

DAIRY INDUSTRY SURVEY RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring and summer of 2007, the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Division of Regulatory Services and Department of Community and Leadership Development sponsored a survey of persons involved in the dairy industry. The purposes of the survey were to determine awareness of and participation in the Regulatory Services Milk Program, and to assess the quality and effectiveness of programs conducted under the Milk Program section. 199 completed surveys were returned during the study, for a response rate of 42 percent. Respondents represented laboratory managers and technicians, milk transport company operators, milk haulers, processor representatives, and producer organization and marketing agency representatives.

Survey data were analyzed and reports were written by personnel from the University of Kentucky Department of Community and Leadership Development. Results were presented to the UK Division of Regulatory Services Milk Program and the Milk Program Advisory Board.

The following summarizes the responses to the survey questions. The actual response frequencies to each question are included in Appendix A. In addition to response frequencies, some comparisons were made based on the industry occupation of the respondents, and important differences are reported.

SURVEY RESULTS

Characteristics of respondents

Wide ranges of occupational groups and company or organization size were represented by the respondents in this study. The dairy industry occupational groups represented in this sample include laboratory managers (9%), laboratory technicians or “testers” (10%), milk transport company owner-operators (5%), milk haulers or “sampler-weighers” (45%), processor representatives (8%), and producer organization or marketing agency representatives (8%). Fifteen percent of the sample represented other occupations. Since these occupational groups represent the various types clientele of the milk program, the groups were used for comparison purposes for some of the analyses to see if differences exist among these different groups. Forty-three percent of the respondents work in a company or organization with 0-10 employees, 19% with 11-25 employees, 5% with 26-50 employees, 7% with 51-100 employees, and 26% work in a company or organization with over 100 employees.

Receiving information from the Milk Program

Respondents indicated the most frequent manner by which they receive information from the milk program. Newsletters were the most frequently cited way that information is received (35%), followed by letters and reports (28%). Fifteen percent most often receive information from personal contacts during inspection activity. E-mail, personal contact at meetings, and telephone were each mentioned by less than 10% of the respondents. None of the respondents indicated that the Milk Program web site was the most frequent manner to receive program information.

Information sources and satisfaction

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of obtaining information about the milk program through personal contact, newsletter, and email or web site. Each information source was rated as not very important, important, or very important. Comparisons were made among the occupational groups for each of the information sources.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents felt that personal contact was an important or very important source of obtaining information about the milk program. The occupational groups were consistent on this as well, with group responses ranging from 81% of the other occupations to 94% of the processor representatives indicating that personal contact was an important or very important source of information.

Newsletters were considered as an important or very important source of information by 90% of all the respondents. There were some occupational differences. Responses ranged from 78% of laboratory managers who considered newsletters important or very important, to 100% of milk transport company owner-operators indicating important or very important.

Milk program email or web site used as an information source showed even a greater range among the occupations. While approximately two-thirds of the total sample rated email or the web site as important or very important, the responses went from 47% of milk haulers or sampler-weighers considering the electronic information sources as important or very important to 87% of producer organization or marketing agency representatives.

Respondents were also asked about their general satisfaction with their ability to obtain information from the milk program. Overall, about three-fourths responded that they were mostly or completely satisfied with their ability to obtain information. Occupational categories ranged from 61% of other occupations and 67% of milk transport company owner-operators indicating mostly or completely satisfied to 89% of laboratory managers who were mostly or completely satisfied with their ability to obtain information from the milk program. (See Tables 1, 2, and 3.)

Awareness of Milk Program activities and services

A strong majority of respondents answered that they were aware of the various types of activities and services that are provided by the milk program. Total responses showed that 77% were aware that milk program laboratory services are available at no charge, 90% were aware that milk program personnel investigate irregularities within the milk marketing system, 86% were aware that milk program personnel conduct dairy training programs, and 64% were aware that milk program personnel reconstruct bulk tank calibration charts at no charge. There were very little differences among the occupational categories on the questions about awareness of activities and services.

Oversight priorities

The milk program provides oversight for several milk marketing areas. Survey participants indicated that each of the oversight areas is a high priority for the milk program. Over 70% answered high priority for oversight of milk hauling procedures, milk hauling records, milk lab testing procedures, milk lab testing records, and milk payment and accounting records.

Training and outreach topics

The milk program conducts training and outreach seminars as part of its educational responsibilities. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of several training topics for the milk program's training and outreach seminars. All of topics included were rated as a high priority by a majority of respondents. Quality control and good manufacturing practices was rated as a high priority topic by 84% of the survey respondents. Compliance with regulatory requirements was rated as a high priority topic by 77%; proper dairy industry procedures was a high priority topic to 72% of respondents; pasteurized milk ordinance (PMO) requirements 66%; worker safety 65%; and bio-security 58%. There were few differences among the occupational categories on the importance of training and outreach topics; however, milk transport company owner-operators did not feel that bio-security was had as high priority as the other groups, and laboratory technicians/testers and milk haulers rated worker safety as a higher priority than the other groups.

Methods to ensure compliance

A question was included on the survey to get feedback on the milk program's methods to ensure compliance with regulations. The milk program's use of education and training to ensure compliance was considered very effective by 33% of respondents and effective by 61% of respondents. Inspection and monitoring was considered very effective by 42% and effective by 52%. Enforcement and regulatory action was rated very effective by 37% and effective by 57%. Thus, each method of ensuring compliance by the milk program was rated as effective or very effective by over 90% of the survey respondents.

Future Milk Program Emphases

In order to get input on potential goals for future milk program emphasis, a series of fourteen potential goals were rated by survey respondents. The priority for each potential future goal was rated as high, medium, low, none, or unsure. The priorities are listed below from highest to lowest priority followed by the percentage of respondents who indicated medium priority or high priority:

1. Emphasize the milk program's lab efforts toward development of improved milk testing procedures – 90%
2. Enhance Kentucky's influence on dairy regulatory matters at the national level – 83%
3. Increase the number of training programs offered for laboratories – 81%
4. Conduct more dairy producer training programs – 79%
5. Structure the inspection program in a manner to provide producers more frequent test results from the milk program laboratory – 79%
6. Provide laboratories with daily quality control samples – 77%
7. Increase the number of training programs offered for dairy processors – 76%
8. Increase the number of service laboratory milk testing procedures available to Kentucky's dairy industry – 74%
9. Increase the number of training programs offered for milk haulers – 71%
10. Increase the number of dairy laboratory inspections – 70%
11. Increase the number of annual milk hauler inspections – 66%
12. Increase the number of bulk milk ticket audits – 57%
13. Increase the number of producer pay record audits – 55%
14. Eliminate the "last stop" load sample requirement for milk haulers – 40%

Respondents were also asked to indicate which of these possible goals is the most important for the milk program. The top four listed above were also rated in the top five responses for the most important. However, the other goal in the top five most important responses was "eliminate the 'last stop' load sample requirement for milk haulers", which received the lowest rating of priority in the previous list. So, while in the total sample, fewer rated it as a medium or high priority, those that did obviously felt very strongly about its importance.

Effectiveness of primary missions

The final survey question asked survey participants to rate the effectiveness of the milk program's efforts in three of the program's primary missions. For the mission of ensuring the accuracy of marketing raw farm milk in Kentucky, 29% of respondents indicated the milk program's efforts are very effective, and 64% indicated the milk programs efforts are effective. For cooperating with other dairy groups to enhance Kentucky's dairy industry, 30% indicated very effective and 60% indicated effective. Regarding providing services to producers, processors, haulers and other dairy industry participants, 33% rated efforts as very effective and 60% as effective. Thus, over 90% of

the respondents rated the milk program's efforts in each of these mission areas as very effective or effective.

SUMMARY

Survey responses from those in the dairy industry regarding the programs and functions of the Milk Program indicated general awareness of the various parts of the milk program, and that they are satisfied with the types and quality of those program parts. Most responses also showed that the functions of the milk program are considered important by those in the dairy industry. Input was also received for priority areas for future milk program emphases. Survey results will be available for use for evaluation and future program planning of the milk program.