

## **Overview of the *DFC National Standard for the Production of Milk from Grass-Fed Cows***

The *DFC National Standard for the Production of Milk from Grass-Fed Cows* is a voluntary program for the certification of milk produced from grass-fed cows in Canada.

Dairy Farmers of Canada oversees the implementation of the national standard and its operating guidelines. DFC also manages the relationship with certification bodies and regulates the use of a grass-fed certification mark.

The program was developed in conjunction with provincial association members and external stakeholders. Participating provincial associations are responsible for administering transportation, sampling and testing of milk<sup>1</sup>, logistics and pricing<sup>2</sup>.

Dairy Farmers of Canada has entered into agreements with the certification bodies, which are authorized to certify farms that meet, and continue to meet, the requirements set out in the *DFC National Standard for the Production of Milk from Grass-Fed Cows*.

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<sup>1</sup> Associated costs to be paid by producers/processors

<sup>2</sup> In Quebec, the responsibilities of the Provincial Association (PLQ) are subject to individual Sales Agreements with processors

## How the Program Works for Farmers



Farmers willing to produce milk from grass-fed cows must first contact their provincial board to ensure there is a demand. Then, after consulting the DFC website to obtain information on the program, Canadian farmers interested in becoming certified need to contact one of the approved certification bodies to begin the application process.



The certification bodies will ask the farmer to complete an application form and provide supporting documents, which could include a Pasture Management Plan and a Feeding Protocol Plan. The body will review the documents to ensure that the farm has the capacity to meet the requirements of the *DFC National Standard for the Production of Milk from Grass-Fed Cows*.



If the documents are deemed satisfactory, the certification body will schedule an on-farm inspection to ensure the farm operations match what was indicated in the application form and the supporting documents.



If the farm passes the on-farm inspection, the application will be forwarded to the appropriate provincial association. This association will then send the collected samples of milk to a lab to verify that the biomarker levels are met. These biomarkers need to be met on two (2) consecutive bulk tank samples.



If the two consecutive milk samples meet the required biomarker levels, the certification body will issue a certificate to certify the farm under the *DFC National Standard for the Production of Milk from Grass-Fed Cows*. The certification remains valid unless suspended or cancelled for non-conformity.



Certified farms are subject to at least one (1) annual on-farm and document audit per calendar year. Certified farms could also be subject to an additional unannounced inspection once per calendar year.



Participating provincial associations will continue to test milk samples collected from certified grass-fed farms at least six (6) times per calendar year to ensure biomarker levels are met in the milk. If the biomarker levels are not met, this could result in an additional audit by the certification body.



Farmers have up to 90 days to address any non-conformities found during an audit. During this period, grass-fed certification is suspended and milk will not be accepted by the provincial association as grass-fed. Once the certification body conducts a follow-up visit to and confirms that the situation has been fixed, the milk can resume being sold as grass-fed. If non-conformity is not addressed within 90 days, grass-fed certification will be cancelled and the farmer will have to re-apply for certification.