

Iowa's 2.8% Coalition (Dairy)

A.S. Leaflet R2096

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Summary and Implications

If you've been keeping an ear to the ground about things going on in the Iowa dairy industry, you've probably heard the phrase "2.8% Coalition" a time or two. Just what is this coalition? Why was it formed? Who is involved? What is its purpose?

Here's a quick history: In August 2004, ISU organized an Iowa Dairy Summit – a brainstorming meeting in Clear Lake to tackle the important questions: "What are the opportunities for growing the Iowa dairy industry? What are the obstacles to growth?" The participants at this meeting represented many facets of the Iowa dairy industry, including producers, agri-business leaders, commodity group members, economic development planners, Iowa State Dairy Association, NE Iowa Community Based Dairy Foundation, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Iowa Dept. of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Iowa State University.

One of the results of this meeting was the formation of a smaller working group to focus on the priority issues identified at the Iowa Dairy Summit. This group determined that building the Iowa dairy industry should involve a multi-organization effort. The group, or coalition, of representatives set an overall goal to grow the Iowa dairy industry by increasing Iowa's share of the national milk production from 2.2% to 2.8% by the year 2010. Hence the name "**2.8% (Dairy) Coalition**".

The goals of the 2.8% Coalition are succinct: Increase milk production in Iowa by increasing milk produced per cow, and by increasing the number of cows in Iowa. Two guiding principles describe HOW these goals will be achieved:

Guiding Principle 1

The Iowa dairy industry will achieve this primary goal through development, implementation, and coordination of policies and programs (research and education, financial, regulatory, political, and social) that will allow industry growth through:

- * modernization and expansion of existing dairy operations,
- * opportunities for young people and new farmers to enter the dairy business,
- * inviting farm families to be part of the Iowa dairy industry.

Guiding Principle 2

Milk production and processing has a tremendous economic and social impact on local communities. Achieving this primary goal will enhance life in Iowa by:

- * fostering economic development,
- * growing farm-related businesses,
- * diversifying the economy,
- * enhancing the environment,
- * developing human capital, and
- * ultimately by improving the vitality of rural communities.

Who are the participating members on the 2.8% Coalition? This group represents a good cross-section of Iowa's dairy leaders. The group includes dairy producers from both NE and NW Iowa, and representatives from these organizations: Iowa State Dairy Association, Northeast Iowa Community-Based Dairy Foundation, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Iowa Dairy Products Association, Western Iowa Dairy Alliance, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Dairy Foods Association, Iowa Dairy Development Council, Iowa Institute of Cooperatives, and Iowa State University.

Although it is a slow process bringing together busy people from several organizations, the eventual impact could be very positive for the Iowa dairy industry. Simply the fact that there is active statewide support and interest in the dairy industry should be encouraging to all those working in the Iowa dairy industry at any level. The group will be meeting again after January 1 to engage in a strategic plan to properly structure the coalition and its players and define responsibilities and action plans for individual member organizations and the coalition, collectively. If you have questions or would like to have input, contact an ISU Extension dairy specialist (field or campus), the NE Iowa Community-Based Dairy Foundation, an IFBF representative, Western Iowa Dairy Alliance chair persons, or any other of the above organizations.