

President's Letter
Luke Woelber
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Let me start by saying that I hope everyone had happy holidays and were able to enjoy time with family and friends. I am sure, like me, many of you are tired of the fiscal cliff debate and the role that dairy policy does or does not play in it.

I was recently reading an article in the Wall Street Journal that stated farm subsidies were “gouging taxpayers and consumers, long after full time farmers became far wealthier than average Americans.” Having read that, and it taking me the better part of the day to calm down, I started thinking about a reply. It is easy for me to just say to the public “come walk a mile in our shoes and see if we are the average Americans.” We have been charged with the task of feeding more people with fewer acres of land and in less places where we are not chastised for milking cows. We have been asked to do more with less and get beat up while we are doing it. It’s unfortunate that they treat us this way when we are the ones producing the food that nourishes them.

Over the past couple of years there has been a lot of work done to reform dairy policy. However, it seems as though Congress did not have the time to truly consider or review it; and we are left with an extension of the programs that expired last September. Perhaps it is time that agriculture approaches this in a different way. From the dairy aspect, the current programs, as you well know, only support smaller producers. How this is considered a fair and equitable policy I do not know or understand. Would it be such a bad idea to have a program similar to the Dairy Security Act that only took effect in catastrophic situations? Everyone would be entitled to the same coverage big or small. Perhaps this is a model that all commodities could adhere to and see where the chips fall. Let us see if the American public views us in a different light. Then Congress would have to rename the Farm Bill for what it truly is – “Food Stamps and Freebies.”

I think it is unfair that our family farms are excluded from support because of our size. It was our choice to expand, take risks, borrow money and grow our operations as we have done; just as it is a smaller producers’ choice to only milk 50 -100 cows. So what makes our families different? Why are we being labeled as “megafarms or factory farms” and being told we are bad because of our size? Do they say the same for car manufacturers? We all know the money that some of them took from the government. How about ethanol plants? It seems as though there is a “disconnect” in our society. As a result of technology and industrialization our population has gone urban. They have no knowledge of an agrarian community, yet they seem to have an opinion about how it should be done. They have embraced technology in an urban setting, yet do not want

to afford us the same opportunity. How do we fix this? Where do we start? These are all questions that need to be answered.

Once again thank you for your support of DPNM. If you need anything, please feel free to contact us.