

Straight Talk

by Pete Hardin

Kick Co-ops That Support MPCs in Fluid Milk

Bad enough that “they” have screwed up the flavor and quality of cheese with foreign MPCs! Now look what “they” want to do to our fluid milk! (See John Bunting’s article on page 8 of this issue: “DFA/NMPF Want MPCs in Fluid Milk.”)

Of all the despicable stunts I’ve seen in my 30+ years in the dairy industry, the worst of the worst is the proposal sponsored by National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF): a proposal to USDA to change the definition of milk’s ingredients, so that added milk proteins may be compensated at the Class 1 price! NMPF is fronting for its biggest member—DFA. MPCs in our fluid milk?

This proposal is a thinly-disguised excuse to add Milk Protein Concentrates (MPCs) to fluid milk. The proposal was entered at the national federal milk order hearing in late June in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Our colleague, John Bunting, attended the hearing and testified against the proposal, while grilling supportive witnesses.

NMPF is fronting for Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) in this proposal to ruin fluid milk. At the hearing, testimony by DFA’s witness, Elvin Hollon, did not specify which specific added proteins he was referring to. So USDA’s Annette Carter asked him, protein by protein, which ones Hollon may be seeking to include in fluid milk. Her question was, “Milk Protein Concentrate?” Hollon’s answer: “Yes.”

Historically, U.S. dairy producers have devoted great efforts to promote the health and nutrition of “Nature’s most perfect food.” Can any honest person push the idea of changing milk’s standards, through the federal milk order program, to allow MPCs added to fluid milk? Pardon me, but:

*The vast majority of all MPCs used in the U.S. are imported. ZERO of those imported MPCs are currently produced to meet the Grade A sanitary standards required of fluid milk sold to consumers in the U.S.

*Used to be, USDA’s mandate for the federal milk order program was to “provide a fresh and adequate supply of milk” for the fluid market. But somewhere in a recent farm bill, that mandate suspiciously disappeared. Now, we may see why: a conspiracy to “dumb down” the contents and nutritional value of fluid milk. Surely, MPCs used in fluid milk would not be “fresh.” And given some of the *e. coli*- or radiation-infested slop holes from which MPCs enter the U.S. (for human consumption), I doubt the stuff is neither safe or nutritious. Behind this conspiracy to “dumb down” U.S. dairy products with MPCs, my olefatories detect Clayton Yeutter—former USDA Secretary and former U.S. Spe-

cial Trade Representative, who now fronts for New Zealand dairy interests as a Washington D.C. lawyer.

*MPCs enter the U.S. from India. In India, two-thirds of the dairy animals are water buffalo. By definition, water buffalo are not an approved species whose “lacteal secretions” may be used in fluid milk in this country. MPCs from INDIA in our fluid milk??? INDIA? That’s where the farmers hand-milk water buffalo in the pasture had have to repeatedly spit on their hands to coerce milk (udder pus?) out of the rock-hard nipples of the water buffalo!

*MPCs are illegally used in the U.S. as human food ingredients. The federal Food and Drug Administration mandates that all food ingredients developed after 1958 must be subjected to specific safety tests defined by the “Generally Recognized As Safe” (GRAS) standards. No GRAS compliance testing for MPCs have been submitted to FDA. FDA has failed to enforce the food safety laws of this country, in respect to MPCs.

*MPCs in fluid milk would require changing FDA rules. Trust FDA? Danger: if our federal agencies allow MPCs in milk, they can’t block use of imported MPCs.

*MPCs are created by heating concentrated milk components to dry the proteins. I doubt that dairy proteins—so annealed—can have the same biologically-available nutrition as fresh milk.

*DFA produces MPCs at a money-losing plant in Portales, New Mexico. *The Milkweed* reported that the Portales plant lost \$10 million in 2004. And now, the milk supply to Portales is threatened by the big, new Southwest Cheese plant that’s being completed soon. DFA’s partner at Portales, Fonterra (New Zealand), has cooked up a deal with United Dairymen of Arizona to build a MPC plant in Arizona. Is DFA trying to protect its New Zealand “buddy” with a new outlet for MPCs—garbaging up our fluid milk?

Add MPCs? How would fluid milk taste?

As John Bunting correctly analyzes in his article on page 8, if MPCs were made legal for fluid milk, could our Class 1 beverage deteriorate to a mixture of water, rehydrated MPCs and lactose, with a little imported anhydrous milk fat thrown in for good measure.

What would that mix taste like? What nutritional value would such “milk” contain for consumers? What benefits would U.S. dairy farmers have, if their Class 1 products could be taken over by imported, rehydrated, bug-infested, foreign ingredients?

We already know that MPCs used in cheese pro-



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duction cause reduced taste, functionality and aging characteristics. Goodness knows what damage MPCs would do to fluid milk taste, nutrition and demand.

I see nothing but harm—to dairy producers, fluid milk processors and consumer—from this proposal to incorporate MPCs into fluid milk.

Why would dairy co-ops support this bad idea?

Why would dairy farmers’ organizations support a proposal to denigrate the taste, quality and nutritional value of fluid milk? No single issues highlights the gap between dairy farmers and many of their cooperatives than the “MPC in fluid milk” proposal now before USDA.

The major processor—Dean Foods—fares no better on this issue under scrutiny. Dean Foods’ lawyers attended the Pittsburgh hearing. They offered no objections to the proposals put forth by NMPF and DFA. Dean Foods’ silence must be interpreted as assent.

My suggestion is that dairy farmers and consumers who care about the integrity of fluid milk sold our consumers grab these devils by the horns. If a farmer belongs to a NMPF member co-op, then the farmer should get a resolution from the co-op’s board that denounces NMPF’s position and demands NMPF retract the proposal ... or have the co-op get out of NMPF. Otherwise, I suggest the farmer get out of NMPF member co-ops where possible.

How many real dairy farmers support the notion of garbaging fluid milk’s nutrition and quality with imported dairy proteins.

Please join us and help give repeated swift kicks in the keister to any dairy organization that supports debasing fluid milk with MPCs. This is war!

Why would dairy farmers’ own organizations propose putting MPCs in fluid milk?