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TAD OFFERS A ROUND OF THANKS DURING “NATIONAL DAIRY MONTH”

By Darren Turley

Each June, during National Dairy Month, I cannot decide exactly what should be celebrated or who should be honored.

Is it a month to recognize the hard-working dairy producer? Or are producers supposed to be thanking consumers and community members who support the dairy industry? Or maybe it's a good excuse to eat ice cream for 30 days without counting calories.

After careful thought – as a former dairy farmer, the current executive director of the Texas Association of Dairymen (TAD) and a happy consumer of all things dairy – I've finally decided the correct answer is “all of the above.”

Especially this year, with Texans continuing to face economic and other hardships, a “thank you” would be appreciated by all parties.

First, on behalf of its dairy producer members, TAD would like to tell our communities how much we value their support of our farms and our families.

We are buoyed by the handshake and the kind word when we see you at youth sporting events, the local diner, church and elsewhere around town. Sometimes a little encouragement is just what a dairyman needs to ease a hard day on the farm or take his mind off financial worries.

We also appreciate everything our communities do to keep us in business. In our towns, our fellow citizens support us by doing more than buying our products. They keep our farms running by servicing equipment, lending money, delivering feed and offering a helping hand when we need it.

Farm communities really are one big family.

In larger cities, folks may not know much about how the jug of milk, block of cheese or gallon of ice cream gets to the store shelves. They might not understand farming, appreciate a dairyman's daily struggles or offer the same support as our neighbors. But they are no less valuable, and dairy farmers certainly appreciate them.

We hope all Texans keep buying, consuming and enjoying dairy products!

Finally, a tip of the hat to Texas dairy farmers, who work 24/7 to keep Texans supplied with healthy, wholesome milk and milk products, create jobs, go to great lengths to protect our environment, and contribute to both local and state economies.

Unfortunately, the number of dairy families in Texas continues to decline. Times remain tough in the dairy industry. Dairymen are working harder than ever to earn a living. Beyond the usual farming

challenges, they are battling a severe drought, paying elevated fuel and feed costs, and meeting a growing number of industry regulations. For some farmers, it's just been too much for too long.

Farming and rural life is often romanticized on television. In real life, working on a farm certainly isn't easy or glamorous. Yet farm families love their lives on the farm and, given a choice, wouldn't do anything else

TAD thanks these dedicated dairy farmers, their supportive communities and those who continue to enjoy dairy products – not just during this “National Dairy Month,” but every day of the year.

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DIGITAL PHOTO OF THE AUTHOR ATTACHED

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