

PA Milk Marketing Board
Carol A. Hardbarger

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

On January 8th, Rob, Jim and I had the honor of participating in a panel discussion hosted by Lancaster Farming and moderated by Phil Gruber. Phil and audience members asked questions and we had the opportunity to clear up some misconceptions about some of the things the Board can and cannot do under the law. We also shared our current initiatives such as regulation changes on which we are working as well as legislation we hope to move forward in the coming year.

I was asked a specific question as to what dairy farmers can do in terms of helping us do our job; my response was, “Communicate, communicate, communicate.” We have found that there ARE a lot of notions about the MMB floating around out there that are just not correct. Or, people get together and discuss a solution to a problem in the dairy industry that is possibly illegal, and we don’t have the opportunity to explain that to them.

One recent example is a question posed to me by a reader of this column, “Why doesn’t PMMB impose a tariff on milk coming into the state from surrounding states much like the federal government is imposing tariffs on foreign goods coming into the country?” I had a chance to write back to this reader explaining that adding a tariff on out-of-state milk is, in fact, not legal due to interstate commerce laws. I hope this person can now communicate that response to others if the question comes up in conversation.

Another example is a question asking if we communicate with other states to find out what they are doing that might work well in Pennsylvania. We are not doing that at this time due to limited resources, but I have been given the idea and will look for a way to make those communications happen—perhaps that would be a good graduate student research project!

We want to hear from our dairy producers, dealers, retailers and consumers about any concerns or questions they may have. PMMB will respond. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 or by email at chardbarger@pa.gov.