

GUEST COLUMNIST



CMN Exclusive!

Perspective: Ingredient technology

Joseph O'Donnell is executive director of the California Dairy Research Foundation. He contributes his column exclusively for Cheese Market News®.



I read the news today, oh boy!

If you've been scanning the headlines lately, no doubt you've seen a lot of great news about milk and dairy products. A recent UPI article — "Milk as the New Atkins?" — quotes Dr. Bruce German, professor of food science and technology at the University of California-Davis as saying: "Milk evolved with selective Darwinian pressure to provide nourishment in mammals. We're now realizing that it's one food that we can use to make healthy people even healthier."

Or, how about this bit from *The New York Times*?: "Diets rich in fruit, vegetables and lowfat dairy have been shown in some studies to help reduce blood pressure in adults. Now, a new study in the journal *Epidemiology* suggests that children may benefit as well." Another article from Lindsey Partos of *FoodNavigator* states: "Foods that can help control the common incidence of blood pres-

sure offer growing opportunities for industry, and a recent study boosts the case revealing that children who consistently eat more servings of dairy foods, fruits and vegetables may have lower blood pressure levels compared to children eating the least amount of these foods."

All of this positive news for consumers and the dairy industry joins with the pervasive coverage of Dr. Zemel's research showing how including dairy products in the diet of people trying to lose weight improves the effectiveness of the weight loss program that filled newspapers throughout 2004. I could fill this column with material like this from last year alone. I purposely cherry-picked items from the lay press — publications consumers read, not from scientific journals — to show that this is information that's getting to the masses. Two major points stand out: first, it is about health

not disease, with dairy products not positioned as a "cure" but as a way of making a healthy person healthier. The second point is that this is done "naturally." Milk is nature's designed contribution to health. All other foods require some processing, breeding or manipulation by humans to be truly healthful or even edible.

Consumers are receptive to these concepts. The notion of keeping healthy sounds like a lot more fun than curing a disease — not to mention that healthy people represent a larger market. Dairy products are reported to be the leading player in the booming area of functional foods. Many readers of this column already supply that market; others would like to diversify their product line or branch off into non-standard products. Either way it is a tough, competitive business — largely because it is on the higher tech side and the field requires constant monitoring to stay on top of the science.

Fortunately, the dairy industry is there to meet your needs. Through Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) and their local dairy promotion orders, dairy producers support two university labs dedicated to helping processors from anywhere in the country with new product development, product refinement and staying ahead of the ingredient business game. These labs are located at the University of Wisconsin's Center for Dairy Research and the Dairy Products Technology Center at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. Both the Center for Dairy Research, which falls under the direction of Dr. Rusty Bishop and also is supported by the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, and the Dairy

Products Technology Center, which is directed by Dr. Phil Tong and receives support from the California Milk Advisory Board, are fully equipped to assist companies in diving into the functional foods arena. No matter the size of your company, these facilities can keep you up-to-date on global developments in dairy ingredients and, with their processing capabilities, they also can test prototypes or work through production-ingredient research concerns.

There's never been a better time for dairy products and ingredients. DMI has a national marketing plan (3-A-Day) addressing the government-supported recommendation of three servings of dairy foods each day for good health. Couple this with an exploding understanding of the role milk and dairy products play in maintaining good health and add on the new dairy processing technologies available to create dairy ingredients suited for the functional foods market and you've got it made. Our mission is to deliver nutrition and health through milk and dairy products — we now have a greater scientific understanding of how milk was designed by nature to do just that. We have the technology to work our knowledge into value-added consumer products and the marketing and laboratory infrastructure to support proprietary efforts to deliver benefits to consumers through dairy foods. It all adds up. Keep reading the news — it's only going to get better!

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