



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Driving innovation and growth in cheese and dairy



Farrah Newberry is CEO of *The Dairy Alliance, Atlanta*

Q What do you think are the most important attributes of a leader, and how do you use your role to help direct, motivate and inspire your team and organization?

A For me, the most impactful leaders lead with empathy — both for the people they serve and for the teams who make the work possible. True leadership begins with being genuinely approachable and committed to learning.

At The Dairy Alliance, I strive to create an environment where authenticity is encouraged, perspectives are valued and adaptability is part of our culture. Leadership, to me, is about setting a tone of respect, resilience and shared purpose so we can navigate challenges together and seize new opportunities for our organization.

Q Do you feel women in the dairy industry are well represented in trade organizations, educational content and the media? Where do you see gaps?

A When I began my career in 2000, few women worked in agriculture, particularly in leadership positions. Over the past two decades, however, the industry has seen steady and meaningful progress as more women move into influential roles.

There is still tremendous opportunity to strengthen female representation across the dairy value chain — from on-farm roles to manufacturing, research and communications. To sustain and accelerate this momentum, our industry must continue investing in the next generation. One of the most effective ways to do this is by expanding outreach and financial support for young women, especially those in urban areas, to pursue STEM and trade-focused education

in high school. By creating clearer pathways into agricultural careers, we can build a more diverse, innovative and resilient dairy workforce.



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Q What role do you think leaders play in strengthening trust between the dairy industry and consumers, especially around transparency, nutrition and sustainability?

A Today's consumers want what is real — real food produced by real people. Our industry must return to the basics: sharing genuine stories that highlight the people, values and communities behind dairy, and reminding consumers just how local and accessible their food truly is.

To build that trust, leaders must be willing to listen first. It's not enough to focus on what is easiest to produce or communicate; we must pay attention to what consumers care about, what they question and what they need to feel confident in their food choices.

Q What are some non-negotiables you expect from your team and co-workers? How do you resolve conflicts in the workplace?

A For me, one non-negotiable in any workplace is respect. Regardless of title, tenure or area of expertise, every person deserves to be treated with dignity and consideration. When respect is foundational, collaboration becomes easier, communication flows more naturally and teams better navigate challenges together.

Q What can the dairy industry do to spark interest in this sector from future generations? Please tell us about some of your work in this regard with the Georgia Dairy Youth Foundation?

A As consumers become increasingly removed from the farm, it is essential for the dairy industry to meet the next generation where they are. To spark interest, we must invest in compelling storytelling that highlights the breadth of opportunities within dairy today. From cutting-edge biogenetics to food science, sustainable farming practices, agritech and dairy nutrition, our industry offers far more than most young people realize. When we share these stories in ways that are accessible, modern and relevant, we open the door for future leaders to see themselves in agriculture.

My work with the Georgia Dairy Youth Foundation was rewarding and one of the most meaningful parts of my career. Through this organization, we helped young people with little to no experience in agriculture gain hands-on experience, develop leadership skills and build confidence as they participated in various FFA and 4-H dairy programs. Whether it was supporting youth dairy competitions, offering scholarships or creating opportunities for students to connect directly with farmers and industry, we strived to inspire curiosity and provide a clear pathway into the agricultural workforce. By nurturing these experiences and highlighting today's dairy sector, we make sure that the next generation doesn't just understand agriculture, they see a future in it.

Q What can companies and organizations in the dairy industry do to further diversity, equity and inclusion in their hiring and career advancement practices?

A To advance diversity, equity and inclusion across the dairy industry, we must actively broaden the pipeline of future talent. The simple reality is that our future workforce lives within city limits, often with little exposure to food and fiber production. If we want a diverse and dynamic industry tomorrow, we must reach beyond traditional agricultural circles today.

This begins with building meaningful connections in urban and suburban schools, investing in programs that introduce students to agriculture, nutrition, food science, engineering and agritech. By creating accessible pathways, internships, mentorship opportunities and scholarships, we can help students envision themselves in roles they may have never considered.

Q What is a key industry insight you'd share with yourself 10 years ago if you could?

A If I could share one insight with myself from a decade ago, it would be this: Nothing in our industry stays the same, and resilience is essential. Over the past 20 years, collaborating closely with dairy farmers across the Southeast, I have witnessed tremendous change. Market volatility and the consolidation of generational farms have created pressures that few could have anticipated.

Yet through all that change, one truth has remained constant: The relationships we build are what truly endure. The trust, honesty and shared commitment I've developed with the farmers I serve have become the most meaningful part of my career. Those relationships have offered perspective during difficult moments and reinforced why this work matters so deeply. **CMN**