



NEWS RELEASE

PENNSYLVANIA DAIRY STAKEHOLDERS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **PA Dairy Stakeholders and Center for Dairy Excellence to Join Forces**

At its meeting last week, the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders gave final approval to a plan to combine their resources with the Center for Dairy Excellence, creating a stronger entity that will provide even more effective leadership to the dairy industry. Operating under the name of the Center for Dairy Excellence (CDE), the combined organization will set an example for cooperation in providing leadership, education and advocacy for the entire Pennsylvania Dairy industry.

Leon Graves, president of the board of the Dairy Stakeholders, said, "We believe it is vital for groups within the dairy industry to consolidate and take full advantage of the limited human and financial resources available. Our board was committed to being proactive in bringing these two organizations together, and moving toward the goal of having the industry speak with a unified voice." He said his board wanted to lead by example and was willing to give up some individual recognition for the good of the whole industry. He added that the move will eliminate some of the duplication and confusion arising from having multiple organizations within the industry.

Lolly Leshner, president of the board of the Center for Dairy Excellence, said, "Combining the resources of the Dairy Stakeholders and CDE is an important step in providing strong leadership for Pennsylvania's dairy industry. These two organizations are both committed to moving the industry forward and ensuring that all segments of the industry are working together for a more profitable future. I am both encouraged and excited to see the fruition of months of discussions."

The two groups have been in serious discussions for the last 18 months, though the concept of bringing together the Commonwealth's dairy organizations has been explored for several years. Both groups are organized as 501 (c)(6) independent organizations, so structurally the move to combine will be smooth.

The Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders was organized in 1996 as a way to bring all segments of the industry together, from producers to consumers, with the goal of creating a more

profitable and growing dairy industry. The Center for Dairy Excellence was created in 2005 as an outgrowth of the Dairy Task Force. Mission statements of both organizations are very similar, reflecting a desire to strengthen, support and expand the industry.

Graves added that the new organization will build upon the strengths of both and will provide more clarity and focus in serving the industry. “We feel we can be more effective by working together and operating as a single entity.”

Programs of the Dairy Stakeholders such as their academic scholarships and their Pacesetter awards program will continue on their own merits as the organizations fully merge. CDE will assume the Stakeholders’ responsibilities in co-hosting the annual Pennsylvania Dairy Summit with the Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania.

There will be a transition board made up of members of the two boards who will oversee the transition for a two year period, though the actual effective date of the move is January 1, 2011. When fully implemented, it is expected that the new, permanent CDE board will have representation from retail, milk dealer/processor, cooperatives, allied industry, Penn State University, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture and at least five producers including representatives from PDMP and the Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association.

Graves and Leshar both noted that they anticipate that current supporters of the two groups will throw their support behind the consolidated entity, and perhaps increase their support as the group works to strengthen and unify the industry.

More information about both organizations can be found at their websites, [www.padairystake.org](http://www.padairystake.org) and [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org).

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