

Deli Market News

Adrienne Daniels Outlines CMAB's 2026 Retail Strategy for Real California Milk

Through promotional tentpoles, digital commerce investments, and innovation, the organization unveils a 2026 blueprint

by Jordan Okumura-Wright

TRACY, CA

Monday, February 23rd, 2026

Real California Milk stands out in a class of its own for visibility, awareness, recognition, and familiarity in the specialty foods space. Consumers see the colors and the silhouette, and immediately they can locate themselves in a memory, a commercial, or a meal. Definitely a message.

As the organization looks ahead, Adrienne Daniels, Executive Vice President, California Milk Advisory Board, joined me to discuss the near horizon and action items of the day, as we look to a blueprint for elevating the California dairy category.

“The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) exists to increase demand for value-added products made with real California milk on behalf of California's dairy farmers,” Adrienne begins. “In 2026, we are focused on four main strategies: continuing to grow the use of the Real California Milk seal both domestically and internationally; ensuring that our investments are optimized around the globe; continuing to act as a catalyst for innovation within the dairy industry in California and, relatedly, helping to facilitate increased capacity where needed to support these innovation efforts. Here in California, the CMAB's efforts are focused on the core dairy purchaser, and we support all dairy categories with our efforts in advertising, retail marketing, and innovation.”

Advancing the category is no small goal, and it takes meticulous planning to lay the foundation for its cause and build on the momentum of the year to come.

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) exists to increase demand for value-added products made with real California milk on behalf of California's dairy farmers

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) exists to increase demand for value-added products made with real California milk on behalf of California's dairy farmers

“The California Milk Advisory Board has three retail promotion tentpoles planned in 2026 where we work with processors and retailers on behalf of California’s dairy farmers that are focused around existing shopper need states,” Adrienne reveals. “Protein will be the ‘name of the game’ in Q2 as we highlight dairy’s role in helping consumers find quality protein at a great value, followed by a focus on dairy’s role in helping families get back to school in Q3. This will be followed by the celebration of dairy’s important role during the holidays in Q4.”

CMAB is also looking at how it can support customers as they expand their digital shopping experience to include more fresh categories. ;This includes continued trial and investment on Instacart, as well as retail media networks, as detailed by the board. Dairy’s versatility and year-round relevance to both shoppers and retailers truly shine through in each of these tentpole promotions.

Today’s consumer is changing, from how they choose to define their lifestyles to how they fill their kitchens.

The California Milk Advisory Board is also looking at how it can support customers as they expand their digital shopping experience to include more fresh categories

“We all know that consumers are looking for protein in their food. According to IFIC Food & Health Survey (<https://ific.org>), 70 percent of consumers are looking to add protein into their diets,” Adrienne shares. “Dairy has such an exciting and important role to play in consumers’ lives as they look for protein-packed foods that offer added value. For every 10 grams of protein, dairy categories offer some of the most affordable sources of protein out there. Beyond the value of dairy protein, we will continue to communicate the ‘quality’ of dairy protein. Protein quality is about how well your body can use what you eat—especially the nine essential amino acids your body cannot make on its own. That's why dairy protein (from real milk) stands out: it's complete, highly digestible, and efficient for your body to use.”

CMAB’s focus is also concentrated on being the catalyst for innovation in the dairy industry in California. To CMAB, this means that the group is laser-focused on understanding where consumer demand is going next.

“We work with multiple partners and utilize multiple sources to make sure we are staying ahead of consumer sentiment. The Real California Milk Accelerator program is a leading force in helping growth-stage startups scale innovative dairy products,” Adrienne describes. “The California Milk Advisory Board is committed to increasing demand for value-added products made with Real California Milk. In practice, this means many of the

dairy categories we support remain relevant to consumers' lives and continue to show strong growth. Categories like whole milk, natural cheese, yogurt, and cottage cheese are all important and value-driven sources for a protein-packed diet.”

With so much in the pipeline and yet to come, we are excited to see what the CMAB team will impact as 2026 continues its upward momentum.