



Producers Highlight Benefits Found in Center Programs

By John Frey, Executive Director
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Editor's Note: This is a special feature from the Center for Dairy Excellence exclusively for the Farmshine newspaper.

Five years ago, the Pennsylvania Dairy Task Force was established to guide the direction of Pennsylvania's dairy industry. From the task force came the Center for Dairy Excellence.

Today the task force is comprised of 110 volunteers, who develop the ideas that shape the programs the center coordinates to benefit the dairy industry and dairy farms across the state.

Last week, the task force met in Harrisburg to discuss the current state of the dairy industry and how the center is playing a role in helping dairy farms work through short-term challenges and become stronger, more viable businesses.

Those who attended the meeting agreed that the center's role has become even more important as dairy farms are struggling with market volatility and depressed milk prices.

During a panel discussion, five individuals shared how they have seen dairy farm families benefit from the center's programs and resources. Three of the panelists were dairy producers who have been directly involved in those programs.

Their stories were amazing testaments to the role that the center is playing in the state and how it has helped many dairy farms become more profitable.

Below are highlights about the panelists and what they shared with the group. If you haven't taken advantage of the center's programs yet, call us at 717-346-0849 to find out how we can help you strengthen your business, both in the short term and for the long haul.



DON AND PAM GABLE Conebella Farm, Elverson Chester County

Don and Pam Gable own Conebella Farm, a 115-cow Ayrshire operation. They farm about 200 acres and are the fourth generation on the farm, which now sells its own cheese to local markets. They also have an on-farm store where they sell their cheese and other products.

How they have used the center: The Gables took over the farm in 1996 from Don's father and have made changes in their operation to improve both cow comfort and labor efficiency.

The Gables have a dairy profit team. "It has helped just by organizing everyone to come together at one time around a table — all of the key people in our business," Don says.

"One thing that always bothered me before was when the vet would say the nutritionist should be doing something, and the nutritionist would say the vet should be doing something different. This way we are all talking about each issue and everyone knows where we are at."

The role of the center: The Gables rely on the Center for Dairy Excellence to provide consumer education materials they use in their store.

"The people who come into our farm really have no understanding of what it takes to run a dairy farm," Don says. "They are very much interested in keeping the farms in the community, and the information on dairy's economic value really opens their eyes and sticks in their mind."



JOEL KRALL Furnace Hill Holsteins, Lebanon Lebanon County

Joel is a partner in Furnace Hill Holsteins, a 135-cow dairy that he and Tim Crouse established in 2008. Furnace Hill owns the animals, rents the farm and buys feed from Joel's parents who own the land.

How he has used the center: Joel and Tim have worked with the center to establish a dairy profit team for their farm. They've also used the LGM for Dairy insurance program.

"The profit team has allowed us to sit down together with our vet, nutritionist, accountant and facilitator, and it has helped us bring outside perspectives into our business," says Tim.

"As young and beginning farmers, we utilized the LGM for Dairy program because we felt we were more at risk than established farmers. That decision continues to be more and more of a blessing as the milk price continues to stay depressed."

The role of the center: "As the dairy industry continues to become more competitive, it is not enough to just be a great dairyman," Joel says.

"Dairy farmers today need to manage employees, work with environmental regulations, transition between generations, stay on the cutting edge of technology and efficiency tools, utilize risk management tools and still produce a high quality product. The center gives us tools we need to better manage our businesses."



WALT MOORE Walmoore Holsteins, Chatham Chester County

Walt is the majority owner of Walmoore Holsteins, Inc., a 750-cow, 1,100 acre dairy operation. At the age of six, he decided he wanted to go to Penn State, study agriculture and come home to farm. He never looked back. "It's always been in my blood, something that I always had a passion for and still do," he says.

How he has used the center: Ten years ago, the Moores consolidated from three farms where they were milking cows to one. "We've continued to grow internally, and we are in the midst of building a new milking parlor," he says.

Walmoore started using an on-farm advisory team — or profit team — soon after the program was initiated. "I use that team like a board of directors, and it has really helped me with vision planning, moving forward and just staying on task," Walt says.

Walt has also participated in the center's new "Mastering the Dairy Business" conference-call learning series. "The education in general has just been really helpful."

The role of the center: "The industry is ever and quickly changing, and we need a hub like the center to help producers deal with that," Walt says.

"The profit team is just huge — we made a lot of progress. It has really just made me a lot more profitable," he says. "If producers are willing to use the resources that the center is putting out there, they can be very beneficial."

Resources Available From the Center:

The center's role in the state is to empower the people, create the partnerships and coordinate the resources to grow dairy profitability. A few resources for dairy farms supported by the center include:

The Dairy Profit Team Program — financial and program support to help farmers establish on-farm advisory teams — or a board of directors — for their dairy business. Producers can choose to initiate a traditional profit team, a target profit team or a succession planning team through the center.

Risk Management Resources — support in helping dairy producers develop a risk management plan, which could include the new LGM for Dairy insurance program, supported by the center.

Grants for Dairy Farmers — grants made available periodically through federal and other funding sources to help dairy farms improve profitability.

Dairy educational events — training, education and networking opportunities to help dairy farm families improve their on-farm productivity and profitability through improved management.

Discover Dairy — An inter-active, Web-based lesson series that meets PA Education Standards to teach upper elementary-aged students how dairy contributes to our world.

Dairy farm promotional brochures — general and customizable brochures tell how dairy farmers care for their animals, the environment and their local communities.

Find these and more resources at: www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.

