



CHEESE REPORTER

Cheese Reporter Publishing Co. Inc. © 2005
2810 Crossroads Drive, Suite 3000
Madison, WI 53718-7972
(608) 246-8430 • Fax (608) 246-8431
http://www.cheesereporter.com

DICK GROVES
Publisher/Editor
e-mail: dgroves@cheesereporter.com

MOIRA CROWLEY
Specialty Cheese Editor
e-mail: mcrowley@cheesereporter.com

KEVIN THOME
Advertising & Marketing Director
e-mail: kthome@cheesereporter.com

BETTY MERKES
Classifieds/Circulation Manager
e-mail: info@cheesereporter.com

REGULAR CONTRIBUTORS:
Bob Cropp, Don Dahlstrom,
Neville McNaughton, Ray Mueller,
John Umhoefer, Ed Zimmerman
e-mail: contributors@cheesereporter.com

*The Cheese Reporter is the official
publication of the following cheese &
dairy associations:*

California Cheese & Butter Association
Lisa Waters,
1011 Pebble Beach Drive,
Clayton, CA 94517

**Central Wisconsin Cheesemakers' and
Buttermakers' Association**
Gordon Moen, 908 Sawyer Drive
Marshfield, WI 54449

Cheese Importers Association of America
Richard Koby, 460 Park Ave.,
New York, NY 10022

**Eastern Wisconsin Cheesemakers' and
Buttermakers' Association**
Doug Simon, Trega Foods,
PO Box 410, Weyauwega, WI 54983

International Dairy-Deli-Bakery Association
Carol Christison, P.O. Box 5528,
Madison, WI 53705

Iowa Dairy Products Association
Norm Mokledstad, 4623 Douglas Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50310-2742

Missouri Butter & Cheese Institute
Terry S. Long, 19107 Factory Creek Road,
Jamestown, MO 65046

Nebraska Cheese Association
Ed Price, 3104 Nebraska, Fremont, NE 68025

New York State Cheese Manufacturer's Assn
Kathryn Boor, 11 Stocking Hall,
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853

North Central Cheese Industries Association
David R. Henning, SDSU, Box 2104,
Brookings, SD 57007

North Dakota Cheese Makers' Assn
Glen Knetter, P.O. Box 309,
Medina, ND 58467

Ohio Swiss Cheese Association
Darlene Miller, P.O. Box 445,
Sugar Creek, OH 44681

South Dakota State Dairy Association
Howard Bonnemann, SDSU, Box 2104,
Brookings, SD 57007

**Southwestern Wisconsin
Cheese Makers' Association**
Myron Olson, Chalet Cheese Coop,
N4858 Cty Hwy N, Monroe, WI 53566

Wisconsin Cheese Makers' Association
John Umhoefer, 8030 Excelsior Drive,
Suite 305, Madison, WI 53717

Wisconsin Dairy Products Association
Brad Legreid, 8383 Greenway Blvd.,
Middleton, WI 53562

EDITORIAL COMMENT



DICK GROVES

Publisher / Editor
Cheese Reporter
dgroves@cheesereporter.com

Tillamook Makes The Right Decision On BST/BGH

The cooperative came under considerable pressure prior to making the decision, and was also criticized after making it, but the recent decision by the Tillamook County Creamery Association to ban the use of BST/BGH was, from our perspective, the right move to make.

As we reported in our March 4 issue (page 13), TCCA members recently voted 83 to 43 in favor of the ban on the controversial BST/BGH. A pretty impressive 126 out of 147 co-op members met at a special session late last month to discuss the BST/BGH ban and cast their votes.

The ban was in the works for almost two years; last May, the co-op's board made it Tillamook's policy to require that by April 1, 2005, all milk producers delivering milk to its facilities in Tillamook and Boardman, OR, would certify that their milk is from cows not treated with BST/BGH.

After that board decision last May, TCCA reported in a recent "Media Backgrounder," Monsanto, the manufacturer and marketer of BST/BGH, began lobbying for a reversal of the decision. TCCA went so far as to call it an "aggressive intrusion" by Monsanto into the co-op's decision-making process.

Still, TCCA members voted almost two to one in favor of the ban, which will be fully implemented by April 1.

But it didn't end with that vote. Last week, the "Milk is Milk" blog criticized Tillamook, basically for caving in to activist demands. But a review of the points made by "Milk is Milk" and the Center for Global Food Issues tells us that TCCA did indeed make the right decision in banning BST/BGH.

First, a bit of background is in order. The "Milk is Milk" blog, or weblog (www.milkismilk.com), is run by the Center for Global Food Issues, a project of the Hudson Institute. That organization describes itself as a non-profit public policy organization, providing factual, science-based information on important food and farming issues.

In a March 10 news release, CGFI charged that Tillamook, under attack from activist groups funded by the organic and natural products industry, banned its members' use of BST/BGH "without addressing the serious ramifications for its members, consumers and the environment."

CGFI is correct when it states that BST/BGH is approved as safe by the US Food and Drug Administration. However, FDA only has to worry about the safety of the hormone, not about actually selling milk and dairy products. That job is left up to companies such as Tillamook.

Indeed, we can't help but question the whole idea that, as CGFI's blog says, "milk is milk." That concept has led to a decades-long decline in fluid milk consumption. Meanwhile, organic milk sales seem to have no trouble at all racking up double-digit percentage increases every year.

Perhaps this is because at least some consumers don't think "milk is milk." Granted, this is still a minority of consumers and probably will always be a minority of consumers, but not everybody shops for milk strictly on price.

And perhaps this is why the California Milk Advisory Board, in its highly regarded "It's The Cheese" commercials, shows "Happy Cows" standing out in green meadows, rather than being injected with hormones. It's an image thing, and frankly BST/BGH doesn't really do the dairy industry's image a whole lot of good. Whether it does any actual harm is still open for debate.

CGFI is part of a broad-based coalition which has filed state and federal complaints about false and misleading milk marketing practices in the dairy industry. Indeed, after a series of complaints by CGFI's "Stop Labeling Lies" coalition, FDA sent out warning letters to four companies, informing them that their products are misbranded because the labels contain the false statements, "No Hormones" or "Hormone Free."

But misleading claims run both ways in this longstanding controversy. Way back in 1992, the Office of Inspector General of the US

From our perspective, Tillamook listened to its consumers and reacted accordingly. Given Tillamook's success in the marketplace in recent years, it's hard to argue with its BST/BGH strategy.

Department of Health and Human Services (FDA's parent agency) found that "Monsanto had disseminated pre-approval promotional materials which claimed, without supporting scientific data, that bST was safe and effective prior to FDA approval of the drug." This of course occurred long before Center for Global Food Issues started its various blogs railing against alleged abuses by companies who use false or misleading labels and deceptive marketing practices.

Avery goes on to claim that farmers, consumers and Tillamook are the "big losers" in this controversy, but we disagree for the most part. As noted earlier, 43 TCCA members did vote against the BST/BGH ban, so it's probably safe to conclude that those 43 producers either were already using BST/BGH or were planning to use it, and now won't be able to.

But is Tillamook a loser here? Hardly. From our perspective, Tillamook listened to its consumers and reacted accordingly. Given Tillamook's success in the marketplace in recent years, it's hard to argue with its BST/BGH strategy.

What about consumers? Avery correctly states that the "vast majority of consumers care about fresh, safe, nutritious, affordable dairy products." TCCA's ban will do nothing to hamper the ability of consumers to obtain exactly those types of products.

Yes, for many consumers, milk probably is just milk, but at least some consumers let TCCA know that they opposed the use of BST/BGH, for whatever reasons. Tillamook made the right decision in listening. •

PERSPECTIVES

**"Our research shows this
is a top-of-the-mind
issue for consumers."**

—Jim McMullen,
president and CEO,
Tillamook County
Creamery Association,
on BST/BGH.