

Testimony from Nicole Barlass

My name is Nicole Barlass from Dusty Lane Farms LLC in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. We milk 130 cows and farm 1600 acres, raising corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. We employ four part-time employees on the farm and support numerous other area businesses. Our family also owns a trucking business that works with several local cooperatives to haul feed, bedding and minerals across the U.S.

Our milk is shipped to a local cheese manufacturer, where it is made into soft white cheeses like provolone. Our farm does qualify under the definition of a small business of \$3.75 million in annual revenue.

In addition to my roles in the family businesses, I am a member of many organizations, including the Dairy Business Association, Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative and Sheboygan County Farm Bureau. I serve as President of the Wisconsin State Fair Dairy Promotion Board, sit on the county farm bureau's education and promotion committee and lead sponsorships for the Sheboygan County Fairest of the Fair Committee.

I have been a National Finalist in the Farm Bureau Discussion Meet contest and Excellence in Agriculture Award, Wisconsin's 59th Alice in Dairyland, a Wisconsin state FFA officer and agricultural educator. Outside agriculture, I coach softball. For many years, I worked full-time positions off the farm in both ag education and for several dairy groups in Wisconsin.

We run a very lean, "hands-on" operation from a labor standpoint — from milking cows to harvesting grain. I believe this strategy and our diversification have kept our farm viable for all these years. But as we look to the future, we know that our farm size and management will dictate the need to explore other options, such as robotic milking systems, due to labor limitations. If we do not, we may, unfortunately, reach a point where we sell the cows and focus solely on cash crops and the trucking business.

Risk management is an important part of how modern dairy farms operate, as milk prices and costs can fluctuate up and down. One of the biggest hurdles producer price risk management has seen over the last few years has been more frequent negative PPDs or producer price differentials. Proposals 16 and 17, submitted by Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, aim to limit producer price risk exposure by eliminating advanced pricing, one of the most popular causes of negative PPDs.

I would like to finish by thanking USDA for this opportunity to testify at the hearing today virtually. As I stated, we are a very "hands-on" farm, so taking time away to testify in person is not always feasible. It is refreshing to have an increased emphasis on the farmer's voice in this hearing. Thank you again.