

## **Four New Initiatives Developed From Northern Tier Dairy Summit**

*Attendees of Summit assist with new initiatives*

**May 10, 2019 | Montpelier, VT** - The “first-of-its-kind” Northern Tier Dairy Summit was held April 1-2, 2019 at Jay Peak Resort. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFMM) organized and convened the summit to develop actionable next steps to help a dairy industry impacted by a fifth year of record low prices, a volatile export market, and an oversupply of milk. The event was attended by 240 participants with 115 dairy farmers present from across New England. Keynote speakers and breakout sessions encouraged participants to think outside the box, develop a long-term vision, and work collaboratively to move dairy into a positive future. The final working sessions asked participants at each table to develop action items based on their priority and time frame for completion.

“During a difficult time, our dairy industry came together at the Northern Tier Dairy Summit to listen, collaborate and share their thoughts and ideas,” VAAFMM Secretary Anson Tebbetts commented. “Our staff at the Agency of Agriculture heard you, and we’re proud to follow through on these great ideas. We promise to keep listening and working to support our dairy farmers in Vermont.”

The Agency is pleased to announce four new initiatives derived from the Summit, and four additional existing initiatives to respond to the areas developed:

### **New Initiatives:**

- **Convene a Secretary’s Dairy Advisory Committee** which will meet quarterly to discuss current issues from the farmer’s perspective and share Agency work. Committee nominations will go out shortly and the first meeting will be this summer.
- **Publish a monthly Agriview series** about current topics in dairy such as market trends, national policy changes that impact Vermont dairy farmers, and updates regarding grant funded work that the Agency is completing or that we have granted.
- **Coordinate Legislative farm tours** this summer and fall to ensure to all legislators understand what really happens on a farm and hear directly from you.
- **Visioning and goal development workshops** to meet the needs of farmers who expressed a desire to develop a long term plan for their farm beyond the standard business plan. Workshops will be planned for late 2019 or early 2020.

## **Current and On-going Initiatives:**

- **Growth Management Plan** – the Milk Commission will continue to meet, and Agency staff will remain engaged in regional and national level discussions regarding a national growth management plan.
- **Positive Messaging campaign** – VAAFm currently produces a “Fantastic Farmer” series and has engaged additional dollars for a targeted positive dairy focused campaign.
- **Truth in Labeling** – VAAFm is actively engaged at the national level regarding standards of identity for items carrying a dairy product label to ensure they are made from real milk.
- **Milk in Schools** – VAAFm and partners work closely with schools and school nutrition agencies to allow higher fat milk back into schools.

Furthermore, VAAFm will be applying for the newly released USDA Dairy Business Innovation Initiative funding and the objectives closely match Dairy Summit outcomes and participant visions. This funding opportunity will span multiple years and allow VAAFm and partners to engage deeply in developing a more competitive value-added dairy marketplace for Vermont producers.

For more information and follow-up from the Northern Tier Dairy Summit, please visit: <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/2019northerntierdairysummit>.

For questions, please contact:

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