

IDFA Cheese Board

Conference Call RE: COVID-19 and the Impact on the Dairy Industry
Tuesday, March 24 | 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. ET

Presiding: Michael Dykes, D.V.M., President and CEO, International Dairy Foods Association

Counsel: Danielle Quist, Senior Director, Regulatory Affairs and Counsel

Meeting Notes

Welcome and Roll Call

Heather Soubra welcomed the members to the call and asked Danielle Quist to remind members about IDFA's antitrust policy. Next, Soubra asked for a roll call. The following members were on the call:

Officers

Chair: Louie P. Gentine, Chief Executive Officer, Sargento Foods Inc.

Vice Chair: Doug Simon, President, Agropur US Operations

Directors

Troy Ammann, Vice President, Cheese Sales, Agropur U.S. Operations

Brian Baker, President, Baker Cheese, Inc.

Chadwick Baker, President, Crystal Farms Dairy Company

Rob Byrne, Vice President, Industry & Regulatory Affairs, Schreiber Foods, Inc.

Wilf Costello, Chief Commercial Officer, Cheese, Glanbia Nutritionals

Patrick Criteser, President and CEO, Tillamook County Creamery Association

Kurt Epprecht, Owner/Vice President, Cheese Quality & Dairy Policy, Great Lakes Cheese Co., Inc.

Jeff Gentine, President & CEO, Masters Gallery Foods, Incorporated

Bill Graham, CEO, Bel Brands USA, Inc.

Chris Hoeger, President, Prairie Farms Cheese Division, Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.

Kim Parks, Vice President & General Manager, Dairy Food Ingredients, Dairy Farmers of America

Jeff Saforek, Chief Operating Officer, Agri-Mark, Inc./Cabot

Jim C. Sartori, CEO, Sartori Company

Neal Schuman, President, Schuman Cheese

Doug Wilke, CEO, Valley Queen Cheese Factory, Inc.

Dan Zastoupil, President, Marathon Cheese Corporation

IDFA Executive Council Members

David Ahlem, CEO & President, Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc.

Terry Brockman, President & COO, U.S. Division, Saputo Cheese USA Inc.

Tom Murphy, President, Brewster Cheese Company

Sue Taylor, Vice President, Dairy Economics & Policy, Leprino Foods Company

Gold Business Partner Representatives

Betsy Erdelyi, *Managing Director*, BMO Harris Bank

Brian Rice, *Principal*, Rice Dairy LLC

IDFA Staff

John Allan

Dave Carlin

Michael Dykes

Tony Eberhard

Cary Frye

Donald Grady

Matt Herrick

Neil Moran

Colin Newman

Danielle Quist

Joe Scimeca

Heather Soubra

Tom Wojno

IDFA Update

- Michael Dykes noted that IDFA has been primarily focused on critical infrastructure and workforce issues.
- IDFA has a dedicated [webpage](#) focused on COVID-19 issues that is updated regularly, and we are planning a special member briefing focused on various COVID-19 regulatory and legislative issues so stayed tuned on that front.
- Please send any questions to coronavirus@idfa.org and the appropriate IDFA staff member will respond to you quickly.
- Michael also noted that we are in regular communication with the Mexico, Canada and European Dairy Associations, state dairy organizations, and other food and agriculture trade associations in DC to share best practices and to discuss how we are addressing common challenges.
- Matt Herrick discussed items on the IDFA coronavirus webpage, including a new campaign to recognize essential employees in our manufacturing facilities. He also discussed a self-certification template that we have posted to allow critical infrastructure workers to get to and from their jobs despite state quarantine rules. He also highlighted an FDA approved protocol regarding how to treat employees that test positive for COVID-19 or who have come into contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Matt Herrick discussed items on the IDFA coronavirus webpage, including a new campaign to recognize essential employees in our manufacturing facilities. He also discussed a self-certification form that we have posted to allow critical workers to get to and from their plants despite state quarantine rules. He also highlighted an FDA approved protocol regarding how to handle employees that test positive for COVID-19 or who have come into contact with someone with COVID-19.

- Dave Carlin described IDFA's efforts to support direct government payments to essential workers who are working every day to keep the food supply chain up and running. Dave also discussed coalition efforts to encourage Congress to allow heavier trucks to operate on the interstate highway system. Our goal is to see both of these programs included in the next legislative package that Congress considers as the crisis continues to unfold.
- Cary Frye detailed the regulatory group's activities, including efforts to achieve emergency labeling flexibility to sell food service packages at retail; a request to extend the compliance period for upcoming nutrition facts panel changes; as well as an extension of the comment period regarding UF milk for cheese and other pending FDA rulemakings relevant to our industry. Cary also discussed our efforts to encourage USDA to allow more types of milk, yogurt and cheese to be included in the WIC supplemental food packages on an emergency basis.

Industry Issues

- Retail consumption is up dramatically across many categories including dairy. Retailers have been willing to accept food in different types of packaging than usual just to keep food in the stores. Food service consumption is down by 30 to 50 percent for fast-casual restaurants, and even more dramatically for white table-cloth restaurants. Restaurants are beginning to reopen in the Far East which is encouraging. The food and agriculture sector is performing well from a financial perspective compared to many other industries.
- It was also noted that the financial markets are currently operating with minimal disruptions which is an encouraging sign. We are seeing more questions regarding the impact of milk dumping on the Dairy Revenue Protection program with the spring flush on the way and there are tools available to cooperatives and producers to help deal with that situation. Some hedges are also being cancelled, mainly on the food service side.

Transportation Issues

- There has been some concern about the status of products moving through U.S. ports into export markets. Two members noted that product is moving, but there is more congestion than typical.
- The self-certification form for employees seems to be working well with a few exceptions. Many members are using these forms and local authorities are routinely honoring them for workers in critical industries like dairy processing.

Employee Issues

- It's important to have regular communication with your employees during this crisis, both in terms of the virus itself, as well as to provide regular updates on the company's business operations to help employees maintain their connection to the enterprise.