

The New Milk Demand

PMMB Chair, Robert N. Barley

I am sure many of you have heard Albert Einstein's definition of insanity, "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". Many of us, myself included, have fallen into this trap. We expect that because growing up our mothers told us to drink our 'whole' milk at every meal, fried most things in butter and we always had ice cream as a special treat, everyone should still be doing the same thing. I wish we could go back to that time when milk was King and the alternative was water out of the tap; however, this is not the world we live in.

As I was ordering a milkshake at the Farm Show this past week – kudos by the way to Dave Smith and his team at the Pennsylvania Dairyman's Association -- I had a chance to talk to my server, Willy Leshner from Way-Har Farms. We were discussing the changing consumer drinking habits over the recent years. Willy mentioned that many of the restaurants they deliver to have seen a huge decrease in the amount of milk that people drink. Much of the decrease is based on competition from a myriad of other drinks, changing habits, disconnect to dairy farms and farmers, and the politics of the anti-animal groups. I have always been an optimist and I look at this as *an opportunity*. Maybe we need to look at this in a new light or put some light on what is happening and could be happening in the dairy industry.

Don't abandon what got us here. Milk, butter, cheese, ice cream and yes milkshakes are still essential to the demand for our product. As Nelson Troutman advertises on his round bale, milk is 97% fat free.

Coffee has become king, thank you Starbucks. Many coffee drinks have milk or milk substitutes in them. Let's make great products people want and beat the competition at their own game.

My son Ethan is into fitness and weightlifting. He drinks a lot of whey products. Let's develop products the general public needs to have that are high in protein.

Farmer's are still more trusted than many of the so-called experts. This past week at the Pennsylvania Farm Show we had the 'Calving Corner'. The great event brought people to see the cows calving and while they were watching they could see the videos on the screen of real farmers telling their story of how they take good care of their cows and provide a wholesome product to families in Pennsylvania. Farmers need to be telling 'Their Story' everywhere.

We can take a lesson from George Washington Carver. He convinced farmers to grow peanuts, but they grew so many peanuts the market was flooded. He didn't complain about the PMMB, Coop's, exports, competition and the naïve public. He went to work and developed many uses for peanuts and saved the industry. We seem to be in a similar position with milk. Let's all get to work and save our industry together.