

## ARS Administrators Visit CDCB

Administrators from USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) visited the CDCB office in Bowie, Md., on August 3 to learn more about CDCB work and understand USDA's valuable contribution to genetic improvement over the past century. The visitors were Jeffrey Silverstein (Deputy Administrator of the Office of National Programs in Animal Production and Protection), Jeff Vallet (Animal Production Program Leader), Howard Zhang (Beltsville Agricultural Research Center Director) and Le Ann Blomberg (BARC Assistant Director). They were hosted by João Dürr (CDCB CEO), Ezequiel Nicolazzi (CDCB Technical Director), Duane Norman (CDCB Technical Advisor and Industry Liaison) and George Wiggans (CDCB Technical Advisor).

During the meeting, CDCB emphasized the importance of AGIL and the value provided to the entire dairy sector. "AGIL is by far the best example of a USDA research program that has had a long-term transformational impact on the agricultural sector," stated Dürr. "Decades of dairy cattle genetic improvement methods placed U.S. breeding stock at the top of the world ranks and culminated with the development and implementation of genomic evaluation methods that took the dairy industry to a completely new level." CDCB staff also expressed an urgent need for ARS to fill AGIL research and support positions vacated by staff departures or retirement. The ARS administrators expressed their appreciation for the open dialogue and further understanding.

CDCB and ARS-USDA maintain a very successful partnership for the benefit of the dairy industry. While CDCB hosts the national cooperator database and provides the services of calculating genetic evaluations based on methods and technologies developed by the Animal Genomics and Improvement Laboratory (AGIL-ARS-USDA), researchers from AGIL have full access to the data for research purposes.

The cooperation between the dairy industry and the USDA has been responsible for providing U.S. consumers with some of the most economical and the healthiest food available on the planet – milk and milk products.

To review, Dairy Herd Information (DHI) associations provide the valuable input data. USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) conducts the research needed to develop national evaluation systems that can identify animals of superior genetic merit for traits of economic significance. Artificial-insemination organizations and breed registry societies design and implement programs to accelerate genetic gains by emphasizing the importance of using both DHI records and USDA genetic evaluations for genetic progress. Dairy records processing centers and breed societies supply pedigrees (ancestor records) needed to achieve highly accurate genetic predictions. Failure by any one of these groups to fulfill its expected obligation eliminates all potential for sustained genetic advancement. To date, all parties have met their responsibilities and have produced one of (if not the) most successful livestock improvement programs for any species worldwide.

*\*USDA AGIL = United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Genomics and Improvement Laboratory*