

Mr. Wally Smith, President
Dairy Farmers of Canada

July 6, 2015

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am delighted to share my ideas regarding Dairy Farmers of Canada's proAction Initiative. I have had the pleasure of being a member of the Biosecurity Working Group of proAction, and I am proud of the end result of our discussions.

The dairy industry in the developed world has undergone profound changes over recent decades. Additional changes in production practices that affect animal health and welfare seem inevitable, particularly given societal concerns (e.g. animal welfare and antibiotic resistance). These concerns will influence how dairy farmers (worldwide, including Canada) will operate in the future, and likely impact industry profitability and indeed sustainability. In the following paragraphs, I will indicate how some of these challenges are addressed by your proAction initiative.

Animal welfare. Consumers rate animal welfare as an important priority (after price and food safety) when deciding what food to purchase. Fortunately, dairy farmers share that priority: in a recently completed research needs assessment for the Dairy Cluster 2-funded National Dairy Survey, animal welfare was rated as the top management issue by 1025 dairy producers, industry advisors and government dairy experts in Canada. Your ongoing funding of research on animal care and the assessment program of your animal care module demonstrate your dedication to continue to improve in that area.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Although antimicrobial use in human medicine arguably contributes at least as much to AMR as corresponding use in the livestock sector, it is important that livestock industries, including veterinary practitioners, proactively apply principles of prudent and judicious use of antimicrobials, and generally aim to decrease the use of antimicrobials, particularly those with potential relevance to human health. There is great need to preserve the ability to rationally use antimicrobials, e.g. for treatment of clinical disease. Furthermore, the livestock industry must also make every effort to minimize AMR. The CQM program and your requirement to have veterinary oversight will make a positive difference.

Biosecurity. Infectious disease control programs are universally essential in the dairy industry. Although several countries already have programs to control various diseases, not all countries are at the same stage. Unfortunately, several 'new' infectious diseases are threatening the global dairy industry (e.g. Schmallenberg virus), whereas 'old' diseases (e.g. Food-and-Mouth disease) continue to be a threat. Therefore, countries will need to protect themselves against introduction of these diseases. It is well

established that national disease control and biosecurity programs are profitable for the dairy industry as a whole, as well as for individual dairy farmers.

Clearly risks to the dairy industry can be reduced if dairy farmers are proactive. For example, appropriate responses including increasing efforts to improve biosecurity, detection and recording of disease, and decreasing antimicrobial use, while concurrently providing assurances of high standards of animal welfare. Therefore, in my opinion, the proAction Initiative is the appropriate proactive measure and I applaud the Canadian dairy farmers for implementing it.

If you would like more details on any of the points I have raised, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,



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