

Comments from Amy Richardson regarding the Dairy Task Force meeting of August 24, 2021:

- Heather made a few points related to marketing strategies that I really support as well- not strictly about being "Vermont", but that our dairy sector is protecting the environment for everyone here, that we are striving everyday to be truly sustainable, that we are part of local communities around the state... etc.
- I don't know much about the Caring Dairy program but do know a bit about the FARM program, also a nationwide effort and happens to be required of AgriMark members to participate. Check out [nationaldairyfarm.com/](http://nationaldairyfarm.com/)
- I agree with the comments related to need for more processing capacity, and with that slaughter capacity. Both of these areas would benefit from stronger connection to "Vermont" as a brand as well as addressing critical needs of farmers. I think that value added products are likely a huge part of sustainability.
- I've spent a lot of years working with both VT dairy promotion and NE dairy promotion groups. Historically I've felt the key to sustainability for VT dairy sector is to be a strong member of the group- that is, the dairy sector across all of New England. I still think this is essential and important. But, I do also think that us farmers can't ignore the fact that CONSUMERS LIKE VERMONT AS A BRAND ! And it may be a key component to the future of dairy ag in Vermont to embrace that, because consumers are "here" to stay.
- I think there is something to learn from dairy agriculture in other countries... and if anyone wants to sponsor me to travel to the UK to study this, I will jump at the chance! Kidding aside- I've traveled to Northern England once and have a small grant to return. I'm not trying to say they have all the answers but for example, the use of milk vending machines is ongoing and growing in popularity. I mean like a soda machine. Farmers often set these units up in a farmstand situation where customers purchase pasteurized or raw milk in reusable glass bottles. The concept seems so straightforward to me, but for whatever reasons basically doesn't exist in the US. Other value added farm businesses including agritourism are different in the UK also and could be examples for Vermont farmers.

- I agree with the farmer comments about need for FMMO reform. And I agree with the idea of dairy CoOps and legislature working together somehow on this issue. I do think that supply management is a good tool. The fact is that farmers are doing more with less these days. And there is too much milk out there. But being able to "go back to full production" is not the answer IMO. At the same time I don't think a realistic future of dairy ag in Vermont is the revival of tiny farms. Somehow we have to build a future for our dairy sector that includes a variety of stakeholders- multi sized operations both conventional and organic, options for diversifying and value added production. A consumer base who supports us in the work we do and is willing to pay fairly for it.
- Lastly I agree with a few comments made related to education and marketing. Like it or not the average consumer doesn't know much about dairy farming, has lots of opinions anyway, and has a multitude of options (already) when they look in the dairy case at the grocery store. Consumers have a lot of power this way, and would make better choices of they were better informed

Thanks for your attention on this important topic. And thanks for accepting my personal comments here.

I look forward to hearing more about the work of the Task Force!

Best,  
Amy Richardson  
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