



Thankful for dairy partners

The November issue of *Hoard's Dairyman* included an editorial on page 704 about the building project at Babcock Hall on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. In this season of reflection, I want to offer additional details.

We all have the same hopes for the project: A modern, inspirational facility that befits the dairy state, including an expanded Center for Dairy Research to support the research and development needs of the dairy industry and an updated, contemporary dairy plant to support the training of University of Wisconsin students and dairy professionals.

I am grateful for all the dairy industry has done to help upgrade Babcock Hall, home to our current 1960s-era dairy plant and the world-class Center for Dairy Research. Shortly after the project launched, our partners raised over \$18 million in private gifts. Their advocacy was also critical to securing \$16 million in state support.

Mid-year, we were excitedly anticipating completion of the project's design, so we could move on to construction. But problems arose when projected costs exceeded available funds by 30 percent due to an

expansion of the project's size and scope during design.

This sent us back to the drawing board to assess the causes of this mismatch between plans and funds, and to develop solutions. Now the project is back in scope and on budget. I am pleased to report that, thanks to many experts working together, the team has identified ways to maximize the research and pilot plant space while remaining within budget.

I am grateful for the continuing support the industry gave us during this year's difficult stretch. Interested stakeholders participated in design meetings, contributing their expertise to help identify design solutions and cost savings. We now have industry professionals on the state-contracted design team to help make sure we get the details right, as we move toward design completion.

I am also thankful for the role that University of Wisconsin-Madison leadership played, contributing important project oversight, as well as \$1.2 million to cover long-needed building repairs and equipment upgrades that were outside the scope of the project.

I deeply value the relationship

between the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the dairy industry, and I hope interested partners will track our progress at babcockhall.cals.wisc.edu. I look forward to nourishing this crucial partnership in the new year.

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Are audits a win?

I read a number of articles on management and cow care audits. Each author describes how these can be a win-win for the farmer and the consumer. However, it's just business as usual. Within the next three years, we will have these new standards and have to be rBST-free. That is what I gleaned from reading my new manual.

What does the dairy farmer get in return?

You get a market. Wow. You're running on empty, working 24/7, and you're going to do more for less. If it's care that's wanted, get the funding for the farmer to do this. The audit is nothing but a lie. Why waste our time and money to pay for an audit if you're not willing to provide the ability to do it.

At one time in this country, half of everyone's income went for food. Now, it's 5 to 7 percent. That means nearly everyone has access to plenty of well-produced, affordable food. Yet, one in six people can't afford this. The lesson the consumer needs is hunger to help focus people's emotions and feelings so as to replace with the success of science and commonsense ideas. These manuals need to create another special production group similar to organic and pay average cost of production. That could be a win-win for farmers and consumers.

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These columns are open to the readers of *Hoard's Dairyman* for the expression of their opinions on current issues of direct interest to dairy farmers. With the exception of letters promoting religious creeds, proprietary products, farm organizations, or political groups, the editors welcome readers' views on all subjects. Letters should be 250 words or less. The right is reserved to select and abstract letters to be published. Unsigned letters will not be printed, but names will be withheld on request. You may send letters to *Hoard's Dairyman*, P.O. Box 801, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538 or you may email them to editors@hoards.com.

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