

For generations my family has been dairy farmers in the hills and valleys of southern Trempealeau County. Dairy farms dominated the landscape of this area and have been the economic lifeblood for our communities. Unfortunately over the last 40 years or more that landscape has seen a dramatic change not only here, but throughout the entire nation. The number of dairy farms has decreased from 648,000 in 1970 to 51,480 in 2012. These farms and the families that run them were major contributors to keeping not only our small towns, but also our rural churches thriving.

A major factor in why we have lost so many dairy farms is an extremely volatile milk price. As supply and demand change, so does the milk price. In 2009 with the national economy struggling dairy farmers lost nearly a third of their income. Input prices stayed high and dairy farmers were faced with either tightening an already too tight belt or going out of business.

In 2010 driven by the continuing roller coaster that the dairy pricing system is three Wisconsin dairy farmers got together and created the Dairy Pricing Association. I, along with two of my brothers, joined this organization shortly after. DPA has two main goals, to help keep a stable milk price for farmers and to provide nutritional dairy products to the needy.

The program is simple, members agree to donate 10 cents for every 100 lbs. of milk they sell to DPA and that money is then put into a fund so that when the farmer's milk pay price falls below a certain level that money is used to buy surplus product which is given to those in need. This is 100% producer funded with zero government/tax payer money involved.

Since its initial 3 members DPA has grown to over 300 across the country. In 2013 nearly 570,000 pounds of milk with a value of almost \$125,000 was donated by the farmer members to help those in need. Most of the milk products goes to local food pantries such as the Hunger Task Force in La Crosse. This summer they were the recipient of 8,000 pound of cheese.

Together the members of DPA are working to help stabilize the milk price and hopefully help make it possible that another generation will continue to keep rural America alive. DPA has certainly already made an impact on people's lives by providing dairy products to those who otherwise may not have access to them.

Tim Byom

Dairy Farmer and member of Hardies Creek Lutheran Church, Ettrick, WI

If you or anyone you know would like more information on the Dairy Pricing Association please contact Tim at 608-582-4517 or e-mail him at byomaats@juno.com