

**United States Department of Agriculture**

**Before The Secretary of Agriculture**

**In re: [Docket No. 23-J-0067; AMS-DA-23-0031]  
Milk in the Northeast and Other Marketing Areas**

**Hearing beginning August 23, 2023**

**Testimony Presented By:**

**Neil Hoff**

**Representing**

**Dairy Farmers of America**

**1405 North 98<sup>th</sup> St**

**Kansas City, KS 66111**

**Subject: Surveyed Commodity Products**

Hello, my name is Neil Hoff, and I am a dairy farmer from Windthorst, Texas. Today I am testifying on behalf of the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and my dairy cooperative, Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), in support of the NMPF proposals. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my thoughts on milk order modernization. I am a fourth-generation dairy farmer, working the same land as my great-grandfather did back in the 1800's. Two of my grandsons currently help me on the farm. They are the sixth-generation milking cows on this farm.

In our industry, all farms strive to be sustainable but, the term remains hard to uniformly define. At my farm, as each generation hands off to the next, we make sure that the farm and the cows are in a better place than when we took over. We make sure the farm is improved with each generation. That, to me, should be the definition of what sustainability is all about.

I currently milk about 100 cows; half Holstein and half Jerseys. This is about the same number of cows that I milked 20 years ago. One of the reasons I have not grown over the years, has been due to me being away from the farm because of my expansive involvement in the leadership of our industry. On the dairy marketing side, I was on the original Board of DFA when it was formed in 1998, and still serve today on its corporate Board of Directors. On the policy side, I currently sit on the NMPF Board of Directors, and on the advertising and promotion side, I have served on the Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) Board of Directors for 25 years. Additionally, for the last 12 years, I have been honored

to have served as Chairman of United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA), the dues paying and state and region side of dairy promotion. So, I wear a lot of hats in our industry, but my testimony today is personal, not from one of the hats I wear, but from me, from my heart.

I would like my small dairy to stay viable for at least my next two generations. I would like for my grandsons, currently working on my farm to have the opportunity to make a decent living and raise their families the way my parents and grandparents did. I believe the NMPF proposals provides the best chance!

The past few years there have probably been well over 100 meetings of dairy producers to try to gain some consensus for a unified Federal Order plan. I have been a part of many of those meetings. Dairymen are generally conservative, independent-thinking people. It is usually hard for dairy producers from all across this country to come to an agreement on just about any

issue but, through the many meetings held by both the cooperative and the NMPF membership, producers have united! The NMPF Board of Directors, representing all size dairies, from all areas of the country, voted unanimously for the proposal that has been submitted to this hearing, and the 48 members of the DFA Board of Directors representing all size dairies from across the country also voted unanimously!

I understand that make allowances are an important aspect in determining Federal Order Class Prices and from time to time there is a regulatory need to adjust them. I ask that in doing so that the USDA consider the impact on dairy farm operations' milk prices, and more importantly, the impact on dairy farm profitability. The more modest changes proposed by NMPF, which they have indicated will lower farm milk prices by about \$0.50 per hundredweight, all else equal, is a troublesome but acceptable change. The significant changes proposed by the International Dairy Foods Association and the Wisconsin Cheese

Manufacturers Association would be much more detrimental to my milk price and should be rejected.

Windthorst is a small, but thriving, community in north-central Texas with about 500 residents. Windthorst is like many of the small towns across this country that make up the backbone of America, but the only industry in this town, and supporting its people, is the dairy industry! I believe to keep a stable dairy industry that will support my small town, we need help from USDA with order modernization. So, on behalf of my small dairy and my family who operate it, and my community that I love, I ask you all to support the NMPF proposals submitted in this hearing.

I understand that for a fair hearing all interests should be heard but, at the end of the day the recommended decision by USDA will be a producer program, voted on by producers only! I ask that you listen to the producers and seriously consider the NMPF proposals submitted at this hearing. I think these proposals will

give my small farm a fighting chance going forward. My dairy, my family and my community are asking for your help.