



For Immediate Release

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DAIRY CENTER, STAKEHOLDERS HOLD FIRST JOINT MEETING

Organizations to Join for Benefit of PA Dairy Industry

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania’s dairy industry will benefit from the joining of the Center for Dairy Excellence and the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders, which will provide leadership, education and advocacy to boost the industry.

The groups’ boards of directors recently met to prepare for the integration of the two organizations that will begin operating under the name of the Center for Dairy Excellence on Dec. 31.

Lolly Leshar of Bernville, Berks County, president of the Center for Dairy Excellence board, welcomed the Dairy Stakeholders, acknowledging the group’s leadership in consolidating the organizations to bring unity to the dairy industry. “We appreciate the Stakeholders’ efforts in taking this momentous step to move Pennsylvania’s dairy industry forward with stronger, more consolidated leadership,” she said.

Leon Graves of Syracuse, N.Y., board president of the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders, recognized the center for bringing a new level of support and resources to the dairy industry. “When the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders was formed in 1996, it was to fill a void in leadership for Pennsylvania’s dairy industry,” said Graves. “That effort has gone full circle with the potential for the combined organization being greater than the sum of its parts.”

Graves said the Dairy Stakeholders board is fully committed to proactively bringing the two organizations together, adding the move will eliminate some of the duplication and confusion arising from having multiple organizations within the industry.

“With 7,400 dairy farms and \$4.5 billion in economic revenue, a strong dairy industry is critical to the commonwealth,” Agriculture Secretary Russell C. Redding said. “Having unity in the dairy leadership will be tremendously beneficial in bringing a new level of resources to our dairy farms and providing input to shaping dairy policy in Pennsylvania.”

The groups reviewed the center’s existing programs and identified future industry needs, recognizing priorities for the combined organization.

“The center has a complete staff dedicated to serving the dairy industry and individual dairy farms day in and day out,” Center for Dairy Excellence Executive Director John Frey said. “That aspect of our organization allows the center to be a valuable resource for Pennsylvania’s dairy farm families and infrastructure within the dairy industry.”



“Since its inception, the Dairy Stakeholders focused on providing leadership for the industry, from farm to fork, by bringing together members from the production, processing and retail segments of the industry,” said N. Alan Bair, facilitator for the group. “That is something we can bring to the center to make it an even greater resource for the industry.”

After the first of the year, all operations of the Dairy Stakeholders will be consolidated into the center. A combined transition board meeting is set for January to begin the transition to a permanent Center for Dairy Excellence board to be in place by 2012, with representatives from both boards.

For more information about the integration of the Center for Dairy Excellence and the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders, call 717-346-0849.

Media contact: Jayne Sebright, 717-259-6496; c-jsebrigh@state.pa.us

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Photo: Members of the Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders and Center for Dairy Excellence boards met early in December in preparation for the integration of the organizations in January. Members of the boards attending the meeting included (seated) John Frey, Erick Coolidge, Lolly Leshner, Leon Graves, Gary Heckman, (standing) Allyn Lamb, Brian Reed, Vinton Smith, David Hunsberger, Jennifer Heltzel, Arlen Benner, Betsy Albright, Gordon Hoover, Christine Waddell, David Dowler, Ron Kline, PA Deputy Agriculture Secretary Michael Pechart, and N. Alan Bair.

The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and was launched in January 2004 by Governor Edward G. Rendell. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center's mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more about the Center at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.