

82 Producers attend Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting

By Linda Harrington

Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia's 15th Annual General Meeting was held at the Best Western Glengarry January 6-7th with 165 participants, including 82 producers.

The two day agenda was filled with updates and reports from the industry and it gave producers a chance to ask questions of the experts.

Messages of support and updates were provided by guest representatives of dairy farmers from across the country who share similar concerns and struggles.

The AGM gives dairy producers from across the province an opportunity to come together and share tricks of the trade and socialize with like-minded farmers.

The new proAction initiative was top of mind for many in attendance. "We know it is a good thing but there are certainly concerns about it," says Lauchie MacEachern. "We hope consumers get on board and support us, so it is a win for everyone. We know what we do, and we would never want to harm the environment. We want our farms to be here for future generations. The proAction plan will

involve a lot more time for record keeping and we want the public to realize the effort involved."

The way cows are milked on dairy farms is quite diverse as technology continues to change. "You have to figure out which technology is going to pay you back the most and pick what works for you," says Allan Macmillan, who uses an activity monitor on each of his cows to keep track of details such as rumination, eating times and when the cow is ready to breed. "I can use the data to maximize yields and I don't even have to actually see the cow."

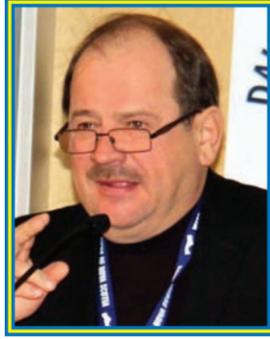
There are three basic styles of dairy barn. The more traditional pipeline or tie stall, parlour / free stall, and robotic, which is a different kind of free stall offering cows a choice of when they are milked. All offer pros and cons and different costs depending on the size of the herd and the number of employees. "It is a family farm but it is still a business and it has to make money," said Allan Macmillan.

MacEachern, Macmillan and another local farmer Alan Porter (see photo on page 9)



DFNS Board Chair Andrew McCurdy welcomes everyone to the 15th Annual AGM at the Best Western Glengarry, Truro.

shared stories about the next generation of famers and the sustainability of their family farms. Alan Porter has one son who is old enough to know he wants to be a dairy farmer, and while MacEachern and McMillan's children are younger they still are showing a keen interest. "My son said if the NHL calls for him to play hockey he is going to have a tough decision when he tells them he can't sign on because he wants to be a dairy farmer," laughs Lauchie.



CEO of the Canadian Dairy Commission, Jacques Laforge presents the CDC Report.



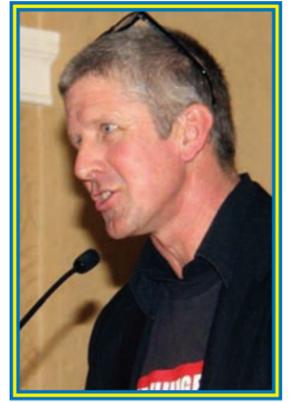
David Wiens, producer/director from Dairy Farmers of Manitoba and Vice Chair of Dairy Farmers of Canada, presents the DFC Report.



Executive Board Member John Vissers was chair of the Wednesday afternoon meeting.



Julie Belzile discussed progress in the P5 Harmonization.



Ian McHattie presented information about the Harvest For Hunger NS project for the Canadian Food Grains Bank, prior to opening the silent auction for corn harvested from the two local projects.



Gloria Beyeler presented an update on the Canadian Quality Milk Program.

Surplus Skim Milk Powder is a Major Concern

By Linda Harrington

Mr. Jacques Laforge, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC) presented the Annual CDC Report at the Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia AGM. He told producers, "It is decision-making time!" as a result of what he calls a "perfect storm" for demand and production in the 2014-2015.

The good news is consumers have listened to nutritionists and recognized the nutritional benefits of butter, cream and higher fat dairy products. This has resulted in an increased demand for butter fat, but at the same time has caused a surplus of skim milk powder. The CDC decided to make a "bold move" and give a 30% reduction in their support price of skim milk powder, the first time this has happened, hoping to create new markets yielding better revenue for skim milk powder.

There has been a 2% increase in market growth over the last few years from good marketing and the fact that dairy fat has now become a good thing. Dairy products, including fluid milk and yogurt, are containing more fat than a few years ago as consumers change their eat-

ing habits. "From a growth perspective, we have never had a healthier industry for growth," says Mr. Laforge. "But any good thing that comes there are always little things around it that are not so good, but at least growth is happening." There was a 4% increase in milk production in the last year, but this was not enough to keep up with the demand for butter and CDC butter stocks were reduced.

The surplus skim milk powder is a major concern for the CDC, but Laforge says this responsibility must be shared with the processors. Producers and processors are in ongoing negotiations, hoping to reach some critical decisions in the next few weeks. "What we are hoping for is for processors to either sell it at reduce margins, or use domestic milk protein first before importing any."

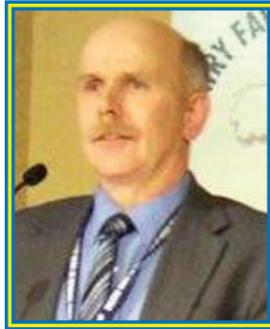
Mr. Laforge gave an update on several CDC managed programs including the Dairy Innovation Program which has been expanded to include butter. There were 22 applications in the last year, with 12 approved. There were 103.5 million liters of milk used through this program.

Niche cheese markets and other products were export-

ed within Canada's trade limits to the tune of 3,000 tonnes or 22 million liters of milk in 2014/15. The total for 2015/16 is expected to be 2,400 tonnes.

The CDC created the "Milk Access for Growth" program to encourage more businesses to invest in dairy. This program would ensure adequate access to milk for companies looking to develop a new product. "This was to create program showing that Canada is open for business in dairy," says Mr. Laforge, noting there have not been any applications but some are being investigated.

The World Trade Organization decision this past year will end export subsidies effective immediately, but Canada has been given until 2020 to adjust. This decision dramatically affects the export of skim milk powder by the CDC.



DFNS Vice Chair Gerrit Damsteegt presented the DFNS Board of Directors report.



Ashley Baskin discussed the Livestock Traceability component of the proAction Program with producers.



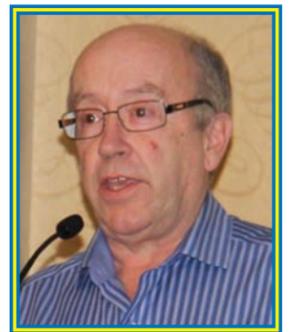
Dwane Mellish, DFNS staff, was MC for the Annual Banquet.



DFNS Board Member Dustin Swinkels reports on progress of the A4 Synergy Committee.



Nancy Douglas gave an overview of the proAction components.



Jim Baillie, presented the NS Federation of Agriculture Report.



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