



International Dairy Foods Association  
Milk Industry Foundation  
National Cheese Institute  
International Ice Cream Association



**National Milk  
Producers Federation**

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**Joint Statement of the  
National Milk Producers Federation and  
International Dairy Foods Association  
Before the  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry**

**March 4, 2003**

Mr. Chairman, it is an honor to testify this morning. I am Jerry Kozak, president and chief executive officer of the National Milk Producers Federation. Today, the nation's dairy industry comes before you speaking with one voice. My testimony is offered on behalf of both the National Milk Producers Federation – which represents America's dairy farmers – and the International Dairy Foods Association – which represents the processors of fluid milk and other dairy products. Joint testimony such as we will offer today may not be unprecedented, but it is unusual for our two independent organizations.

Our unity reflects, in large part, the importance to our industry of the child nutrition programs for which this Committee is responsible. I can sum up my entire statement in this way: **Child nutrition programs represent a national commitment to offer our young people healthy choices and a fair start toward lifelong good nutrition. Milk is a central part of this commitment and is an unparalleled source of affordable nutrients. We can and must strengthen child nutrition programs across the board – and also enhance the role of milk in assuring that the programs succeed.** The remainder of my testimony will attempt to justify these propositions.

**Child Nutrition Programs: A National Commitment**

Few if any federal programs enjoy such widespread support as those that are the subject of this hearing. The National School Lunch Program; the School Breakfast Program; the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children – these and other programs serve critical public interests, in the view of an overwhelming majority of Americans.

**First, there is the simple matter of justice.** It is right that an affluent society such as ours should make provision for its children, including their nutritional needs.

**Second, the programs help give kids a fair start.** We must all ultimately take responsibility for what we achieve in this life, but the circumstances of our formative years can make a big difference. As a society that values equal opportunity, we want to ensure that our children's potential is not limited by a lack of proper nutrition.

**Third, child nutrition programs are demonstrably successful.** Studies show the superior nutrition patterns of children who participate in the school meal programs, compared to those who do not. The WIC Program's success has been widely documented and acknowledged.

**Fourth, these programs help ensure the quality of our future workforce.** Children's readiness to learn improves when they eat a good, balanced diet. Of course that is important to our ability to educate kids. It is also important to the companies that will employ those children when they grow up. Indeed, nutrition programs pay dividends for our entire society: Later in this statement, we will describe how health care expenditures might be substantially reduced through increased school milk consumption and higher participation in the school meal programs.

**Fifth, the programs help encourage good dietary habits throughout the day and throughout life.** Schools are a learning environment in which we have the opportunity to impart the principles of good nutrition and fitness. We should not just tell our children what they ought to eat – we should show them, by offering them healthy foods and beverages.

I could go on, but other witnesses have been eloquent in describing the benefits of child nutrition programs, and I probably need not convince this Committee of their merits. The programs are, of course, not perfect. One could make a list of their flaws as well as their virtues, and I know the Committee is dedicated to their improvement. But we ought not let any shortcomings blind us to the fundamental fact that these are good, successful, important programs that deserve our support.

That support must, of course, be monetary as well as rhetorical. As a nation, we need to devote the resources necessary not just to maintain child nutrition programs but to improve them further. **We believe – along with many other organizations and industries – that additional budgetary resources for these programs are justified, and should be sought.**

Part of the problem is that program resources have not fully kept up with inflation over time. For many schools in many parts of the United States, the cost of serving a school lunch exceeds the \$2.14 maximum reimbursement rate. Since most school food service programs must be self-sustaining, a federal reimbursement rate that fails to meet per-meal costs will encourage schools to place more emphasis on generating additional revenues through sales of other foods and beverages which, unlike school meals, need not comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

There is nothing wrong with a la carte sales – indeed, they represent exciting growth potential for milk and other healthy foods. Yet there is always the danger that inadequate funding for reimbursable meals will provide unintended incentives to promote alternatives that are less nutritionally balanced. In extreme cases, schools might even be tempted to leave the federal meal programs altogether. Inadequate resources may also discourage innovation and creativity, since it is often cheaper to do things the same old way rather than trying out something new – like new menu items, more attractive surroundings or new sales venues for healthy products.

**Milk and milk products** account for 72% of the calcium, 32% of the phosphorus, 26% of the riboflavin, 22% of the vitamin B-12, 19% of the protein, 16% of the magnesium and 15% of the vitamin A available in the U.S. food supply.

Yet milk and other dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt contribute only 9% of the calories available in the food supply. Our products are, therefore, **nutrient-dense** in relation to their caloric density.

**Few of our young people are getting enough calcium.** According to USDA, among children 6-11 years old, 71% of the girls and 62% of the boys fail to meet calcium recommendations. These figures rise to even more alarming levels among adolescents 12-19 years old, with 88% of females and 68% of males not meeting the recommendations.

Milk is, therefore, the best answer to a calcium crisis that manifests itself ultimately in the bone fractures and other consequences of osteoporosis. But as we have seen, **milk is much more than calcium.** It is also an important source of phosphorus, potassium, Vitamin A, Vitamin B-12, riboflavin, and other nutrients.

**Milk is, in fact, a marker for a healthy diet.** Thus, the federal government's "Milk Matters" campaign emphasizes the need for growing children and teens to consume more milk for healthy bones. That campaign is run by the **National Institute of Child Health & Human Development**, part of the National Institutes of Health. In a similar way, the **American Academy of Pediatrics** urges its physician-members to recommend their patients get enough milk, cheese, yogurt and other calcium-rich foods to help build bone mass.

Emerging scientific evidence suggests that **milk is an important part of the solution to our nation's obesity crisis.** A variety of studies have shown an inverse relationship between dairy food intake and obesity. Evidence is building that increased dairy consumption may be one of the dietary patterns that can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Dairy products are important components of a healthy diet for all age groups. Of course, we know they are especially important for our children. Therefore, we would expect that milk would be a central part of society's efforts to support child nutrition. It is, and was from the beginning.

Ever since the establishment of the federal school lunch program in 1946, milk has been required as part of the meal. This unique place reflects milk's critical role in young people's diets. And the evidence bears out the wisdom of putting milk front and center. For example, a recent investigation of children 5-17 found that only those who drank milk at the noon meal met or exceeded recommended calcium intakes for the day. In contrast, children in the study who drank other beverages at lunch did not meet daily calcium requirements.

We noted earlier that many other beverages compete for a share of children's stomachs. As children's consumption of other beverages has increased, their consumption of milk has decreased. All of us – including our industry – need to do a better job of making milk attractive to kids. But surely it is clear that in light of the calcium crisis, the obesity epidemic and other health challenges, it would be foolish to abandon the requirement to offer milk in our meal programs. Similarly, it is our view that any changes to the mix of foods in the WIC program should be made so that dairy foods

are not sacrificed at the same time we are augmenting other foods that we can all agree should be promoted.

### **Increasing School Milk Consumption**

Declining milk consumption statistics can be depressing – not just to dairy farmers and processors, but to health professionals and parents. At NMPF and IDFA, we feel a special responsibility to be part of the solution: to offer accurate diagnoses of the problems, and put forward innovative solutions.

If we can improve milk consumption in the schools, there are of course profound and immediate nutritional benefits to our children – and that is the primary reason it is important. Yet the benefits go even further than that.

If students have a positive experience of drinking milk in school, they are **more likely to remain milk drinkers** throughout life.

If we improve the quality of milk in schools, kids will be **more likely to choose milk outside school**.

If we can make a variety of attractive milk products available at venues throughout the school, that will help **build the image and sales potential of new, innovative milk products**.

And higher-quality, more-attractive milk can help **build participation in school meal programs**, increasing children's consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other healthy foods.

These are not simply speculative statements. In recent years, a variety of studies have demonstrated the potential for increasing students' milk consumption in the cafeteria, through a la carte sales, and through vending machines.

The most recent, and largest-scale, of these studies is the **School Milk Pilot Test** carried out by the National Dairy Council® and the American School Food Service Association. This test involved 100,000 students in 146 schools in 18 school districts. Although the test involved a variety of improvements, and several different combinations of changes, the basic upgrades were simple:

**Add an extra flavor** besides white and chocolate – usually strawberry.

**Keep the milk cold**, in new and more accessible coolers.

**Put the milk in plastic containers** rather than cardboard.

In addition to upgraded milk on the meal line, offer larger age-appropriate servings of milk **a la carte** and through **vending machines**.

The results of the test substantially exceeded expectations.

**Milk sales increased 15% in elementary schools, 22% in secondary schools.**

In secondary schools, **average daily participation (ADP)** in the school meal programs **increased 4.8%**. In elementary schools, where ADP is already very high and thus harder to increase, ADP still rose marginally.

Milk **“plate waste”** – the portion of their milk that children take but don’t finish – **fell 7.2%** in elementary schools and 5.5% in secondary schools.

Thus, improved milk not only has the potential to get kids to drink more milk – something we all support – but also can bring more kids into the school cafeteria, where they will eat a more balanced diet involving many different healthy foods, not just dairy products.

Indeed, a study commissioned by NDC and ASFSA – and included with ASFSA’s testimony this morning – showed that if the School Milk Pilot Test could be implemented nationwide, some 430,000 students who do not now participate in the school meal programs would begin to do so. In addition, 2.1 million students who already participate, but do not drink milk, would become milk drinkers.

And potentially, these 2.6 million students would reap lifelong health benefits, as would society. The direct and indirect costs associated with diet-related health conditions could fall by as much as \$800 million - \$1.1 billion per year over the students’ lifetimes.

We are not arguing that the upgrades in the School Milk Pilot Test are a panacea. First, they are not cost-free – schools need to be able to afford high-quality products, and that may imply not only a need for additional resources, but substantial changes in the way schools approach milk procurement. Second, schools need to be free to innovate. The improvements we have described are not necessarily the only ways to increase school milk consumption. And third, many variables – including product availability, local tastes and preferences, the characteristics of local retail demand and others – will play a part in determining how each school works with its local dairies to upgrade products. Still, it is hard to argue with success, and we believe a growing body of evidence – and not just from the School Milk Pilot Test – tells us the time is ripe to give our kids better milk and that a variety of benefits will flow from that decision.

### Dairy Producers and Processors: Common Priorities

We have argued that Congress should allocate additional budgetary resources for child nutrition programs. We have also described the important place of milk in our children’s diets, and in child nutrition programs. Finally, we have asserted that it is possible to increase school milk consumption, and that such consumption increases would have important benefits for meal program participation and the overall quality of children’s diets.

Now we would like to suggest four ways that this Committee, as it reauthorizes child nutrition programs, can enhance the role of dairy products, especially in school meal programs. We believe these four steps will not only lead to increased milk consumption – a desirable objective in and of itself – but also encourage more children to participate in school meal programs and achieve balanced diets.