

## News Release

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### USDEC receives health initiative award

The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) received a special “Highly Commended” award at this year’s Global Dairy Congress, held Mar. 11-13 in Athens, Greece, for its work in the area of dairy nutrition and HIV/AIDS treatment. Presented by *dairy innovation* magazine, the award recognizes and celebrates the best in innovation across several dairy sectors, in this case Best Health Initiative.

“More than 40 million people worldwide live with HIV/AIDS, and there is growing belief that nutrition, particularly high-quality proteins, can mitigate the progression of the disease,” says Veronique Lagrange, USDEC vice president, strategic research and business development. “However, we still need scientific evidence proving the benefits of dairy proteins in therapeutic or supplementary feeding programs.”

USDEC launched a new initiative in 2007 to provide “proof of concept” evidence that high-quality proteins, such as dairy, offer superior benefits to people living with HIV/AIDS by helping them regain muscle mass and maintain a higher level of physical activity. The project was backed by a special funding allocation from Dairy Management Inc., as part of its broader nutri-marketing initiative focused on whey proteins. Those nutri-marketing efforts aim to expand dairy category sales by using solid science to illustrate the superior health benefits of whey.

As a result of the “proof of concept” initiative, several intervention studies are underway or in the design stage in Africa, funded and supported not only by USDEC but also by international aid agencies and nonprofit groups.

“This initiative is an example of how the dairy industry can embrace the challenge of building on dairy’s already well established healthy reputation,” says Geoff Platt, editor of *dairy innovation*. “The dairy industry is often accused of failing to capitalize on research that indicates the positive benefits of consuming dairy and



dairy ingredients. The judges felt the USDEC work was a great example of what can be done and was worthy of special commendation.”

“Most efforts by dairy companies focus on the health of consumers in developed nations and we too often forget the needs of the vast majority of the population on earth,” says Lagrange. “I am glad this award recognizes our responsibility towards developing countries and the fact that dairy has the potential to improve the quality of life of millions of individuals living with HIV/AIDS.”

More than 90 dairy companies and organizations, large and small, from 18 countries submitted entries for the awards. Prizes were handed out in seven categories: health initiative, new products, packaging, school milk, sustainability, marketing, and first-time success. All entries emphasized products that are innovative and seek to establish a point of difference with their competitors, and campaigns that are designed to promote dairy and enhance its reputation.

“The dairy industry needs to take the lead in pre-competitive nutrition research and market development,” says Lagrange. “The Export Council is well suited for that: We can serve as catalysts for research, raise funds from farmers and industry, and ensure that science is delivered promptly and efficiently to consumers or those who bring products to consumers, whether they are multinationals or private voluntary organizations.”

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The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) is a non-profit, independent membership organization that represents the export trade interests of U.S. milk producers, proprietary processors, dairy cooperatives, and export traders. Its mission is to enhance international demand for U.S. dairy products and assist the industry to increase the volume and value of exports. USDEC accomplishes this through market development programs that build overseas demand for U.S. dairy products, resolving market access barriers and advancing the industry’s trade policy goals. USDEC activities are supported by staff in Mexico, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, South America, Middle East and Europe.