

Annual General Meeting of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec (FPLQ)

The FPLQ presents the winners of the Lait'Xcellent milk quality competition

Quebec City, April 16, 2014/CNW – Bruno Letendre, Chairman of the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec (FPLQ), revealed the 2013 Lait'Xcellent Award winners at its Annual General Meeting. The 2013 Gold Lait'Xcellent Award was presented to the Ferme Denis Desfossés in Sainte-Brigitte-des-Saults. The Silver Lait'Xcellent Award was presented to the Ferme Jovigny Inc. in Nantes and the Bronze Lait'Xcellent Award went to the Ferme Vincy SENC in Saint-Norbert-d'Arthabaska.

Letendre paid tribute to the producers' work and on-going efforts to produce the best quality milk possible. **“We present Lait'Xcellent awards to honour producers who have distinguished themselves by producing outstanding quality milk,”** he explained. The recipients produced milk with bacterial and cell counts that were 4 to 7 times lower than the provincial average.

Milk quality: a key concern for milk producers

Producers spare no efforts to produce quality milk. In fact, raw milk is subject to a number of controls, starting at the farm, where producers are required to comply with strict raw milk storage rules (temperature, hygiene, agitation, etc.). Milk is then picked up at the farm by a tester who checks its temperature, odour and appearance before loading it. If testers have reservations about the quality of the milk they are meant to pick up, they can reject it. When the milk arrives at the plant, its temperature, odour and appearance are checked again while it is still in the tank.

A zero tolerance policy is applied to antibiotics. In other words, milk is not accepted whenever antibiotics are detected in it. Milk is also analyzed before it is unloaded at the plant. If traces of antibiotics are detected in it, the entire shipment is destroyed at the expense of the producer who sent it. The use of antibiotics on dairy cows is strictly regulated. Moreover, the use of growth hormones to stimulate milk production in cows is prohibited.

Milk samples are also taken at the farm for quality testing purposes. If the results of these tests exceed the standards in force, penalties may be enforced and milk may cease to be picked up. In Quebec, milk quality standards are set with processors and are in some cases stricter than the minimum requirements set out in government regulations. These standards make it possible to control bacteria and somatic cells, which are naturally found in milk and can affect dairy processor results.

The Federation manages various milk quality improvement programs and has also set up a quality fund to help producers deal with related problems. Money from this fund can be put toward anything that helps improve milk quality.

In addition, milk producers have set up the Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) program, a food safety program aimed at helping producers prevent, monitor and reduce food safety risks on farms.

The CQM program is based on the so-called HACCP principles (hazard analysis critical control points). Producers who participate in the program apply best management practices on their farms and keep records to monitor the critical points affecting food safety.

About the FPLQ

The Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec speaks for the province's 12,000 milk producers and 6,000 dairy farms. Every year, Quebec producers deliver nearly 3 billion litres of milk, which generate a total of \$2 billion in revenues for farms. Milk production creates around 61,000 jobs in Quebec and contributes as much as \$5.49 billion to the GDP.

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