



GLOBAL DAIRY OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

JUNE

16-18, 2026

UNION LEAGUE CLUB

CHICAGO, IL

20
26

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17

Registration & Continental Breakfast 8:00 – 8:30 AM

Opening Remarks 8:30 – 8:45 AM

Eric Meyer, Founder & President, HighGround Dairy

Dairy Market Outlook: US & Global Fundamentals & Price Forecasts 8:45 – 10:15 AM

Alyssa Badger, Vice President, Global Operations & Insights, HighGround Dairy

Betty Berning, Contributing Dairy Economist, HighGround Dairy

Stu Davison, Senior Manager, Global Market Insights, HighGround Dairy

Cara Murphy, Senior Manager, Dairy Market Intelligence, HighGround Dairy

BREAK

Producer Panel: Boots on the Ground Perspective from US Dairy Producers 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Moderator: **Alex Gambonini**, Senior Manager, Advisory Services, HighGround Dairy

Amber Horn-Leiterman, Managing Director, Hornstead Dairy LLC

Denton Ross, Owner/Manager, Arizona Dairy Company

Jason Sheehan, Partner Manager, J & K Dairy, LLC

NETWORKING LUNCH

Perspectives on International Markets 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Philipp Goetz, Head of Sales and Business Development, IFCN

Earl Rattray, Managing Director, Dairy Link Ltd.

BREAK

Dairy's Path Forward in a Protein-Focused World 2:45 PM – 4:15 PM

Tom Bailey, North America Head: Consumer, Rabobank

Lucas Fuess, Senior Dairy Analyst, Rabobank

Jaime Underwood, Principal, Edible Chemistry

BREAK

Connecting Trade Policy, Shocks, and Food Price Trends 4:30 PM – 5:30 PM

David Ortega, Professor and Noel W. Stuckman Chair in Food Economics and Policy, Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University

Reception sponsored by Global Dairy Trade 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

AGENDA

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 9:00 AM

Butter Session: Consumer Demand and Market Signals

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Michael Burdeny, Chief Commercial Officer, California Dairies Inc.

BREAK

Retail & Restaurant Outlook Panel

10:20 – 12:00 PM

John Barone, President, Market Vision, Inc.

Ralph Hoffman, Chief Business Officer, Schuman Cheese

Jessi Webb, Senior Director, Strategic Sourcing, Casey's General Stores

NETWORKING LUNCH

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



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ALYSSA BADGER

Vice President, Global Operations & Insights, **HighGround Dairy**

Alyssa started her career at the Board of Trade managing a firm that had a primary focus in grains. The nucleus of her position centered around order entry and research development. From there, Alyssa's enthusiasm for commodities grew which led her to move to West Texas and assist in hedging for the largest originator of U.S. cotton to textile mills worldwide. Alyssa has been back in Chicago for more than ten years with HighGround as the Director of Global Operations, overseeing the market intelligence and advisory business units. Alyssa's risk management background, as well as working closely with New Zealand and other international dairy companies, provides HighGround a unique value-add perspective.



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TOM BAILEY

North America Head: Consumer, **Rabobank**

Tom Bailey is the Head of North America - Consumer Research at Rabobank, leading the bank's consumer insights agenda and guiding clients through the fast-moving landscape of food, nutrition, and retail trends. A lifelong participant in the global food and agriculture supply chain, Tom's experience spans from his family farm in Winchester, Illinois, to roles across New Zealand, Asia, and the United States.

Prior to his current role, Tom served as a Senior Consumer Foods Analyst at Rabobank, specializing in strategic trends shaping both regional and global food demand. Tom has worked his way to the consumer side of the market via a literal path from farm to fork, including dairy commodity risk and trading research, and consumer food brand management.

Tom also brings private equity experience, having served as an operating partner overseeing a consumer food brand acquisition and integrating regenerative farming practices through to finished products - including the development of a wholesale dairy trading for Southern Pastures, a New Zealand-based operation. His blend of global, technical, and commercial expertise equips him with a unique perspective - one he now applies to helping Rabobank and its clients navigate the evolving consumer food market.



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BETTY BERNING

Contributing Dairy Economist, **HighGround Dairy**

Betty Berning is HighGround's Contributing Dairy Economist, providing analysis and commentary on the domestic dairy markets. She has extensive experience across the agricultural supply chain, having held roles such as Senior Dairy Buyer at General Mills, Loan Officer at Farm Credit, and Extension Educator at the University of Minnesota. She also grew up working on her family's dairy farm in Central Minnesota. These experiences give Betty a unique perspective on both the challenges farmers face and the decision-making processes of food companies and consumers. She is passionate about writing, teaching, and presenting on dairy-related topics. Betty is a proud Mom to three sons and loves bringing them to her family's dairy farm, where their energy is always put to good use.



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JOHN BARONE

President, **Market Vision**

John Barone is the Founder and President of Market Vision, Inc. It is Market Vision's mission to foster and support a community of supply chain professionals in the foodservice industry. That is accomplished primarily through Market Vision's Supply Chain Conferences and the west-coast Chain Gang Meetings. John is also an advisory board member of the National Restaurant Association's Supply Chain Expert Exchange.

John has been highly active in speaking, presenting, and educating within the foodservice industry for over 35 years. He specializes in "connecting the dots" - distilling complex economic, market, and commodity data down to actionable information. His focus on macroeconomics has helped restaurateurs understand the new and dramatic global forces that are affecting their businesses - and helped them reformulate risk management solutions.



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MICHAEL BURDENY

Chief Commercial Officer, **California Dairies Inc.**

Michael Burdeny joined Challenge Dairy Products Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of California Dairies Inc. (CDI), as President in 2020. Following Challenge's integration as a division of CDI in 2024, he now serves as CDI's Chief Commercial Officer.

As a member of CDI's executive leadership team, Michael leads the commercial organizations responsible for the company's value-added branded and private-label retail and foodservice businesses. His scope includes Challenge, Danish Creamery, In Good Hands, and CDI's new state-of-the-art ESL/UHT fluid milk facility, Valley Natural Beverages, which began production in January 2025. He plays a key role in driving the company's commercial growth, overseeing both sales and marketing across these platforms.

Previously, Michael served as Global Head of Marketing for Blue Diamond Growers, where he led the consumer products division, including Snack Almonds, Almond Breeze, and Nut Thins. He has also held senior global leadership roles in marketing, innovation, and strategic planning at industry-leading companies such as Samsonite, L'Oréal, Symantec, and Procter & Gamble.

Michael earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Manitoba and an MBA from McGill University. He currently serves on the boards of the American Butter Institute (ABI) and the California Milk Producers Board (CMPB) and is based in Dublin, California.



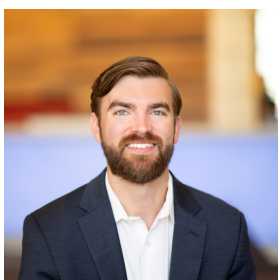
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STU DAVISON

Senior Manager, Global Market Insights, **HighGround Dairy**

Stu is a true Kiwi dairy farmer from a long line of farmers in New Zealand's Waikato region, known for its significance to the country's dairy industry. Raised in a farming family, he developed a strong business acumen and an understanding of the global dairy market. After studying at Lincoln University, Stu spent eight years working on dairy farms, gaining firsthand experience in the industry.

Before joining HighGround Dairy, he led the NZX Dairy Insights team for three years, building a reputation for his expertise in data analysis and market trends. His deep knowledge of New Zealand agriculture and the global dairy market makes him a key voice in shaping insights for major dairy exporting and importing regions.



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LUCAS FUESS

Senior Dairy Analyst, **Rabobank**

Lucas Fuess is a Senior Dairy Analyst at Rabobank, where he works within the bank's RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness group to monitor and evaluate dairy market events that affect food and agriculture worldwide. He discerns key insights into US and global dairy markets, conducts in-depth analysis of the factors that drive sector success or failure, and examines megatrends that ultimately influence clients' business strategies. Before joining Rabobank in 2023, Lucas has held positions at HighGround Dairy and Glanbia Nutritionals. Lucas grew up on a dairy farm in New York and holds degrees from Cornell University, Purdue University, and Indiana University.



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ALEX GAMBONINI

Senior Manager, Advisory Services, **HighGround Dairy**

Originally hailing from Petaluma, California, Alex was raised on her family's dairy farm, fostering her love for the industry from a young age. She pursued her education at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, where she earned her bachelor's degree in Dairy Science and Agricultural Business. Later, she furthered her studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, obtaining a master's degree in Applied Economics. During her time in Minnesota, Alex conducted research focused on dairy farm profitability, showcasing her dedication to understanding the economic aspects of the industry.

Following her academic pursuits, Alex gained valuable experience working for the USDA within the California Federal Milk Marketing Order for three years. This experience provided her with unique insights into the intricacies of milk pricing and pooling, enhancing her understanding of dairy market dynamics.



PHILIPP GOETZ

Head of Sales & Business Development, **IFCN**

Philipp Goetz is an experienced expert in the dairy industry with a strong focus on milk production, market analysis, and global dairy trends. As Head of Sales and Business Development at IFCN, he leads strategic business development and key account management, oversees international partnerships, and drives the expansion of IFCN’s data and consulting services.

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His expertise includes the analysis of dairy farm structures, price developments, and market dynamics, as well as the implementation of practical, solution-oriented approaches for the dairy sector. With a background in agricultural economics and many years of experience in data analysis, model development, business development, and strategic consulting, Philipp combines strong analytical expertise with commercial insight, supporting stakeholders across the entire dairy value chain.



RALPH HOFFMAN

Chief Business Officer, **Schuman Cheese**

Ralph Hoffman, Chief Business Officer, oversees Schuman Cheese’s financial performance, strategy, risk management, and government & Trade relations. His responsibilities include tracking global dairy market fundamentals, trade dynamics, and commodity trends, as well as serving in leadership roles across industry organizations. He is a former President of the Cheese Importers Association of America and was appointed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) as a technical advisor (ATAC) on processed foods, supporting U.S. trade policy and negotiations. He is a member of the Executive Council for the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), and previously served on the board of the National Dairy Board and Dairy Management Inc.

[Find Ralph on LinkedIn](#)

Before joining Schuman Cheese 20 years ago, Ralph held leadership roles at Ernst & Young in strategy and supply chain consulting. He holds a BS and an MBA in Finance.



AMBER HORN-LEITERMAN

Managing Partner, **Hornstead Dairy LLC**

Amber Horn-Leiterman is a 6th-generation dairy farmer from Brillion, Wisconsin, where she helps manage Hornstead Dairy LLC with her partners, Brian, Lori & Tom Horn. Amber focuses on herd care, employee management and community outreach. Along with her day-to-day work on the farm, she has served in national and cooperative leadership roles on the National Dairy Board, Country Visions Cooperative, and currently represents her milk cooperative, Land O’Lakes, on the Cooperative Network Board. She brings a practical, candid perspective shaped by real-world decision-making on the farm, along with a passion for innovation, collaboration, and the long-term success of dairy producers.



ERIC MEYER

President & Founder, HighGround Dairy

Eric Meyer is a seasoned dairy risk management and sourcing professional with more than 23 years of experience including tenure at Downes-O'Neill LLC, Sara Lee Corporation, FCStone & Winona Foods before founding HighGround Dairy in 2012.

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Eric's extensive hedging and procurement experience for both small boutique firms and large multi-national corporations gives him a unique insight into the dairy market. He has a strong reputation of creating insightful educational programs and content, specifically HighGround's comprehensive dairy market intelligence, industry-leading analysis that is read by subscribers across the globe.



CARA MURPHY

Senior Manager, Dairy Market Intelligence, HighGround Dairy

Cara Murphy is originally from the Heartland, where she grew up raising beef cattle just outside of Des Moines, Iowa. Her passion for agriculture led her to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science from Iowa State University. Post graduation, Cara developed her expertise in international markets and economic analysis across a variety of industries, including oil and gas, construction, and agriculture. Delighted to be in dairy, Cara has been with HighGround for three years, delivering global and domestic market insights. Her diverse background and strategic mindset provide customers with a holistic viewpoint on changing market dynamics.

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DAVID ORTEGA

Professor & Noel W. Stuckman Chair in Food Economics & Policy, Department of Agricultural, Food, & Resource Economics, Michigan State University

David L. Ortega is a professor and the Noel W. Stuckman Chair in Food Economics and Policy at Michigan State University. His research focuses on decision-making in agrifood systems and how economic forces shape food and agricultural markets and policy. Dr. Ortega has been invited to testify before the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture Committees and has advised the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Reserve Banks, and various state governments on issues ranging from agricultural trade to food prices and supply chains. He is regularly featured in outlets such as The New York Times, NPR, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Financial Times, and CNN.

[Find David on LinkedIn](#)



[Find Earl on LinkedIn](#)

EARL RATTRAY

Managing Director, Dairy Link Ltd.

Earl Rattray is a 40-year veteran of the New Zealand Dairy Industry. His longstanding career has taken him from sharemilking to multiple farm ownership to senior dairy industry leadership roles in New Zealand. Earl was a founding Board member of the Fonterra Co-operative Group and the founding chairman of the New Zealand Dairy Companies Association. He served as an independent member of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand Monetary Policy Committee. In the years since, Earl has served as a non-executive board member of several New Zealand-based companies active in Agribusiness, Biotech, Animal Genetics, and Infrastructure sectors.

Earl established a private dairy consultancy, Dairy Link Ltd, in 2010, providing specialist trade and investment advice and strategic analysis for selected clients, covering Oceania and Asian dairy sectors. He has also enjoyed a long association with GIRA, a Geneva-based strategic food consultancy, and is a regular contributor to GIRA's Global Dairy Club program.

While now retired from active farming, Earl retains equity interests in multiple dairy farming operations active in NZ, USA, and Chile. He is the founding chairman and a cornerstone Investor in Binsar Farms Pvt Ltd (India), a pioneering and now well-established dairy farming and direct-to-home fresh dairy business operating in the greater Delhi area. Earl is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Directors in New Zealand and a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Rural Professionals. He is a relentless enthusiast for dairy farming and the role of dairy in human health and nutrition.



DENTON ROSS

Owner/Manager, Arizona Dairy Company

Denton Ross works alongside his family operating a dairy and farming business in Arizona that includes a 3,000-cow dairy, approximately 6000 acres of farmland, and a growing cattle program. His role is centered on the day-to-day management of people, cows, and land, as well as helping guide the business through changing markets and seasons.

Over time, Denton has gained experience across both the operational and financial sides of agriculture, including feed production, workforce management, and working with lenders and risk management tools. Much of his perspective comes from learning through real-world challenges and working closely with his team.

He cares deeply about the people in the business and is committed to building something that can last for the next generation.



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JASON SHEEHAN

Partner Manager, J & K Dairy, LLC

Jason Sheehan dairy farms in Washington with his partner and wife, Karen, and her parents at J&K Dairy. They milk 3,000+ cows and grow corn, alfalfa, triticale, wine grapes, and cherries on 2,000+ acres. Jason and Karen grew up on dairy farms, and before returning to farming, they worked in agribusiness, honing their skills and bringing lessons home to J & K Dairy. They are proud parents to four children, Jared, Claire, Andrew, and Annelise; continuing the legacy of this second-generation farm is the priority. Their farming operation exemplifies best-in-class in production, herd management, and nutrient management. On the dairy, Jason's day involves managing the operation's larger picture, as well as its finances. He works closely with key long-term managers to keep the business thriving and moving forward.

Jason earned a degree in Animal Science from the University of Minnesota. He was a three-term director with Northwest Dairy Association, where J & K Dairy is a member-owner and markets its milk, and has served on the Roza Irrigation District Board of Directors since 2016. He was also a member of the Yakima GWMA, which addresses nitrates in groundwater.



[Find Jaime on LinkedIn](#)

JAIME UNDERWOOD

Principal, Edible Chemistry

An experienced food scientist with over 20 years developing and commercializing quality products, Jaime has proven to perform at the highest level when it comes to providing technical expertise for product development and commercialization. Jaime has directly developed over 200 beverage, dairy, supplement, and food products that are currently in the market and has advised on the development or launch of hundreds of additional products. Seen as an industry leader in ingredient knowledge and process improvement, Jaime continues to assist others in pushing the boundaries of food and beverage innovation.



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JESSI WEBB

Senior Director, Strategic Sourcing, Casey's General Stores

Jessi Webb is the Senior Director of Strategic Sourcing at Casey's, where she leads a high-performing team supporting a diverse spend portfolio across Indirect, Direct, and CapEx categories. Since joining in 2020 as a founding member of the Sourcing and Procurement function, she has been instrumental in building the team from the ground up and establishing it as a strategic driver of enterprise value.

Under her leadership, Strategic Sourcing has become a key contributor to long-term profitability—embedding sourcing expertise across the organization and delivering enterprise-wide impact through strategic supplier partnerships, cost optimization, and risk mitigation. Her team is recognized for its data-driven, process-disciplined approach and serves as a trusted advisor to stakeholders across the business.

Looking ahead, Jessi is focused on how sourcing and purchasing organizations can work more efficiently and think differently about the supply chain of the future. Her interests include exploring practical, executable applications of AI in strategic sourcing, reimagining supplier collaboration models, and preparing for challenges the industry will face over the next 5–10 years. She is particularly passionate about how organizations can anticipate disruption—rather than react to it—and build capabilities today that position them for resilience tomorrow.