent on various premiums on milk.

The question is: Can premiums really work? Yes, they can, but more than one state has to be involved. The original premium began in the New England states. These states had already organized under RCMA. Durling, then Readington Farms of Whitehouse, New Jersey sold milk into New England and gathered some of the RCMA premiums and returned the funds to their dairy farmers in Pennsylvania.

So milk produced in Pennsylvania, bottled in New Jersey, sold in New England, returned some of the premium money to Pennsylvania dairy farmers.

Durling and Readington Farms paid this premium to the dairy farmers at the same time they were paying their special negotiated premium to their dairy farmers. In addition for a few months we had a state order in New York State which allowed a price of \$1.30 per cwt. to be paid to dairy farmers. Some Pennsylvania legislators were ready to introduce legislation that would have allowed the same pricing system as New York State.

After some of the dairy cooperatives in New York State protested the new order to the courts, finally the court threw the order out. So now, we're back to Pennsylvania with our over-order premium on Class I milk. How can we improve the order? I'm not sure. Some say that all dairy farmers in Pennsylvania must share in the premium money. That sounds great, but where will the extra money come from?

Will we take the current sum of money that is generated from the premium and divide the money amongst all Pennsylvania dairy farmers? Or are we going to double the amount of money that our Class I handlers collect from the marketplace to pay the dollar over-order premium, or whatever is generated (to all Pennsylvania dairy farmers)?

How much more can our Class I handlers stand? What about the handlers that manufacture dairy products? Why not charge them some funds? Why is it always the Class I handlers that pay all the premiums? Why not all milk handlers paying the premiums?

Please don't forget that in the Federal Milk Marketing orders, the Class I handlers pay money into the order so the manufacturers of dairy products can draw money, fund the Federal orders in order so these handlers can pay their producers the same starting price as Class I handlers.

Yes, I think we are always demanding too much from our Class I handlers.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the Board's efforts to help our dairy farmers in Pennsylvania. If we want to help dairy farmers, then maybe we should ask the milk handlers (and we know who they are) that handle the majority of milk to manufacture dairy products, maybe to eliminate market adjustments being taken from our dairy farmers.

No matter whether it was the RCMA program in New England or New York and the present premium in Pennsylvania, these handlers that handle large sums of milk are never required to pay their dairy farmers a premium. I'm sure most of their dairy farmers would be happy if these handlers would eliminate the market adjustment price. Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you for

the opportunity to present our testimony today, and again I want to say, the only over-order premium that was negotiated and sustained was the Durling/Readington Farms premium. Remember, both Durling/Readington paid the negotiated premium and the RCMA premium at the same time. The negotiated premium returned millions of dollars to dairy farmers. We must find a better way in Pennsylvania to help our dairy farmers. Please do not use the threat of shutting down the premium here in Pennsylvania until we have something to take its place.

Mr. Chairman, I'm again listing all of my past activities, but I'm not going to read them.

*In addition to operating my dairy farm in Meshoppen Township, Wyoming County, Pennsylvania for over 50 years, I have also been involved with many farm organizations. In the 1960s I served on the dairy committee of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, later on I served on the dairy committees of the Pennsylvania Farmers Union, and the Pennsylvania State Grange for several years. In the 1970s, I was elected to the Board of Directors of Eastern Milk Producers, which I served for 9 years. While there, I was on the Executive Board for 7 years, 2 years as Vice-President, and 5 years as President of the Co-op. During my term as President, we were successful in bringing Leprino Foods into South Waverly, Pennsylvania, which took care of a substantial amount of milk that many times was homeless. After leaving the Board, I served as assistant to the General Manager, and later on, I did consulting work

for Leprino Foods. During the 1980s, I was hired to do membership and dairy work for the Pennsylvania Farmers Union and was named manager of the Northern Tier Farmers Union Co-op. I also became a director of the Regional Marketing Cooperative Agency and also the Regional Bargaining Agency. In 1985, I was named Granger of the Year for the State of Pennsylvania. In 1991, several dairy farmers started the Progressive Agriculture Organization, which I have managed since that time.

Mr. Chairman, today in addition to representing the Progressive Agriculture Organization, I'm also representing the Dairy Subcommittee of the National Family Farm Coalition of Washington DC. I serve as Chairman of the Committee. The Coalition has other members in Pennsylvania in addition to Pro-Ag. Members of the Coalition come from at least 20 other states.

In addition to my credentials, I want to add that I have been a School Director of the Elk Lake School District for 59 years. I now have been elected to the Board of Directors of the Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit (NEIU) regional Educational Board. This Board oversees 21 schools in the northeastern part of Pennsylvania. One of the benefits of this position has allowed me to obtain the support of all of these schools to officially support returning whole milk back into the school lunch program. *

Arden Tewksbury, Manager

