



For Immediate Release

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SPEAKERS ANNOUNCED FOR 2024 DAIRY FINANCIAL AND RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Sessions Will Focus On Dairy Supply Impacts, Emerging Technologies at the Farm Level and More

Harrisburg, Pa. – Registration is now open for the 15th annual Dairy Financial and Risk Management Conference, titled “Future-Proofing Our Farms.” Designed to help attendees protect their risk, navigate the ever-changing dairy marketplace, and make financial decisions with the future in mind, the conference is planned for Wednesday, September 11, 2024 at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel in Harrisburg, Pa. Dairy financial consultants, lending representatives, and interested dairy producers can register online at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/financial-conference.

The conference will feature expert speakers who will lead four sessions during the one-day event:

- **Expecting the Unexpected: 2024 Dairy Supply and Market Impacts With Danny Munch.** No one could have predicted the Baltimore Bridge collapse this spring and the ripple effects it caused on one of the nation’s busiest ports and our overall supply chain. Danny Munch will discuss some of the unexpected impacts of recent regional events and offer his perspective on dairy markets and supply/demand factors.
- **Calculating Where PA Stands: Annual Dairy Performance Indicators with Rob Goodling and LeeAnn McLaughlin.** Where does Pennsylvania dairy stand? As part of an annual joint project between Horizon Farm Credit, Penn State Extension, and the Center for Dairy Excellence, you’ll hear the 2024 takeaways and data points that have been identified through 17 key benchmarks calculated from Pennsylvania dairy farm data. These annual benchmarks compare individual dairy operations to how the top dairies in the data set are performing financially from year to year.
- **Smoothing the Road for the Future: Succession Planning and Business Continuity with Mike Hosterman and Jennifer Wetzel.** As we strive to future-proof our farms, smoothing the road for future generations to ensure business continuity is one of the most important parts of succession planning. During this session, Mike Hosterman and Jennifer Wetzel will dive into some of the family dynamics they encounter when working with dairy farm families and strategies for achieving business continuity and stability when working with multiple generations.
- **Highlighting Innovation in Dairy Farming: Dairy Producer Panel With Alan Waybright (Mount Rock Dairy), Ben Peckman (Slate Ridge Farm) and Matt Brake (Oakleigh Farms).** How is technology shaping the future of dairy farming? During this panel discussion, three dairy producers will share their perspective on the technology of the future and what emerging technology they are looking at and currently using. From robotics to automated cropping tools, these producers will share their honest outlook on how technology impacts efficiency, innovation and profitability.

“We all know that dairy markets are never foolproof. At this year’s Dairy Financial Conference, our speakers will lead timely sessions that will help us brainstorm ways we can be future-proof at the farm level and when working with our dairy farm clients,” said LeeAnn McLaughlin, Dairy Policy and Industry Relations Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “From dairy supply and annual performance indicators to succession planning, business continuity, and emerging technologies, we look forward to hearing from future-minded individuals from across the dairy industry.”

The conference will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on September 11. The cost to attend this year’s Dairy Financial and Risk Management Conference is \$260 per person, discounted to \$210 for those who are representatives of the Center for Dairy Excellence Allies for Advancement.

Learn more about each speaker:

- **Danny Munch** works as an Economist within American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF)’s public affairs department with a profile that covers issues including dairy markets and policy, transportation & infrastructure, natural disasters, aquaculture, endangered and invasive species, public lands, and specialty crop markets. In 2020, Danny graduated from Cornell University with a Master of Science in Agricultural and Food Economics after completing his thesis: Assessing the Value of Agricultural Cooperative Membership: A Case of Dairy Marketing in the United States. Throughout his graduate career, Danny was heavily involved with providing valuable strategy insights to farmer-owned cooperatives and agribusinesses, including hands-on projects with Ocean Spray, Palabana Fisheries (a tilapia producer in Zambia, Africa), and with Farm Credit East. Prior to joining the American Farm Bureau Federation, Danny worked as a protein market commodity analyst for Urner Barry, focusing on protein crop markets.
- **Rob Goodling** is an agricultural business consultant with Horizon Farm Credit in the Lewisburg office. Rob has over twenty years of experience helping producers understand their farm business records and analyses to grow their operations. His specialties include financial business analysis, cost of production analysis, cash flow planning and budgeting, QuickBooks consultation and troubleshooting, dairy record evaluation, and team facilitation.
- **Jennifer Wetzel**, an advocate dedicated to serving Pennsylvania’s farm and agri-business community, has spent the past fifteen years providing legal counsel to various agricultural businesses across the state. Her knowledge spans a wide spectrum of legal issues, with a focus on business succession planning, real estate, and asset preservation within the agricultural law framework. Jennifer is recognized for her profound understanding of agricultural matters and has shared her insights through presentations for esteemed organizations such as the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Pennsylvania Bar Institute, Pennsylvania Farm Link, and Pennsylvania Bankers Association. Her commitment to the agricultural sector extends to her role as a Succession Coordinator for the International Farm Transition Network and the Pennsylvania Center for Dairy Excellence.
- **Mike Hosterman** has been with Horizon Farm Credit and its predecessor organization for 33 years. In his role, Mike works with farm operations to conduct all types of strategic planning, business planning, transition/succession planning, budgeting, benchmarking, and efficiency reviews. During his 33 years at Farm Credit, Mike has worked with various ag operations and businesses in 6 states and has primarily worked with dairy clients to benchmark their operations and make profitable business decisions. Mike has served on the

Horizon Farm Credit Dairy Team as one of the founding members, and as a contributor to their dairy outlook.

- **Alan Waybright** is owner of Mount Rock Dairy in Cumberland County, PA. He has been in dairy farming for the past 40 years, spending the first 35 years working in his family's multi-family partnership in Gettysburg before becoming a sole owner of Mount Rock Dairy in 2019. The farm is currently undergoing an expansion from 650 cows to 1,000 cows.
- **Ben Peckman** and his wife operate Slate Ridge Dairy in Franklin County, PA. They milk approximately 150 cows and raise all of their replacement heifers. They have diversified the dairy operation through cash crops, raising and finishing their bull calves, grazing a group of native beef steers on some of their cover crops, and selling grain to local farms and feed mills. Ben utilizes several innovative planting and cropping strategies on his operation, including highly diverse cover crop mixes, a green planting approach, a seed-buying group with neighboring farms, and more.
- **Matt Brake** of Oakleigh Farm in Franklin County, PA manages the farm in partnership with his father Glenn and other family members. Together, they milk 120 cows and farm 400 acres. They also raise their own heifers and calves, and their herd of Holstein cows is 100 percent registered. A devastating barn fire in 2019 forced the family to decide whether they were going to rebuild or leave the dairy industry altogether. Matt's family ultimately decided to invest in innovative technology, including a vector feeding system, robotic milkers, automated curtains and fans, and discovery manure collectors.

For more information about the program and to register for the event, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/financial-conference or call LeeAnn McLaughlin at 717-346-0849.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center's mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more at centerfordairyexcellence.org.

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