DAIRY

The United States dairy industry produces over 20 billion gallons of milk. This milk is pasteurized and sold, or transformed into cheese, butter, cream and ice cream for consumers in the U.S. and around the world. Many people believe dairy farms are characterized by an agrarian ideal of open grassy pastures, rolling hills, grazing cows and red barns. Unfortunately, today most of our milk is produced in large industrial facilities that hardly resemble that ideal vision.

BIRTH OF THE U.S. DAIRY INDUSTRY
As American cities developed and expanded, many dairies were naturally located within city centers. Overcrowded and unkempt barns held up to 4,000 cows, which were fed waste residue from grains used in nearby liquor distilleries and breweries. These conditions, coupled with lack of refrigeration, poor human sanitation, vermin and insect infestations, made milk a risky and unhealthy drink. By the mid-1800s, reformers pushed for the importation of “country milk” into cities, but without refrigeration and proper handling, it was no healthier than city milk.

PASTEURIZATION AND CENTRALIZATION
Towards the end of the 19th Century, with the widely accepted invention of pasteurization, the quality, safety and shelf life of milk for consumers dramatically increased. As pasteurization laws passed in local districts, large processors with the ability to afford expensive pasteurization equipment scaled-up production and distribution over wide geographic areas and replaced small dairies. Today, much of our milk is processed, priced and distributed by a handful of multi-billion dollar firms. These corporations buy 80 percent of milk produced in the U.S. and wield enormous power over the way milk is made and what it costs, leaving dairy farmers little control over their livelihood or product.

INDUSTRIAL PRACTICES
Dairy farmers have adapted by increasing production through the use of artificial hormones, antibiotics, and highly-concentrated feed, and by moving cows off pasture and into filthy, confined factory farms known as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). These practices cause major environmental and public health devastation, affecting air, water and land quality.

Perhaps the most drastic measure dairies take to boost milk production is the use of artificial hormones. Approved by the FDA in 1993, and produced by Monsanto under the name Posilac®, recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) is said to increase per-cow milk yield by 10 to 15 percent. Cows treated with these hormones often develop serious health complications, resulting in additional increases in antibiotic injections. Dairy products are not labeled when cows are treated with rBGH, but some dairies label products from cows that have not received it. With pressure from Monsanto, the dairy industry is attempting to make this labeling practice illegal, claiming the statement is misleading!

CONCERN OVER INDUSTRIAL DAIRY PRODUCTION HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF THE ORGANIC DAIRY INDUSTRY.

RISE OF ORGANIC DAIRY
Concern over industrial dairy production has contributed to the rise of the organic dairy industry. While organic milk makes up only 1 percent of the dairy market, demand for it has increased 477 percent between 1997 and 2003! Milk products labeled “Certified Organic” or “USDA Organic” ensure consumers that the product meets U.S. Department of Agriculture organic standards, and are certified by a USDA-accredited private certifying organization.

(continued)
RAW MILK
Some consumers are turning to raw milk products from goats and cows, some out of concern about the hormones and animal welfare issues present in some conventional dairy, others for health and nutrition reasons. By definition, raw milk is not pasteurized or homogenized. It is thought to contain higher amounts of healthy vitamins, minerals, enzymes and good bacteria than pasteurized milk. Stemming from poor health and safety codes in the early 20th Century, raw milk developed a bad reputation that continues to this day. Currently, the sale of raw milk products is illegal in 22 states. Where it is legal, consumers can only purchase raw milk in small quantities on the farm where it is produced.

DID YOU KNOW?
- 2006 figures indicate that only 1 percent of all dairy products sold in the US are certified organic, and organic milk sales are growing by about 25 percent each year.
- The countries that consume the most dairy products are also the countries with the most wealth, including the United States, the European Union, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.
- Swiss-owned Nestle is the world's largest Dairy company, with nearly $19 billion in revenues in 2005.

What You Can Do...
Luckily, there are still small dairy farms throughout the United States that raise cows on pasture and produce high-quality milk and dairy products without sacrificing human and environmental well-being.

- Visit the Eat Well Guide to find a dairy farm near you that produces milk, cheese, butter and other dairy products using sustainable farming and production practices.
- Visit Sustainable Table and Food & Water Watch's rBGH-free dairy map to find a state by state listing of dairy products without rBGH.

To find sustainably raised meat near you visit www.eatwellguide.org.

Find more detailed information about dairy on our website at www.sustainabletable.org/issues/dairy.