THE FOLLOWING TESTIMONY IS BEING SUBMITTED TO THE

PENNSYLVANIA MILK MARKETING BOARD

BY ARDEN TEWKSBURY, MANAGER

OF THE PROGRESSIVE AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

 MARCH 4, 2020

**Progressive Agriculture Organization (Like us on FACEBOOK!)**

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

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

Mr. Chairman, I’m again listing all of my past activities, but I’m not going to read them. I believe it is more important to relate to the serious financial problems that are facing the majority of dairy farmers in Pennsylvania as well as many dairy farmers across the United States.

\*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 Sub-committee 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. \*

Mr. Chairman, today the Progressive Agriculture Organization (Pro-Ag) is strongly recommending our continuing support of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board’s (PMMB) continuing the special premium of $1 per cwt. on fluid milk that is produced, bottled and consumed in Pennsylvania. We also acknowledge that the $1 per cwt. premium does not in any way alleviate the majority of continued losses experienced by the majority of dairy farmers residing in Pennsylvania.

However, the Board deserved due credit for continuing this premium as long as neither the US Congress or the USDA failed to take any corrective actions to give the average dairy farmer a fair chance to cover all their costs of producing good, wholesome milk for our consumers.

There appears to be a continued problem with the lack of knowledge as to whether the members of some dairy cooperatives are receiving their fair share of the premium money.

I hope this problem can be resolved! As I have pointed out before, the New York State Legislatures allowed their dairy farmers to petition for a hearing to place a premium on fluid milk in New York State. To make a long story short, hearings were held and a premium was established ( I remember testifying three different times in support of this premium). This premium was established at approximately $1.40 per cwt. After a few months, a special referendum was held, and some of the dairy cooperatives were strong enough to discontinue this special premium. What was the problem?

The special premium called for a clearinghouse to be established to collect and disburse the premium to all New York State dairy farmers. However, some of the dairy cooperatives felt they should control the money and disburse the money as they saw fit. Does this sound familiar?

It’s a shame that our Pennsylvania consumers are paying this premium in Pennsylvania thinking they are helping the majority of dairy farmers in Pennsylvania. I sincerely wish that the PMMB had the authority to do more for all of our Pennsylvania dairy farmers. I just received word that a cooperative in Pennsylvania has just raised their marketing costs from 80 cents per cwt. to $1.20 per cwt. The manager tells me “as long as our dairy cooperatives are willing to sell milk way below the Class prices, then my co-op will always be victimized.”

Also, I must report that Readington Farms are now lowering their premium down from $1 per cwt. down to 75 cents per cwt. The good thing about the Readington premium is that their shippers receive the full 75 cents. This premium is not watered down to the producers as the Pennsylvania does in most cases.

Couple these problems we must realize that according to USDA figures, our average Pennsylvania dairy farmer is receiving a price nearly $4 per cwt. below their cost of production. It’s no wonder we are losing so many dairy farmers.

In closing, I have been involved in these dairy situations since the late 1950’s, and I have never seen such a disarray in the dairy industry as I see now. Sad to see the FAKE milk that is displacing our dairy milk in our stores. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) should never have allowed this fake drink to be labeled “milk”. Also, I wonder if any one knows how much real milk is being displaced by using some milk proteins mixed with fillers that is now called cheese? This process allows cheese makers to realize 14 to 16 pounds of cheese from 100 pounds of milk (normally the yield is 9.5 to 10 pounds of cheese from 100 pounds of milk). Unfortunately, some of these cheeses are chasing consumers away from the dairy case.

Anyway, I would like to thank the Board for their consideration.

Arden Tewksbury, Manager