



ACCELERATED TIMELINE

With a great deal of change facing the project in the next few weeks, I am sure many of you are wondering about the timeline of the current reports. We are committed to fulfilling the agreement and terms of service for those that have submitted (or will be submitting) data prior to the specified deadlines.

In conjunction with the departmental and project advisory committee, we are working on a collaborative agreement that continues some of the project's activities while adding the availability of others. Look for an announcement and details in the coming weeks.

If you plan to submit 1999 data for analysis, we need to get your data into the office immediately. Since the details of collaboration have not yet been determined, I cannot guarantee an analysis of data submitted past the deadline. **May 5** is the last date that data can be submitted. This will enable an analysis report to be compiled and returned in the month of May.

THE FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

There has been some healthy dialogue in the past few weeks surrounding the future of the project. One of the largest concerns has been (even from day one) the long-term sustainability of the project. This applies to the educational/extension component, the research effort on the data, leveraging project efforts with others, and offering feasible, timely benchmarking products.

One of the exciting possibilities of the impending administrative shift in the project is that some of these activities will not only be sustained, but the sophistication of the analyses and level of education may actually increase via long-term collaboration. In other words, all parties are committed to making this transition in the interest of increasing the competitiveness of individual southeast dairy business and the industry as a whole.

With that said, there are certainly plenty of details which need to be specified, researched, and detailed prior to understanding the eventual direction of the project. Current dialogue is focused on developing a system, not unlike current efforts, where project clients may participate, via the university, for an enrollment fee. Clients may also choose other benchmarking products. However, the level and detail will be up to individual

businesses. No one will be 'forced' into a product that does not address their needs.

What will eventually happen? Only time will tell. We are trying to focus on a positive transition in the best interests of the individual clients using a collaborative, rather than competitive approach.

SELF-SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

For those of you submitting the 1999 data yourself, we need to receive the information as soon as possible in order to troubleshoot and verify your financial performance. If you have yet to submit the data, please contact me immediately so we can turn this around as quick as possible.

If you still want to submit the data yourselves, you don't have to fill out the forms yourself. However, we need to have the following information sent in as soon as possible:

- Co-op settlement sheets-for total pounds milk sold in 1999
- DHI herd summary information-DHI report 202 for Dec./Jan. 1999 (for herd size and turnover information)
- Cash receipts (milk, cull cows, calves, crops)
- Cash expenses (feed, labor, livestock, crops, real estate, other)
- Asset values on Jan. 1 and Dec. 31 1999. This includes:
 - Accounts receivable (include the January 1999 and 2000 milk check)
 - Real estate-fair market value (Assessed or other relevant value)
 - Buildings and improvements
 - Machinery and equipment
- Liability values on Jan. 1 and Dec. 31 1999. This includes:
 - Debt schedule and payments made-this includes interest and principal payments during the year and next year's planned payments
 - Capital leases-payments made and next year's planned payments.
 - Accounts payable

- ❑ Cow, heifer, feed, and supply inventories on Jan. 1 and Dec. 31 1999.
- ❑ Land use information (number of acres, owned, rented, tilled, pasture)
- ❑ Labor inventory and turnover information.
- ❑ Depreciation for buildings, cattle, machinery and equipment, and improvements.
- ❑ List of capital purchases and sales separated by livestock, machinery, buildings/improvements, and real estate.

ANNOUNCING 'TOP DAIRIES 2000'

As part of the national dairy farm analysis committee (which I am a participant of), we are pleased to offer another 'package' of performance reviews and benchmarks as part of a 'national' financial performance database. There are two levels which you can participate in this program. The enclosed brochure outlines in greater detail how you can participate. However, I will outline how you tap into this resource:

- ✓ For no fees at all (aside from time), you can submit financial data and receive a benchmark report for your business. At this level, you will also have access to the website and the ability to make 'sorts' and comparisons based on the criteria you chose (i.e. herd size, region, labor efficiency, etc.). All submitted data remains confidential and secure. You do not have to participate in this project if you do not want to. The best part about this project is that it is free and open to any dairy. If you want to submit your data, feel free to do it yourself, or make arrangements with me and I will submit it for you. Again, I will not submit anyone's information without your explicit, written permission.
- ✓ The second level of participation (and probably the most useful) is the 'workshop' that will be held 14-15 August in Orlando. If you contribute your data, you save ½ of the registration fee (see the brochure for more details). This 'workshop' will be a balanced mix of small-group interaction with other farms and industry personnel and strategic planning that is focused on increasing the competitiveness and profitability of your business. To register, you need to contact the people listed in the brochure (i.e. do not call me to register for the conference).

This should be a dynamic, highly informative meeting that will gather 'top dairies' from across the U.S. Best of all, it is happening in our backyard.

For more information about this national benchmarking initiative, check out the program website (URL

<http://cpdmp.cornell.edu/topdairies>). This is a good mix of industry and university personnel interested in increasing the competitiveness and profitability of all participants. Please participate at the level you feel appropriate.

TIMELINE

Data collection 'season': Now-5 May:

- ✓ Expedited data collection and turnaround time for troubleshooting.
- ✓ Internal financial statements computed and returned to you for positive verification.
- ✓ Financial performance per cwt. milk sold, per cow, and percentage of revenues calculated for internal use.
- ✓ Ten (10) day turnaround time for processing in order to expedite troubleshooting and verification.

Reporting season: 5 May-30 May:

- ✓ Analysis report delivered that includes multiple comparisons to project averages. On-site report delivery and consultation.

The moral of the story: we need to get the data collected and verified in a speedy manner so we have time to analyze it, compute meaningful averages, and report it back to you before 1 June.

DAIRY PRODUCTION CONFERENCE

Please join us 2-3 May at the Best Western in Gainesville for the 37th annual Florida Dairy Production Conference. Russ Giesy will be speaking on 'Effect of feeding system on costs in SE dairy farms' and I will be presenting 'The implications of herd turnover on profits', both using project information. Other topics range from reproduction and health management to nutrient management and managing grass forages, including a panel discussion. For more information, call 352-392-5930.

PROJECT CONTACTS

Andy Andreasen, Washington County Extension 850-638-6180	Lane Ely, University of Georgia 706-542-9107
Russ Giesy, Sumter County Extension 352-793-2728	Marvin Hoekema, University of Florida 352-392-5594
Pat Miller, Okeechobee County Extension 941-763-6469	Travis Seawright, Manatee County Extension 941-722-4524
Chris Vann, Lafayette County Extension 904-294-1279	