

Western Iowa Dairy Alliance (WIDA)

A.S. Leaflet R2097

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Summary and Implications

“Hats Off!” to the group of western Iowa dairy producers, agri-business representatives, community planners, and extension workers who took on the task this summer of attending extra meetings to form a viable Western Iowa Dairy Alliance. Not only did they succeed in forming a Vision and Mission Statement to express the overall interests of the western Iowa dairy community, but they also completed a Strategic Planning process that identified and prioritized important issues for Iowa and the Iowa dairy industry. Here are the important products of their efforts:

Western Iowa Dairy Alliance

VISION STATEMENT:

The Vision of the Western Iowa Dairy Alliance is to have all sizes of dairy producers and all types of industry partners working together to expand dairy production.

We believe Iowa is a premier dairy producing region.

We are willing to serve as leaders and as the voice for the western Iowa dairy industry.

OUR MISSION:

- We will be advocates for dairy growth and the advancement of the supporting dairy infrastructure, working to build a thriving industry for producers and their families.
- We will be leaders in the use of technology and dairy science to sustain the environment and raise healthy, productive herds.
- We will be liaisons to help establish beginning farmers and assist the continuation of existing farms.
- We will strive to expand continuing education for dairy owners and herdsman, and support dairy science education in high schools and colleges.
- We will work to increase support of the dairy industry through public and political awareness efforts.

PRIORITY ISSUES TO ADDRESS 2005-2006:

- Assist current and beginning farmers
- Develop financing strategies for expansions, improvements, growth
- Recruit new dairies
- Educate the public about the dairy industry
- Shape public policy

After developing a Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Priority Issues List through a Strategic Planning process this summer, the group formed a Steering Committee to work on the next phase of taking action on priority issues identified. Leading the WIDA Steering Committee as co-chairman are 3 western Iowa dairy producers: Lee Maassen, Sioux County; Kurt Wierda, Osceola County; Mark Wilcox, Cherokee County. Here are their viewpoints about Iowa’s dairy industry and on the role and importance of the WIDA:

“As vibrant and as good as the dairy industry is in western Iowa, there is a need to have a unified voice to represent this region. It is important that we continually give input to those working for the dairy industry on the state level on important issues such as the environmental quality, financial strategies, and the public perception and understanding of the dairy industry. The Western Iowa Dairy Alliance is a group effort to keep industry vibrant for all sizes of dairy operations.” Lee Maassen.

“Regarding the current efforts to grow the Iowa dairy industry, I don’t see this growth as a competitive threat to me as a dairy producer. Cows are going to be milked somewhere in this country – why not in Iowa? My focus is on looking at developing dairy livestock operations as a way to add to local community growth. I see the future of small schools in peril unless we get our town population numbers up. Encouraging dairy farm start-up or growth is a viable economic development venture. I want to see our small towns survive.” Mark Wilcox.

“The Western Iowa Dairy Alliance is a way to help support our state-wide dairy producer organization, the Iowa State Dairy Association. ISDA is our voice in Des Moines, and it is important that the Iowa dairy industry keep active representation at the state level.” Kurt Wierda

Dairy producers in NW Iowa are actively involved in shaping the Western Iowa Dairy Alliance into a viable representative voice for the western Iowa dairy community. All members of the western Iowa dairy community – dairy producers, dairy consultants, agri-service providers – are welcome to join the Western Iowa Dairy Alliance. Contact one of the co-chairman for information about getting involved and attending future meetings.