

NMPF and IDFA Criticize Wisconsin Raw Milk Bill, Urge Federal Lawmakers to Legislate Restrictions on Sales of Unpasteurized Milk
(Joint NMPF and IDFA Press Release)

Arlington, VA – With Wisconsin’s governor poised to sign legislation allowing raw milk sales direct to consumers in that state, the National Milk Producers Federation and the International Dairy Foods Association today criticized elected officials for downplaying the food safety risks inherent in raw dairy products, and urged federal lawmakers to take measures restricting such sales.

Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle has indicated he will sign a bill, approved earlier this spring by the state legislature, which would allow dairy farms to sell milk directly to consumers over the next two years. With Doyle’s signature, Wisconsin will join approximately 28 other states that allow some form of raw milk sales or distribution, either commercially or directly from farms.

Federal law prohibits the interstate sale of raw milk, but allows states individual discretion to regulate raw milk sales within their borders. Several states in recent years have joined Wisconsin in allowing the sale of raw milk, even as the product has been repeatedly linked to serious illnesses from coast to coast.

“It is terribly ironic that, at a time when lawmakers in Washington are trying to pass a major food safety bill to protect consumers from foodborne illnesses, states like Wisconsin are going the opposite direction,” said Jerry Kozak, President and CEO of NMPF. “Raw milk is a known source of life-threatening pathogens such as Campylobacter, Salmonella, Listeria and E. coli. It’s an abdication of a public servant’s role to take actions that will result in more people, including children, becoming sickened by these bacteria.”

NMPF and IDFA have been urging lawmakers in Washington to add provisions to a major, pending food safety bill that would require sales of raw milk to come under the restrictions in the new law or, at a minimum, not exempt any farms from requirements that their products be regulated and tested for harmful bacteria.

“America’s dairy farmers and processors have worked hard to ensure that they produce a safe, wholesome product, and a key pillar in the steps the industry takes is pasteurization,” Connie Tipton, President and CEO of IDFA, referring to the heat treatment that milk receives to eliminate pathogens from the dairy supply.

“There is absolutely no science behind the claims of raw milk supporters that pasteurization does anything other than make safer a potentially hazardous product,” she said, adding that consumers who patronize raw milk are playing “Russian roulette” with their, and their family’s, health.

“Since children are frequently the ones who will be served these products in Wisconsin and elsewhere, it’s a shame that policymakers haven’t expressed greater concern about the health issues that will result from this legislation,” Kozak said. “We will continue to work at the federal level to address this public health concern.”

[The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Washington, DC, represents the nation’s dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies representing a \$110-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the

International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA's 220 dairy processing members run more than 600 plant operations, and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85% of the milk, cultured products, cheese and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States. IDFA can be found online at www.idfa.org.] 5-11-10