

PA Milk Marketing Board
Carol A. Hardbarger

We Need and Want Your Input!

We listen! And even though the process takes time, we try to act to change things where we legally can. In the past 18 months, Rob, Jim and I have had input from a variety of good sources: listening sessions; emails and phone calls responding to our newsletter, press releases, and other general feedback; a producers' survey; and a recently released Legislative and Budget Finance Committee (LBFC) Report (<http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/Resources/Documents/Reports/653.pdf>) . Several things are currently moving forward and are in the regulatory review process:

1. A regulation change to require cooperatives to show over order premium amounts on their members' checks and
2. A regulation change to require milk dealers to give their producers a longer notice if the dealer plans to terminate a contract (currently 28 days).

Based on public feedback and recommendations contained in the LBFC report, we have conceptualized two important initiatives that require new or changes in the law. We also know that the majority of Pennsylvania consumers do not mind paying premiums on dairy products at the grocery store if those funds are directed back to our farmers (PDA Consumer Survey, St. Joseph's University, 2019).

One of these initiatives proposes a small premium on non-fluid dairy products that would be collected by the Department of Revenue and distributed back to PA farmers; the premium would be collected on products that are manufactured both in and out of the Commonwealth. This initiative is dependent on the passage of House Bill 1224 by the General Assembly. The example we cite in our concept paper would require a very small premium and would generate an estimated \$14 million annually for our dairy farmers.

The second initiative would greatly enhance the ability of PMMB to determine trends in the distribution and sales of out-of-state dairy products in Pennsylvania. We currently do not have that information, which would be important as we make decisions on milk pricing in our state. The idea is to license businesses/grocery outlets located in Pennsylvania who buy and ship in milk that they purchase from out-of-state milk suppliers. Since those businesses are not milk processors, we do not currently have any mechanism under the law to collect those data.

Both initiatives are in the *concept* stage—general ideas, a vision, and thoughts with some abstraction—and are in no way intended to be our view of what the final legislation might look like. There are few details outlined for each as we recognize that there are many discussions to have and much input to gather before either could be developed fully as a bill in the Assembly.

Because we are in this early stage of development, we are seeking your feedback and input. A Concept Paper on each initiative is posted on our website along with a feedback form:

www.mmb.pa.gov, Board Initiatives page. We want to hear from you!

PMMB is available to answer any of your questions or concerns. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 or by email at chardbarga@pa.gov.