



Danish DHI celebrate 125 years – 1895-2020!

In January 1895 a group of farmers in the southwestern part of Denmark decided to join forces and establish world's first coop to run organized milk recording. The idea of measuring milk and analyze for fat was not new. Early 1880'ies similar attempts was set up in US on more individual basis. The success of DHI as it took of in Denmark 1895 is linked to the way it was organized and pushed by a few leading persons.

Behind the initiative was especially one person, Niels Pedersen, headmaster of the nearby Ladelund agricultural college. He was engaged in the dairy industry, at that time with focus on primarily butter, and had observed a continuous drop in % fat in the milk to these dairies. This resulted in less butter, higher costs pr kg butter and lower payment to famers.

He convinced a group of farmers, 13 in numbers, that something had to be done to protect their own business and financial interest, and very soon concluded that everything started with the single cow. The goal was to find tools to lift the fat percentage, and to identify cows with low and high content. Low ones to be discarded and high ones to stay in herd.



Niels Pedersen found this would only be possible if the work was handled systematically and with a frequent collection of information's. To carry out the work, he needed staff who understood the idea, and could communicate the process while Pedersen carried on with all his other duties helping the also farmer owned and controlled dairy industry.

Pedersen's ideas and perspectives were focused on the well being of the farmer and his family. He focused on farm economy and linked the new service with efficiency and the best ratio between input and output. Feeding of cows based on DHI data became a major cornerstone because it also then was the key to profit. Niels Pedersen knew that his efforts to enable dairy coops to pay farmers more for their milk, was closely linked to the quality of the milk farmers delivered.

The first milk tester

The first milk tester was Emil Konradi. He was picked by Pedersen among a preselected group of 7 students at the ag college. The 7 students were examined through a written test. Konradi not only finished first, but also was the only one with no wrong answers, and from there his career was set. First to test for 13 farmers, and later as a teacher on Ladelund where hundreds of young farmers over the following years was educated by him to be well respected DHI technicians.

The idea of having these small local organizations to handle milk recording service soon spread over the region. Northern Germany, the coast of the Baltic sea, Baltic countries and throughout Scandinavia and further out.



Emil Konradi (1872-1951) was active all the way through and became a DHI institution worldwide. Niels Pedersen lived from 1851 to 1911.

July 31st a ceremony was held at the church in Malt, where both of these important men is resting next to each other.

Invited to the day was 50 people who all played a role in DHI over the last 50 or more years. Dairy farmers on various boards, managers of DHI organizations, invited guests from Germany, DHI staff and not to forget a group of DHI technicians with 97 year old Erik Groenbaek as the overall

senior. Erik told that he in 1947, as a young technician, was educated by Emil Konradi.

Celebrating 125 years of DHI and still have one person who met and remember founders of the service, for sure underlines longevity and strength of the dairy community. Thanks to Erik for joining us and sharing the information with us! Pictured below is the group of DHI technicians with Erik Groenbaek center right.



After the ceremony at the church, everyone moved to the nearby manor house Sønderskov Castle and Museum, where a small exhibition is open to the public. It presents tools and times long time gone plus some newer and also today used material.

Looking into all these details it is very clear that the principle in DHI work is still the same – we must have precise and solid data on the single cow to build up information's enabling farmers to make profitable decisions.

During the combined lunch and reception all of this was discussed as was time gone and remembered by the 50 guests where some had not seen each other for quite some time.



President of RYK, Dairy farmer Michael Jensen, deliver his notes about Niels Pedersen

Uffe Lauritsen, RYK, August 2020