

A Salute to the Lake Oconee Area Dairy Farmers
Bobby Smith, County Extension Agent, Morgan County
Week of May 31, 2010

You drive past dairy farms scattered about the Lake Oconee area almost daily. But have you ever stopped to think about all the hard work that goes into a dairy farm? Dairy farmers have to get up in all kinds of weather before dawn to go do the milking. They work all day long feeding, milking, cleaning up and doing maintenance; they don't come home until dark and have to work seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Much like the rest of the economy, this year dairy farmers are really struggling. After 2 years of record milk prices for dairy producers in 2007 and 2008, 2009 was a challenging year with on farm prices off over 35% and feed and fertilizer prices near all time highs. 2010 will be much the same. Many dairy farmers have had to borrow money to stay afloat financially. Even in these uncertain times our local dairy farmers deserve our admiration and respect.

Welcome to June Dairy Month, a perfect time for us to honor Greene, Morgan and Putnam County's hard working dairy farm families. Dairy farming makes a significant contribution to our local economy every year and in 2009 over \$37 million dollars was added directly and almost \$148 million indirectly as that money is spent in this area. The Lake Oconee area (Greene, Morgan, and Putnam Counties) has over 60 dairy farms and more than 12,600 cows that work day and night to produce a healthy product every day of the year.

This years June Dairy Month theme is "Dairy Makes Cents" which highlights the nutritional and economical value of dairy foods. In today's challenging economy, it's important for Americans to make smart food choices when it comes to both price and nutrition. This year's theme encourages people to choose pocket-friendly and nutrition-rich foods such as milk, cheese, and yogurt. Milk products are good, economical nutrition choices in today's economy.

To get a copy of the 2010 June Dairy Month Activity Book log on to:

http://www.southeastdairy.org/uploads/news/2010/05/2010050609244620/JDM_2010_Activity_Book_Final.pdf

This activity book contains many educational games and highlights dairy products' nutritional and economic value.

Consume milk and dairy products daily to stay healthy. When you are at your grocery store remember "Dairy Makes Cents" and purchase locally produced dairy products for you and your family. Don't forget the Lake Area men and women dairy farmers that work hard for you so you don't have to.