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# milking TIMES

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## IAMCA - 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Source: Mike Southwood, General Manager

The 81<sup>st</sup> International Association of Milk Control Agencies (IAMCA) Annual Conference was hosted in Roanoke, VA from September 17-19, 2017.

The IAMCA organization's mandate is to promote effective, efficient and improved administration of milk regulators in North America. The annual conference provides a forum for the IAMCA membership to learn about key issues facing the dairy industry in Canada and the United States.

Speakers covered a diverse number of topics that included a profile of dairy industry in both Canada and the United States, global economic trends, a comparison of generic versus branded marketing and trade – related to the negotiations to modernize NAFTA.

Consumer demand for dairy products is increasing. With the exception of fluid milk consumption which is showing a -1.0 to -1.5 reduction trend in both Canada and the US, there is an increase overall for higher fat products namely butter and cheeses. The growth in cheeses continues to be in specialty products.

The trade discussion featured presentations by the two national producer organizations, Dairy Farmers of Canada and the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF). While Canada's position on dairy under the NAFTA discussions has been well stated – no new access and that our supply management system is not part of the discussion- the message from the NMPF was predictably the opposite. With the USA

withdrawal from the TPP and the negotiations with the EU on a trade agreement put on the backburner under the new US administration, NAFTA is the key focus. The NMPF feels they have a strong trade alliance with Mexico and that trade with Canada is broken. Canada is an expanding market and they want access. The message to Canadians was that if they do not get more access under the negotiations, they will push for a trade challenge related to industry changes implemented by Canada on ingredients. The US is also unhappy with the CETA agreement and the concessions they feel Canada made on geographical indicators. Despite this, Yves Leduc, the DFC representative, continued to have a strong voice for Canada and did a convincing job at educating the audience about the benefits of our system.

The speakers from Saputo, Dean Foods and the American Dairy Association North East on promotion and marketing made it clear that there is value for both generic and brand promotion. Generic promotion needs to focus on growing the category, explaining the benefits of milk versus other alternate beverages and making milk relevant. Brand marketing should make an emotional connection with the consumer through partnerships with retailers.

The 2017 IAMCA Conference once again provided a great forum for the exchange of information and ideas, as well as networking opportunities between the stakeholders in Canada and the US.

## our mission

*“Alberta Milk leads Alberta's dairy industry. We support the effective operation and advocacy of the supply management system in a vibrant, sustainable and market-focused industry.”*

Alberta Milk  
1303 - 91 St SW  
Edmonton, AB T6X 1H1  
1-877-361-1231

