

CMAB's Lizzie Werber Talks Protein, Global Flavors and the Next Wave of Dairy Merchandising

Dairy is evolving quickly, and the organization tracks the trends shaping what shoppers crave and ultimately bring home

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Dairy has long been a grocery staple, but the path from the dairy case to the shopper's cart is anything but static. From protein-packed products and globally inspired flavors to retail media and social-driven discovery, the category is finding plenty of **ways to keep things interesting**. For the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), staying ahead of those shifts means looking beyond what shoppers are buying and considering where they are discovering it, what is influencing the purchase, and how retailers can turn emerging demand into stronger assortments.



Lizzie Werber, Director of U.S. Retail, California Milk

Advisory Board “CMAB exists to drive demand for items made with Real California Milk, creating value for California’s **dairy farmers**. The retail channel plays a key role in bringing that commitment to life, allowing us to both increase our presence on shelf and drive demand at the consumer’s point of purchase,” Lizzie Werber, Director of U.S. Retail for CMAB, shared with *Deli Market News*.

Meeting Shoppers Where They Are

For CMAB, retailer relationships stretch beyond securing space in the dairy case. Werber pointed to category reviews, private label development, and trend and demand research as areas where the organization works alongside its retail partners. “We view our work with retailers as true partnerships; everything from category review support to private label development to trend and demand research that shapes their assortment and strategy,” Werber explained.

But the shelf is no longer the only shelf that matters.



CMAB exists to drive demand for items made with Real California Milk, creating value for California's dairy farmers. As grocery shopping increasingly crosses physical and digital channels, CMAB is putting **greater emphasis on retail media networks** and platforms such as Instacart to keep dairy products visible at another crucial point of purchase.

“Improving performance at the shelf starts with how and where we engage consumers. One way we’re doing that is by ensuring a presence on retail media network platforms, which let us put our products and messaging in front of the right consumers at the right time. More consumers are turning to platforms like Instacart for their dairy purchases, and we continue to invest so we have a presence where it matters most to shoppers.”

Protein Keeps Packing a Punch

On the product side, health and wellness continue to shape what catches shoppers' attention, and Werber sees protein playing an especially important role as GLP-1 use becomes more widespread. “As **GLP-1s become more**

prevalent, protein is more important than ever, and no category delivers better than dairy,” Werber said.

That interest has already given categories such as cottage cheese and yogurt considerable momentum. Now, brands are taking those familiar dairy favorites into less expected territory. “Categories like cottage cheese and yogurt have seen incredible growth over the past few years, and one trend we’re seeing now is brands extending that success into new formats and departments.”

Werber pointed to Smearcase as one example, with the brand turning cottage cheese into a clean-label ice cream with **probiotics and protein**. It is the kind of crossover that can give retailers another way to capitalize on a trend without confining it to its traditional corner of the store.



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A World of Flavor

Protein isn't the only thing pushing dairy into fresh territory. Global flavors continue to reshape what shoppers expect from the category as curiosity around international foods translates into increasingly adventurous choices. "Global flavors continue to dominate. Consumers are more curious than ever, and unique flavor profiles are increasingly an expectation rather than an exception," Werber noted.

Asian-inspired flavors are one area Werber sees resonating particularly well. Maven's, for example, has brought flavors including black sesame, Vietnamese coffee, and Thai tea to the ice cream case. "California has long set the standard for innovation, and our dairy products are no exception. Retailers and consumers can trust that California dairy items are at the cutting edge of flavor, innovation and sustainable manufacturing."



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The Assortment Doesn't End at the Shelf

The changing dairy case also reflects a much larger shift in how retailers decide what deserves space in the first place. Digital and e-commerce capabilities remain part of that equation, but Werber also pointed to the growing influence of brands **shoppers encounter on social media**, alongside retailer interest in exclusives and first-to-market items.

“Retailers continue to look for ways to improve the in-store experience, whether that’s strengthening digital and e-commerce offerings, sharpening assortments to reflect brands showing up on customers’ social feeds or prioritizing exclusive flavors and first-to-market opportunities.” For deli and dairy retailers, that creates plenty to watch. Protein may be commanding attention today, global flavors are opening another door, and the next item to earn space in the case might already be making the rounds on shoppers’ feeds.

“The California Milk Advisory Board is excited to continue bringing the best dairy items to retail shelves and carts.”

DMN will be watching as dairy’s latest trends move from shoppers’ feeds and wish lists to retail shelves and carts.