



Women in Leadership



Their voices, ideas and vision for the future of cheese and dairy.

Tammy Anderson-Wise is CEO of Dairy Council of California, Sacramento, California

In an industry with continuous innovation, what inspires you to think creatively and foster creativity among your employees?

Dairy Council of California has been dedicated to elevating health for 103 years. The world has changed quite a bit during that time — and we continue to evolve with it. This means always keeping an eye on what's next, embracing an innovative mindset and never being satisfied with the status quo. One of the strategic ways we do this is with our Trends intelligence process that monitors the environment for shifts that could impact the dairy industry, schools and communities. It was through this process that we identified a move toward digital learning nearly two decades ago and were able to embrace technology early on to evolve our nutrition education programming.

And while our Trends process provides structure to inspire, innovation happens all the time. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our team's innovation engine went into high gear, rapidly adapting to the changes in the education and school environment. As school buildings closed, Dairy Council of California moved quickly to support efforts aimed at increasing access to healthy foods at a time when many students who relied on school meals were attending class virtually. We also adapted our Mobile Dairy Classroom ag literacy educational assembly to provide virtual farm tours, which gave the program global reach.

All that said, at the end of the day, innovation relies on the creative thinking of our people. To foster that, we support the strengths and passions of each individual. We also rely on collaboration with great minds outside of the organization to push our thinking and help make us better.

What is a key industry insight you'd share with yourself 10 years ago if you could?

I would tell myself — and the industry — to get involved in sustainability discussions early on. It used to be that when people heard the word “sustainability” they would think exclusively

about environmental sustainability. Today, we know that sustainability means so much more. Dairy Council of California advocates for a broader view of sustainability that moves beyond protecting planetary health. Broadening the lens of sustainability to include human, social, economic and environmental factors creates an opportunity for the dairy community to highlight the value of dairy foods as part of healthy and sustainable daily eating patterns. While many health experts, advocates, policymakers and consumers are now moving in the direction of sustainable nutrition, if I could rewind the clock, I would say to get involved in sustainability discussions as soon as possible and make sure dairy nutrition is central to the conversation.

Is there a particular service or initiative you were involved with launching at Dairy Council of California that you're particularly proud of?

The dairy community is incredible. It produces milk and dairy foods that are critical to raising healthy children and fostering healthy communities, and it does so by using cutting-edge technologies and with high commitments to animal welfare and environmental stewardship. Because of this, one of the things I am most proud of is launching our advocacy program, which helps the industry better share the story of milk and dairy foods. The program started as a hard copy pocket guide for farmers and processors to carry around with them to remind them of key messages and ideas for how to talk about dairy foods. It later grew to include a mobile app called Dairy Up and a series of trainings designed to equip dairymen and women with tools to better engage with stakeholders. The dairy community has so many positive stories to tell, and through our advocacy program we have more people talking about the positive benefits of dairy foods. Today, advocacy efforts are combined with our nutrition education resources, partnerships and more for greater collective action and sustained impact.

What leadership style do you feel has garnered a positive response throughout your career?

My personal purpose statement has always been to serve rather than be served. Early on in my career at Dairy

Council of California, I was visiting an elementary school cafeteria. I watched as a young boy took a carton of school milk and hid it in his jacket. My heart ached for this student. The school foodservice professional with me that day told me the milk hidden in the boy's jacket might be all he had to eat for the rest of the day. This was hunger and nutrition insecurity right in front of me, and I was compelled to act. I knew then that I would dedicate my career to serving children and families on behalf of the dairy industry. This has translated into a servant leadership style that I have embraced in support of our cause, the dairy community and its partners, and the Dairy Council of California team. A big part of my job is serving as a steward of industry dollars entrusted to us, and it's an honor I hold dear. I also believe that by supporting and empowering my team and connecting with stakeholders on shared values, we can go further than any one person or organization can on its own. The result is something we can all be proud of: healthier children, families and communities.

Over your time with Dairy Council of California, how has the consumer perception of dairy shifted in terms of health and wellness?

When I first started, milk and dairy foods were widely embraced. That position has been challenged by numerous factors, including plant-based foods and beverages. And while dairy foods are no doubt the subject of scrutiny, the fact is that milk, cheese and other dairy foods are full of essential nutrients that can't easily be replaced. There is also a growing body of research that suggests the unique nutrients in dairy foods do not work in isolation, but rather interact with one another synergistically to provide health benefits beyond individual nutrients. This concept of the “dairy matrix” is gaining attention, and it's playing out in numerous ways, including perceptions of fat.

For many years, dietary recommendations focused on limiting foods high in fat. Yet medical and nutrition experts are beginning to understand that not all dietary fats are equal in terms of their effect on cardiovascular health. Moving forward, I believe dairy foods will be in a strong position because of the growing body of positive health research around dairy foods, and because people will see dairy foods as more natural in a time when consumers are shying away from processed and ultraprocessed foods.

How can the industry motivate the next generation of women to pursue a career in dairy?

There are so many great things about the dairy community. By being involved with dairy, women can contribute in making a difference and improving the health of children, families and communities. This positive impact is something to be proud of at a time when so many Americans are suffering from chronic diseases.

I would also let other women know that the dairy community has always felt like one big family. That was something that really appealed to me. The dairy industry is made up of multiple generations of farm families and processing families that are passionate about what they do, and this passion comes through. There is a sense of purpose, warmth, caring and giving that is pretty unique. Luckily, the word is getting out because I am seeing more women getting involved in the dairy industry and more dairy organizations being led by women.

What are some unique perspectives that you and/or other women in the industry have brought to their positions?

Before I was a Dairy Council of California employee, I was a mom, and as any mom knows, you are always a mom whether you are at work, at home or anywhere else. I learned a lot about parenting from my mom, who stayed home with my siblings and me. Everything was cooked from scratch, and milk was served at every meal. I followed in her footsteps and served my kids milk every time we ate. For me, it was more than simply something to drink; it was a nutrition powerhouse packed full of essential nutrients to help them grow, develop and learn. It was a little bit of love. There is no doubt that I brought this view of the importance of milk and dairy foods to my role at Dairy Council of California. The organization's long-standing history and cause to elevate the health of children and families through the pursuit of lifelong healthy eating habits spoke to me as a way to help other children beyond my own. Today my children are instilling the value of milk and dairy foods in their children, which makes me one proud Nonna. CMN