

ALABAMA'S DAIRY INDUSTRY

Due to transportation cost, hauling milk into the state is more expensive than producing milk in the state. The ever escalating cost of fuel and transportation indicates that transporting milk into the area will continue to be more expensive. Listed below are some points that are considered to be major advantages and obstacles to dairying in the state. These were gleaned from interviews with progressive Alabama dairy operators on this topic in 2003-2004. ***Buelon R. (Pete) Moss, Professor Emeritus and Dairy Extension Specialist, Auburn University.***

1. Major Advantages of Dairying in Alabama.
 - a. Good fluid milk market. Demand and price for milk within Alabama is strong. Good Interstate routing and close proximity to Atlanta and Florida markets strengthen fluid milk markets.
 - b. Tax structure. Alabama's property and real estate tax structures are low compared to most states.
 - c. Land is available in many areas of the state for dairy operations and land prices are good in most areas compared to surrounding states.
 - d. Attitude toward agriculture. Agriculture industries, especially dairying, have a very positive image in the state.
 - e. Climate.
 - (1) The state's climate is favorable for dairying due to a minimal amount of cold weather and limited days of hot weather.
 - (2) Cow and people comfort is good during much of the year.
 - (3) Double cropping can be practiced throughout the state.
 - (4) Extended pasture grazing is an advantage. A few "grazing" dairies exist. Most all dairies effectively utilize pasture for heifers and dry cows as well as some lactating cows.
 - f. Available labor. Many dairy producers report readily available sources of local and/or immigrant labor. A 2005 source cite available labor and a strong work ethic in the state as major reasons that industries are locating in the state.
 - g. Waste Management. The regulating authority (Alabama Department of Environmental Management) on waste management is given high marks for their assistance, approach and/or attitude.
2. Obstacles to Dairying in Alabama.
 - a. The lack of infrastructure and isolation of dairy operations are considered as disadvantages by several dairy operators in the state. This varies from the lack of dairy equipment service and supplies to experienced veterinarians. Other operators indicate that supplies are as close as that Brown Truck (UPS).
 - b. Financial Institutions. Concern has been expressed by some managers about the apathy, attitude or lack of experience of financial officers.
 - c. Waste management. Personnel involved with planning waste systems are inexperienced about dairy operations.
 - d. Heat Stress Conditions. This is of concern, but good managers cope with heat stress through feeding, management and facilities.