



2025 Federal Policy Priorities



Dairy Farmer Cooperative

Rural Workforce for Rural Prosperity

The dairy industry faces significant labor shortages, particularly in rural areas, making workforce accessibility and reliability a top policy priority. Dairy farms rely heavily on immigrant labor to fill essential positions, yet there is no effective system for farmers to protect their current workforce or hire new foreign-born workers. Existing programs like the TN Visa allow for hiring educated professionals from Mexico or Canada but do not address the critical shortage of entry-level labor that dairy farms require. The current H-2A visa program excludes dairy farming because it is not seasonal employment, leaving no labor solution for year-round activities like dairy farming.

Farms, their employees and families are the backbone of our rural communities. To encourage rural prosperity, our rural communities must remain viable. Long term viability means we must find a solution for the labor needs of dairy farms and their employees. A multi-year, renewable agricultural worker visa that includes dairy is essential. This visa must provide legal status for existing workers and a practical process to recruit new foreign-born workers. Edge supports efforts to expand the H-2A program to include year-round workers, specifically dairy, and to create a pathway for the legal status of the current on-farm workforce. Attracting a stable and reliable workforce is crucial for ensuring that farms continue to drive the rural economy and support thriving communities.

Trade and Supply Chain

U.S. dairy farmers are the most efficient in the world at providing safe and wholesome dairy products to meet growing consumer and nutritional demands around the globe. The Upper Midwest is a powerhouse for cheese production, so increasing dairy exports to existing, expanding and emerging markets ensures higher and more stable prices for our farmers. Edge urges a greater focus on negotiating new trade agreements that include market access and expansion of standard U.S. terms of trade with key partners. We also believe that international trade and global food security depend on healthy multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization and encourage continued U.S. leadership within those organizations. As we expand our reach to international customers, we must ensure existing trade agreements are implemented as intended. Protecting products from anti-competitive trading practices that obstruct our ability to export must be a priority.

Climate and Environmental Sustainability

Clean water and resilient farms can go hand-in-hand. Edge stands with our farmers in their commitment to seek effective and financially viable ways to protect and improve the environment, water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We believe environmentally focused policies affecting agriculture should be guided by farmers, grounded in science, driven by the marketplace and sufficiently flexible to allow for innovation at the farm level. These initiatives also build trust and goodwill within the communities where our farms operate.

Edge supports the continued funding of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program to find innovative ways for farmers to address climate issues. These pilot programs are helping farmers identify new ways to protect and improve the environment while monetizing climate-smart practices. The practices, improvements and efficiencies should reflect that both crops and animal agriculture have a role in agriculture's sustainability efforts and policy initiatives should mirror those efforts. With growth and



widespread support, the climate-smart programs will create economic opportunity for all forward-looking farmers who want to become involved in environmentally sustainable farming practices.

As an industry, PFAs will continue to be a “forever chemical” that requires engagement, research and reasonable oversight. With so much unknown about these substances, it is important that we learn more before over-regulating. In addition, the efficacy of the dairy food supply chain must be upheld without fault falling on the farmer. Farmers must have access to a sufficiently funded indemnity fund to protect impacted farms.

Farm Bill Priorities

Federal dairy programs can greatly affect our farmers’ ability to earn a living. Farmers want to utilize the tools our government provides for success, but it is important these programs are judicious with our farmers’ and the nation’s resources. Ultimately, farm policy should serve all sizes and types of dairy farms to utilize various tools within the marketplace for sustainable farm businesses. Edge opposes any payment limitations and program participation limits based on farm size.

Accurate and timely payments

The Federal Milk Marketing Orders have served the dairy community well over time in many aspects, including providing some safeguards for dairy farmers. Recent price volatility has resulted in the decline of participation by processors, especially in the Upper Midwest (Federal Order 30). With lack of participation, an order may be considered irrelevant and voted out. With that dissolution also go the safeguards for farmers that are part of the federal order system. Protections such as timely payments and mandatory third-party weight verification provide a structure of safeguards and trust between processors and producers and should be preserved.

Provisions to include within the farm bill to make these protections permanent and uniform for all dairy farmers and processors include:

- **Timely payments** – Under current FMMO regulations, processors must pay their farmer patrons at least twice monthly if milk is pooled. With the current market pressure on Federal Order 30 and potentially other orders, Edge proposes extending this protection, regardless of the federal order or pooling status, as a nationwide requirement for all handlers as is currently required in federal orders. Dairy farmers should receive timely, consistent payments for their milk so they can maintain their business operation, regardless of where they sell their milk.
- **Third-party verification of weights, tests and samples** – Current FMMO regulations require a third-party verification of weights, tests and samples for all pooled milk. Farmers that are part of a cooperative utilize the certified testing services of a company of the cooperative’s choosing.

Farmers that ship directly to private processors utilize a certified testing cooperative or USDA to meet the requirements of the Federal Order regulations. Like ensuring timely payments, we believe dairy farmers should have the confidence and transparency with their buyers that accurate weights and tests are used to calculate milk payments. Codifying this practice into law within the farm bill or other federal policy extends this protection to all dairy farmers regardless of where they sell their milk. It also builds trust between processors and their patrons as a neutral third-party resource.





Title I – Commodity programs

Dairy Margin Coverage Program

Edge supports a strong dairy safety net that allows all types and sizes of farms to fully utilize all dairy risk management programs. The Dairy Margin Coverage Program has functioned well for small to medium-sized farms with the additional changes provided through Supplemental DMC. Edge supports equitable treatment and full enrollment of all dairy operations within this program.

Farmers utilizing the DMC program are paid based on historical marketing data. Previously, historical base was calculated using marketing years 2011-2013 until a one-time update was included in the 2020 appropriations bill and in both the 2023 and 2024 1-year extensions of the 2018 Farm Bill. Edge supports allowing farms to update the amount of milk they can cover in the DMC program every year so that any expanded milk production is included.

Title II – Conservation

Conservation programs

Edge stands with our farmers in their commitment to seek effective and financially viable ways to protect and improve water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We believe environmentally focused policies affecting agriculture should be guided by farmers, grounded in science, driven by the marketplace and sufficiently flexible to allow for innovation at the farm level. When implementing new and existing conservation programs, Edge believes it is important to include farmers who were early adopters of climate-smart practices as well as work to bring new farmers into the fold. Conservation practices should continue to be voluntary.

Title XII – Miscellaneous

Dairy Indemnity Payment Program (DIPP)

The Dairy Indemnity Payment Program has not historically been heavily utilized. Recent discoveries of PFAS “forever chemicals” in agricultural fields, wells, dairy animals and the milk produced by those contaminated animals will make this program increasingly important to dairy farmers. Recent changes by Congress and USDA have made the program more flexible and inclusive of the needs of farmers affected by PFAS chemicals.

Edge supports increasing the authorized funding for DIPP. Providing additional coverage for farms impacted by these chemicals must include adequate compensation for production impacts as well as immunity for all past liability.

Dairy Forward Pricing Program

The Dairy Forward Pricing Program allows milk handlers to pay a negotiated price for milk to dairy producers and cooperatives rather than paying the federal order blend minimum. The program expires with the extension of the 2018 farm bill on September 30, 2025. Edge supports making the program permanent to ensure continuity of contracts for those who choose to use this program.

Milk Donation Reimbursement Program (MDRP)

The Milk Donation Reimbursement Program partners dairy organizations with non-profits to distribute donations of fluid milk to low-income individuals and is authorized through the farm bill. Edge supports continuing the MDRP.



Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives

The program funding for the Dairy Business Innovation Initiative was included in the 2018 farm bill and is divided amongst four regional initiatives that support dairy business development and innovation. In addition to the regularly authorized and appropriated funding, the DBI initiatives received an additional \$80 million in funding from USDA through the American Rescue Plan to increase processing capacity. Edge supports the continued authorization of the DBI initiatives.

Other Policy Positions

Tax Reform

Tax policies have significant financial implications for dairy farmers that can have an effect on the long-term viability of the business. Protecting farms through maintenance of the current estate tax structure, advocating for farm-friendly provisions within the renewable tax credits and maintaining bonus depreciation are all tools farms use to help weather market swings and remain productive and profitable. Ensuring farmer focused reforms are maintained during tax reform discussions is essential for business consistency and certainty for dairy farmers.

Dairy Product Labeling and Nutrition

Dairy products are safe, wholesome, nutritious and should be accurately represented to consumers as such. Nutritionally inferior plant-based products that are wrongly labeled as milk, cheese or ice cream are ubiquitous on grocery store shelves. While there is room for a variety of products in the marketplace, it is wrong to mislead consumers. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must enforce the law so consumers are protected and dairy farmers are not unfairly disadvantaged. Lawmakers should support legislation ensuring that FDA takes action to enforce existing labeling requirements and uphold existing dairy product standards, such as the previously introduced Dairy PRIDE Act.

Edge also believes nutritional regulations should be updated to allow consumers a wider variety of dairy products in government-funded nutrition programs, including the school lunch program.

Recent study results continue to prove nutritional restrictions on fuller-fat dairy products are unwarranted. Consumers and students should be given the choice to select more nutritionally dense dairy food options. Edge supports legislation allowing the option of fuller-fat and flavored dairy products in government-funded feeding programs, such as the previously introduced Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act. In addition, as FDA updates the current nutrient content claim “healthy,” the agency should consider recent studies to include full-fat dairy products as part of the claim.

Animal Health and Traceability

Protecting human and herd health through proactive strategies is vital for ensuring a safe food supply. Ensuring industry stability through animal disease outbreaks is also paramount. With Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza moving across species, biosecurity, accurate traceability, research, vaccine development and industry feedback are key to disease management and control. Individual animal and premise identification and disease traceability continue to be key issues that Edge will monitor.

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