

President's Letter
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As I sat down to eat my bowl of “organic” cereal covered with my “non organic” milk (antibiotic free but not labeled as such), I began to read the cereal box. “Our organic foods are made without synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers or genetically engineered ingredients. There are no added artificial flavors or preservatives. Our organic farming methods help protect and nurture the environment.” This of course infers that all other boxes of cereal in the cupboard were inferior, even full of “bad things.” It made me feel like I had contaminated this exquisite granola with my plain old “run of the mill” milk.

As a group the 2% of us who make our living in agriculture have become our own worst enemies. We must learn who our true enemies are and save our salesmanship for when it really counts. Our marketing plans have been developed to try to wrestle control of a larger percentage of the consumer food dollar from our competitors. What we truly accomplish is to turn off a few more customers with each salvo. “BST-Free,” “Humanely Raised,” “Antibiotic Free,” “Free Range,” “Organically Produced,” all denote that in some way or another they are a superior product to the other, and therefore it is justified for the astute consumer to pay more for our product. It also infers that the other product is inferior.

As an industry we are besieged with numerous attacks on our ability to stay in business and to be able to help feed our own citizens as well as the growing population of the world. “Sustainability” is often used as a catch phrase against animal agriculture. I would say that for the dairy industry, “sustainability” means the ability to stay in business, take proper care of our land and animals while providing an affordable nutritious product.

We are currently facing several serious challenges both statewide and nationally that could divide us. Let’s get organized and work together to solve these issues.

State of New Mexico

Environment Department Dairy Rules Environment Department Air Quality Rules

Nationally

FDA - New drug residue surveillance program. This program could give more credence to the anti antibiotic movement, especially if not handled properly.

Milk Pricing - Several proposals are now being floated. We need an industry

consensus before trying to change federal milk pricing. Secretary Vilsack has already said that he will not act until the industry gets organized behind one proposal.

Ethanol - Whether you grow your own corn seems to be the determining factor for whether you like the program or not.

2012 Farm Bill - “We need to curb government spending, and we’ll start with your program, not mine.” This attitude will need to change if we plan on getting our government’s finances in order.

As we in American Agriculture attempt to survive and thrive and help to feed the growing population of the world, we must learn to unite in purpose even while we give consumers a choice of products and prices.