

Dairy Leaders Hit Capitol Hill to Talk Trade, Farm Bill

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Members of IDFA's board of directors arrived in Washington, D.C., this week to meet with congressional leaders on Capitol Hill and senior members of the Trump administration at the White House complex and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. During the next two days, the dairy leaders will discuss IDFA's farm bill priorities and the importance of a proactive U.S. trade agenda.



After a briefing Tuesday by the IDFA legislative team, the dairy executives and IDFA staff met with House and Senate leaders who will draft the farm bill, determining national agricultural policy for the next five years and reauthorizing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Stressing the need for better risk management tools that would benefit dairy processors and producers alike, the dairy executives also asked policymakers to establish voluntary incentives to encourage SNAP participants to consume more milk and dairy foods to improve their overall nutrition, especially for children.

In addition, the dairy executives also discussed the need for a timely renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and aggressive pursuit of other bilateral trade agreements that could benefit U.S. dairy companies.

Follow their activities [@dairyidfa on Twitter](#).

A Packed Schedule

The 12-person group is scheduled to meet with the following legislators:

- Rep. Mike Conaway (R-TX), chairman, House Agriculture Committee;
- Sen. Chuck Grassley, (R-IA), chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee, and senior member, Senate Agriculture and Senate Finance Committees;
- Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN), ranking member, House Agriculture Committee;
- Rep. Devin Nunes, (R-CA), member, House Committee on Ways and Means;
- Rep. David Rouzer, (R-NC), chairman, House Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture;
- Sen. Michael Bennet, (D-CO), member, Senate Agriculture and Senate Finance Committees; and Rep. Jim Costa, (D-CA), ranking member, House Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

They met yesterday with with Ray Starling, special assistant to the President for agriculture, trade and food assistance, and will meet today with Stephen Censky, deputy secretary of USDA.

Dairy Decision-Makers

“These congressional and administration officials are among the most important policymakers on dairy issues, and it is critical that they hear directly from the top decision-makers at our dairy foods companies,” said Michael Dykes, D.V.M., IDFA president and CEO. “Dairy foods companies employ nearly 1 million skilled individuals, generate more than \$39 billion in direct wages and have an overall economic impact of more than \$200 billion, so when company executives take time to come to town, both congressional and administration leaders want to hear what they have to say.”

The board members and other fly-in participants are:

- David Ahlem, CEO and president, Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc.;
- Russ Coleman, executive vice president, Dean Foods Company;
- Anne Divjak, senior director, government and industry relations, Dean Foods Company;
- Rich Draper, CEO, The Ice Cream Club, Inc.;
- Heather Draper, director, The Ice Cream Club, Inc.;
- Ken Jorgensen, director, Dairy Operations, H-E-B;
- Jeffrey Kaneb, executive vice president, HP Hood LLC;
- Andrei Mikhalevsky, president and CEO, California Dairies, Inc.;
- Chris Olsen, vice president, community and government relations – Americas, Tate & Lyle Custom Ingredients;
- Mike Reidy, senior vice president – corporate affairs, Leprino Foods Company;
- Stan Ryan, president and CEO, Darigold Inc.; and
- Alan Thomsen, president and CEO, Schoep's Ice Cream Co., Inc.

Dykes, Dave Carlin, IDFA senior vice president of economic policy & legislative affairs, and Tony Eberhard, IDFA vice president of legislative affairs, hosted the participants during the fly-in.

“Michael, Tony and I have been working tirelessly to assure that top priority issues for the dairy products industry are reflected in trade policy and the development of the next farm bill,” said Carlin. “As the House and Senate agriculture committees continue their efforts to craft the next farm bill, this is the perfect time for our dairy leaders to share their stories about how these critical policy issues directly affect their companies and communities.”

Press Briefing

Three of the leaders kicked-off Wednesday morning with a press briefing at the Liaison Hotel on Capitol Hill. Ahlem of Hilmar Cheese, Mikhalevsky of California Dairies and Ryan of Darigold outlined the importance of progressive trade agreements to the health of the U.S. dairy industry and demonstrated the impact that dairy exports have on their states and the economy overall.

The reporters who attended were Adam Behsudi of Politico; Elyn Ferguson of CQ Roll Call, Brett Fortnam of Inside U.S. Trade, Ana Swanson of The New York Times and Bill Tomson of Agri-Pulse.



Celebration of Dairy

The fly-in will culminate tonight with the first-ever Celebration of Dairy, a holiday reception for members of Congress, administration officials and other industry colleagues who collaborate with IDFA on priority issues throughout the year. IDFA members Agropur, Biery Cheese Company, Glanbia Nutritionals, Hilmar Cheese Company, HP Hood, LLC, The Ice Cream Club and Pacific Cheese Company donated a variety of cheese, ice cream and eggnog for the event.

For more information, contact Dave Carlin, IDFA senior vice president of legislative affairs and economic policy, at dcarlin@idfa.org.