

# Dairy farmers in Manitoba focusing on safety and quality with new program

David Wiens, chair of the board at DFM

Dairy farmers in Manitoba are among the first in Canada to take part in a new national accreditation program developed by Dairy Farmers of Canada. The program focuses on quality, food safety and animal welfare and will be implemented by Dairy Farmers of Manitoba (DFM). It is supported financially through *Growing Forward 2* and is designed to increase consumer confidence in the excellence of Canadian milk.

## Committed to safe and nutritious food

DFM has already begun the four-year process to implement the accreditation program in Manitoba, starting with workshops to spread information and help producers understand the program and how it will benefit them. It will result in Manitoba dairy farmers being recognized under the national proAction initiative which will show their commitment to responsible stewardship of their animals and sustainably producing high quality, safe and nutritious food for consumers.

The initiative is a coordinated national framework that will bring various programs related to best management practices on farms under one umbrella.

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we have those values too and we want to reflect them back to the consumer. This program helps formalize what we were already doing so we can keep a record on our farms.”

Wiens explains the new program will help dairy farmers do herd assessments and benchmark their performance when it comes to animal welfare, food safety, milk quality, biosecurity, traceability and environmental sustainability. It will help them measure improvement and identify areas they need to work on.

Premise inspections that are currently conducted by the provincial government

will be combined with the proAction requirements into a single farm visit from DFM.

“The proAction initiative will allow producers to look at their facilities and animals in a more in-depth way and track any improvements they make toward animal welfare,” says Rob Berry, business development–dairy specialist with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (MAFRD).

There are more than 300 dairy farms in Manitoba, producing more than \$320 million litres of milk and valued at \$264 million annually. ■



## Advancements in technology for the Manitoba dairy industry

Manitoba’s dairy industry will benefit from new technology purchased by Horizon Lab, an accredited laboratory that has been operating in the province for a quarter century.

“Milk in Manitoba and Canada is produced according to standards that are among the highest in the world for safety and quality,” says lab director, Yolo Ortiz at Horizon Lab. “We always want to support further improvement.”

With help from funding provided by *Growing Forward 2*, Horizon Lab is adopting innovative technology called Ultra High Performance Liquid Chromatography (UHPLC) that will provide additional information when testing milk for impurities like antibiotics.

All raw milk is tested for quality and components such as fat, protein, bacteria and antibiotics to ensure it meets the high standards required by the industry. If the raw milk tests positive for impurities, it is properly

discarded. The new equipment will be able to detect not only if the milk is positive or negative for impurities, but what the impurity is and how much is present.

“Right now if we want to test milk for a specific antibiotic for example, we have to send a sample out of the province, or sometimes even out of the country,” says Ortiz. “That process is expensive and can sometimes take three weeks. Our new equipment will bring that capacity to Manitoba so we can go deeper to provide information.”

The UHPLC equipment promotes long-term competitiveness and sustainability in Manitoba’s agrifood sector by helping identify specific impurities in milk immediately. Producers can then quickly identify problem areas on their farm and correct them in a timely manner so they can ensure the quality of their milk meets the high standards required.

There is also the opportunity for collaboration across industries in the future as the equipment could be used to test a variety of different foods for contaminants including eggs and honey. ■