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## **Serving the diverse production information needs of agriculture**

*J. Zimmerman*

*Dairy One Cooperative, Inc., Ithaca, New York, USA*

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Dairy One Cooperative, Inc. is a diverse farm information services business with origins very similar that of many other agricultural service businesses. The predecessor organizations to Dairy One go back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fostered through local county Cooperative Extension, the Dairy Herd Improvement system began with farmers recognizing their need for production information on their cattle, then building the platform for recording and delivering the information.

In 1949 the New York Dairy Herd Improvement Cooperative was formed as a federation of county DHIAs, again fostered through Cooperative Extension. This federation lasted into the 1970s. During the 1970s many of the local county organizations were consolidated into multicounty groups or at the state level within New York. Eventually all of the counties in New York were consolidated into a single state organization of NY DHIC. During this period there was much involvement in the DHIA system by the Land Grant universities in program development, support, and management.

During the 1980s a majority of the northeastern U.S. state DHIAs consolidated in a single, centrally operated organization that became to be known as Northeast DHIA. In the mid 1990s Dairylea Cooperative, a milk marketing cooperative based in Syracuse New York, was moving down a path of developing and providing an array farm management services for its members. Dairylea had a desire to get more involved in herd management services and was contemplating some type of DHIA service. At the same time Northeast DHIA was considering opportunities to partner with others in the dairy industry as it looked to the future. Since there were many leaders in common between Northeast DHIA and Dairylea, it was natural for discussions to begin. After investigation of business synergies and opportunities Northeast DHIA and Dairylea formed Dairy One on January 1, 1997. There was immediate consolidation of a number of business activities including administration, laboratories, and milk sample transportation.

In 2000 the former Mid East DHIA region consolidated into Dairy One and in 2003 Pennsylvania DHIA merged with Dairy One. Both were driven by opportunities to contain costs and maintain or improve services to farmers.

Today Dairy One is a farmer owned cooperative structured as a 501(c) 5 educational not-for-profit, governed by a 19 member farmer board of directors. Dairy One has a unique relationship with Dairylea – similar to a parent organization – that provides

tremendous opportunities to Dairy One. Dairy One has two member organizations, DairyOne and Dairy Farmers of America. Dairy One employs close to 300 people and has gross sales of \$18 million.

Dairy One's strategic focus is to provide production information from all production sectors of a dairy farm while helping farmers and advisors manage the information and implement management strategies through the use of technology.

The mission of Dairy One is carried out through the delivery of products and services proved through four primary business units, DHIA services, analytical services, software sales and support, and Farmland Environmental.

Through Dairy One's DHIA services 5 200 farms with over 600 000 cows in a 13 state region are served. This is Dairy One's largest business segment, but today I will focus on the non- DHIA activities in which Dairy One is involved.

Dairy One operates four milk analysis laboratories providing DHIA testing and producer payment analysis. Through partnerships with Cornell University and the Pennsylvania Diagnostic Laboratory, Dairy One has developed a milk culturing service that helps dairy farmers manage cow udder health. As a way to move cow information and culture results from the farm to the lab, to the advising veterinarian, and back to the farm, Dairy One developed the Culture Tracker software that simplifies data input and management.

The Dairy One forage laboratory is one of the largest laboratories in the U.S. with customers in all 50 U.S. states and 30 foreign countries. Its primary customers are feed companies and feed advisors working in the livestock industries. Additional customer bases are seed companies and zoos. The laboratory provides a full complement of NIR and wet chemistry analyses and is a leader in analysis development. The Dairy One forage laboratory has begun the process of developing affiliated laboratories outside of its traditional territory in the U.S. and around the world. An important arm of the forage lab is Equi-Analytical, a division of the lab focused on serving the equine market.

As part of Dairy One's strategic focus it established soil analysis services in 2006. This is helping Dairy One to move into the area of agronomy information and leverage its resources.

The Dairy Management Resources (DMR) division of Dairy One is comprised of a group of 12 people who are responsible for selling and servicing herd management software systems to farmers. Additionally, the group supports the Dairy One field force in its use of software related to DHIA activities. The strength of the DMR group is that they understand dairy cattle management, and have expertise in software and computers. Support for complex cattle management schemes at the farm has become increasingly important to the industry. DMR has become increasingly involved with the installation and support of computer networks at the farm level, connecting data systems and multiple facilities.

Recently, Dairy One initiated a new business division named Farmland Environmental. The purpose of Farmland Environmental is to help farmers and their advisors organize, optimize, and control issues associated with crop production and environmental management. The initial focus of Farmland Environmental is to provide geo-referenced field maps, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs), and a software suite for managing crop production and environmental compliance.

Moving into a new sector of agriculture, Dairy One will begin providing juice and wine analysis services to wineries in the Finger Lakes region of New York State beginning in fall 2008. The wine industry is growing significantly in the region and is in need of the same types of information and analytical services as other sectors of agriculture.

As agriculture continues to grow and change, Dairy One will be focused on how it can continue to service its information and management needs.