



Texas Association of Dairymen

For Immediate Release

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DAIRY INDUSTRY GIVES THANKS TO COMMUNITY “FAMILY”

By John Cowan

Now that the Central Texas dairy industry has had the chance to reflect on the end of the lawsuit brought against it by the City of Waco, dairy producers want to say “thank you” to the friends, neighbors, businesses, media outlets and other community members who offered support during the 21-month ordeal.

Dairies are a major contributor to the economies of a number of Central Texas communities, including those in Erath, Comanche, Hamilton and Bosque counties. In Erath County alone, the dairy industry provides 31 percent of all employment and accounts for 36 percent of the total goods produced in the county, according to an economic impact study.

So it makes sense that these localities would want the defendant dairies to persevere in the legal attack by Waco.

But the outpouring of support from all spectrums of the communities has been overwhelming and much appreciated. On behalf of the entire industry – not just the defendants in the lawsuit – thank you for standing by us during this tough period. Quite honestly, without your support – both moral and financial – the industry might not have survived.

The legal fight was not a short one. The lawsuit was filed in April 2004 and settled in January 2006. Some of the defendant dairies settled their portions of the lawsuit earlier when the pressures grew too burdensome. That’s understandable.

The Central Texas community hung tough as time progressed. Without this support, from start to finish, the six dairies remaining dairies could not have seen the legal battle through to the end.

On the financial front, the lawsuit cost millions of dollars. Defendants drained their bank accounts. Even dairies not directly part of the lawsuit had their livelihood jeopardized because the future of the industry locally was in question.

On a personal level, the stress and worry about the survival of the farm took an emotional toll that we can only imagine. Ask one of the defendants how many nights he went sleepless, tossing and turning with anxiety.

From a kind word and a pat on the back to numerous community fundraisers that contributed tens of thousands of dollars into a legal defense fund, neighbors pulled together to help their own. The Texas Association of Dairymen stepped up to help with some of those legal bills because we recognized that what happened in this lawsuit would reverberate through the entire industry. Every dairyman has a story to tell about a particular act of kindness.

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Now, dairymen can focus on their farming operation rather than being distracted as to whether or not a future in the dairy industry really does exist there for them. I send a great big “thank you” to everyone who was involved with and touched by events over these critical months, and who, by sticking together, allowed an outcome that now folks can work with.

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John Cowan is the executive director of the Texas Association of Dairymen Inc. (www.milk4texas.org).

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