



615 North Main Street, Westby, WI 54667

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ***Westby Cooperative Creamery* holds 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting as the Longest Operating Dairy Cooperative in Wisconsin.**

**Jan. 24, 2019 (Westby, WI):** As the longest running farmer-owned Dairy Cooperative in Wisconsin, in continuous operations since its founding in 1903; *Westby Cooperative Creamery* conducted its 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on Thursday, January 17, 2019, in the lower-level auditorium of *Our Savior Lutheran Church* in Westby, WI.

The Annual Meeting, as required by the cooperative's bylaws, was called to order by Board President, Ralph Petersheim, at 12:30pm; following a luncheon prepared and served by church member-volunteers. Pastor John Dumke provided a welcome-invocation and blessing to a standing-room-only crowd of the cooperative's member-owners and guests in attendance.

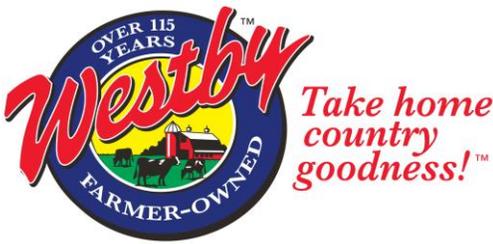
A presentation by Financial Auditors reported on a challenging year during fiscal year 2018, as faced by all participants in the United States Dairy Industry; including here in Wisconsin. Depressed milk pricing at the farm level extended through dairy industry markets and manufactured dairy food products to reduce overall revenues for *Westby Cooperative Creamery* to just under \$70-million for the past year.

Nevertheless, fiscal year 2018 was the third highest year in total revenues following record setting years of just over \$70-million in fiscal year 2016 and just under \$75-million in fiscal year 2017. Over the past ten years, annual business revenues have more than tripled for *Westby Cooperative Creamery*; growing from around \$20-million to now just under/over \$70-million in the past three years.

According to Petersheim: "Each of us as family dairy farms have faced challenging times before, with declining milk prices and rising operating costs. That doesn't make things any easier to contend with in the present; but we do hold steadfast to our strengths in family and in our resolve to persevere. It's tough times like now that reminds us as to why we have united together in this dairy cooperative. Our cooperative was formed over 115 years ago by local dairy farm families wanting to create a stable market-outlet for their milk, by manufacturing high-value cultured dairy food products in their Creamery.

"That purpose, that value, our principles as a Cooperative, and our commitment to the future in the preservation of small dairy farms remains solid. Many of our nearly 200 member-owner dairy farms are now operated by the third, fourth, fifth or six generation of that family. *Westby Cooperative Creamery* remains strong for our current generation of member-owners, and for our next," concludes Petersheim.

*Westby Cooperative Creamery* is unique as one of just a few dairy cooperatives across North America to accept two types of milk from its member-owners. As defined by accepted dairy industry terms, these two milk-types are conventional-milk and certified-organic-milk. All milk supplied by the small dairy farms of the member-owners of *Westby Cooperative Creamery* is Grade-A and rBST-free\*.



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Today, over half of the family dairy farm member-owners of the cooperative are certified-organic; supplying nearly 70% of the 165-million pounds of milk delivered annually by all members. This total annual volume of milk supplied has more than doubled in the past ten years.

From this milk, the total yearly pounds of award-winning consumer dairy foods produced by the *Westby Cooperative Creamery* manufacturing plant has more than tripled in the past ten+ years; from just under 7-million pounds to now over 25-million pounds. Products include Cottage Cheeses, Sour Creams, Dairy Dips, Yogurts, Cheese Curds and Hard Cheeses; for Private Label, Food Service, Ingredient, and Retail Grocery Store market channels. Approximately 40% of all products manufactured are certified-organic dairy food products.

In his Management Report to members, Pete Kondrup, General Manager added: "This past year was the first full year of our new *Westby Organic* Brand products being sold into Food Service and Retail Grocery Store outlets; totaling over 100,000 pounds of Cottage Cheeses, Sour Cream, and French Onion Dip. And, our new *Westby Organic* Brand Butter products will be available in the first quarter of 2019."

"We continue to invest in our Creamery manufacturing facility and our valued employees," said Kondrup. "Many of our customer relationships are long-term and growing, with our reputation for quality and service well-earned. We work closely with these customers on new product development; including fewer ingredient product labels, and product packaging from 5.3-ounce single-serve containers to 2500-pound reusable totes."

Kondrup concluded his remarks with a thank-you to employees for their dedication, teamwork, and hard work that resulted in another year of many dairy industry awards for *Westby* Brand products. He also added that the business continues to meet the stringent requirements of the *SQF Code* for food safety and quality as certified by the *Food Safety & Quality Management System* (Number 108139). And; he further confirmed that *Westby Cooperative Creamery* is the longest running farmer-owned Dairy Cooperative in Wisconsin, in continuous operations since its founding in 1903. And; he reminded the audience that the City of Westby has been proclaimed, by then Governor Scott Walker in 2018, as *The Cottage Cheese Capital of Wisconsin*.

*Westby Cooperative Creamery* is also a participating organization in *Farmers Assuring Responsible Farm Management – F.A.R.M.* – created by the *National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF)*. By participating in this National Dairy FARM Program, the dairy farm families of *Westby Cooperative Creamery* demonstrate their commitment to safe, wholesome, dairy products through quality farm management practices and the highest standards of animal care and environmental stewardship (visit – [www.nationaldairyfarm.com](http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com)).

The final step of business at this Annual Meeting was the election of Board Members to the seven-member Board of Directors. Long-serving Board Member and President, Ralph Petersheim, had reached his term limit after 12 years of board service and could not be a candidate. Ralph was awarded a commemorative plaque for his service, along with the appreciation and applause of his fellow cooperative member-owners.

Six members ran for three open Board seats. Board incumbents, Thomas Schaub and Chuck Fremstad, were re-elected; and Benjamin Klinkner (Cashton, WI) was elected as a new Board Member. They join Robert Anderson, Ryan Dunnum, Keith Rach, and Art Thicke as the 2019 Board of Directors of *Westby Cooperative Creamery*. In their first Board action; Schaub has been elected President, Dunnum as Vice President, and Anderson as Secretary/Treasurer. Please visit – [www.westbycreamery.com](http://www.westbycreamery.com) – for more.

**-end-**

\*No significant difference has been shown between milk from rBST/rBGH treated or non rBST/rBGH treated cows.



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(photo A)

(caption) At the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of *Westby Cooperative Creamery*, outgoing Board Member and Board President, Ralph Petersheim (left), is awarded a commemorative plaque by re-elected Board Member, Chuck Fremstad (right); in appreciation for his 12 years of service on the Board of Directors of the Dairy Cooperative. Petersheim had reached his term limit on board service.



(photo B)

(caption) The election of Board Members for three open seats was conducted at the 115<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of *Westby Cooperative Creamery*. Incumbents, Thomas Schaub (far left) and Chuck Fremstad (far right), were re-elected; and Benjamin Klinkner (third from right) was elected as a new Board Member. They join Robert Anderson (second from right), Ryan Dunnun (center), Keith Rach and Art Thicke (center/left) as the 2019 Board of Directors of *Westby Cooperative Creamery*. In their first Board action; Schaub has been elected President, Dunnun as Vice President, and Anderson as Secretary/Treasurer.