

FMMO October 2, 2015

Week number two of the California FMMO hearing kicked off with Elvin Hollon (DFA) presenting the case for why we need a FMMO in California. Pages of data highlighted how prices received by California producers are significantly and consistently below prices received in the rest of the country. The difference was so striking, a fourth grader probably would have gotten the point. Still, opposing attorneys found enough questions to keep Mr. Hollon on the stand for hours.

The next day, I had the opportunity to testify on behalf of Western United Dairymen to support the coop's proposal. The point to make was straightforward: we have spent a lot of time at CDFA these past few years without success. Producers in California deserve to be on a level playing field with their counterparts in the rest of the country. The coops proposal is our best option to achieve that at this point. Questions ensued, including attempts to make clear the lesser price California handlers have to pay for milk is justified.

Mr. Hollon was put on the stand for almost all of Wednesday for further questioning. It was like Mr. English (the Dairy Institute's attorney) and Mr. Vetne (Hilmar's attorney) entered a cross-examination contest, with a prize waiting for whom could ask the most questions. Actually, all week they have been trying to win in two categories: "most confusing questions" and "most time spent digging through records and conversations that happened a long time ago". Mr. English seems particularly fond of the latter.

Thursday, Tom Wegner (LOL) took the stand to highlight definitions that were common to the coops' and the Dairy Institute's proposals. While his testimony was clear and sounded very non-confrontational, Mr. English managed to turn this personal, digging through records almost ten years old. Friday, Dr. Eric Erba (CDI) was last but not least. His topic, quota, is a very important one. As made clear in the coops' proposal, he eloquently highlighted the importance of maintaining the current quota system in a California FMMO.

Producers testified throughout the week and the variety of heartfelt and factual testimonies added great value to the record. California Dairy Campaign also testified in favor of the coops' proposal. Milk Producers Council is planning on testifying next week also in support.

As a reminder, any interested party can listen to the live audio feed at: tinyurl.com/camilkhearing. Don't have time to sit through entire days of deliberations? "Like" Western United Dairymen on Facebook or follow us on twitter (@wudnews) for daily progress updates.