



Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act—What It Means for Schools and Dairy Farmers

The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act has officially been signed into law—this is an exciting time for dairy farmers! We are proud of the role dairy farmers played in achieving this milestone. Your dairy checkoff dollars funded critical research on the health benefits of full-fat dairy and helped ensure the science supported this policy change.

The legislation allows school lunch programs to offer a broader range of dairy milk options, including whole and reduced-fat (2%) milk, in addition to the currently permitted low-fat (1%), fat-free (skim), flavored and unflavored, and lactose-free dairy milk.

- Checkoff has been a leader in advancing sound science, nutrition research and education on whole milk and whole milk dairy products.

Each year checkoff-funded research results in numerous studies—often 30 or more—in the pipeline with regularly published articles in peer-reviewed journals, all with the goal of strengthening dairy's place in the modern diet to benefit public health.

More than 80 studies have been published that highlight the role of whole milk and full-fat dairy in a healthy lifestyle.

In 2024 whole milk accounted for 47% of fluid milk sales, up from 27% in 2013.



WHAT WE'RE DOING

- Encouraging school districts to include whole and 2% milk options in their 2026–2027 school milk bids.
- Communicating with processors that service school milk accounts to assess availability and pricing for the newly approved milk options.
- Continuing to promote additional dairy offerings in school cafeterias, such as hot chocolate milk, smoothies, and lattes.
- Working with appropriate state-level authorities (Departments of Education or Agriculture, depending on state structure) to understand how implementation will occur in each state.

WHOLE MILK RESEARCH SPEAKS VOLUMES

American Dairy Association North East cannot take a position on legislation and policy. This information is for educational purposes only. For specific questions about the legislation, we recommend contacting National Milk Producers Federation.



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WHAT CAN DAIRY FARMERS DO?

We encourage farmers to promote these new options with their local schools.

- More milk options means more choices for students to drink the milk they enjoy.
- School districts are receiving this information at the same time as everyone else. Menu changes often require multiple approvals and careful consideration of budgets, contracts, and logistics.

Helpful messages for conversations with school leaders and community members:

- This change is supported by emerging research on the benefits of full-fat dairy.
- We are advocating for more nutritious choices in schools.
- Many families already choose whole milk at home; this update allows children to select options that are familiar to them at school.
- This change is supported by emerging research on full-fat dairy.
- Dairy farmers and schools all share the same goal: providing kids with nourishing, tasty meals.

KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- The legislation permits schools to offer whole and 2% milk at lunch; it does not require them to do so.
- While schools may begin serving whole milk at lunch immediately, many may not make changes until the next bid cycle, likely starting in fall 2026.
- All real cow's milk, regardless of fat content, provides the same package of 13 essential nutrients, including 1 gram of protein in every ounce of milk.
- Our shared goal is to increase milk consumption overall, regardless of fat levels.
- Recognize that school nutrition professionals face pressures similar to farmers – tight budgets, rising costs and high expectations.



We will continue to share updates as implementation guidance becomes available. Scan this QR code to sign up for the Checkoff Check-In for the most up-to-date information!



For more information on how we are working to build dairy sales, visit AmericanDairy.com