



Dairy Management Inc. New Product Competition now accepting entries for 2026

Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) New Product Competition (formerly also known as the National Dairy Council New Product Competition) seeks the next new innovative product.

Undergraduate and graduate students in the United States are eligible to compete by developing **Innovative, Dairy-Based Products for consumers seeking “Bone Health, Muscle Health, and Weight Management”**. Successful entries will meet competition criteria, demonstrate innovation and provide value to consumers.

This competition is an opportunity for students to develop new products in line with current industry and consumer insights to uncover innovative dairy base products for health and wellness:

- With a heightened emphasis on health and wellness, the consumers are looking for products that provide benefits in one or more of the following conditions:
 - Bone Health
 - Muscle Health
 - Weight Management

Together, that spells OPPORTUNITY for dairy. For more insights, please see “2026 Challenge: Consumer and Marketplace Insights” at <https://www.usdairy.com/research-resources/new-product-competition>.

The judging panel includes experts from across the dairy industry. Winning teams will be recognized at the American Dairy Science Association Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, WI from June 21 - 24, 2026.

A combined \$27,000 in cash prizes will be awarded:

- **Platinum Dairy Innovator Award** of \$10,000 for first place
- **Gold Dairy Innovator Award** of \$7,000 for second place
- **Silver Dairy Innovator Award** of \$4,000 for third place
- **Dairy Innovator Award** of \$2,000 each for the rest of the 3 teams that make it to the top six and successfully complete Phase 2 of the competition

See full contest details at <https://www.usdairy.com/research-resources/new-product-competition>.

The deadline for 2026 contest submissions is Jan. 12, 2026.

If you have any questions, please contact Rohit Kapoor at rohit.kapoor@dairy.org.

DMI New Product Competition provides a platform for students to bring their knowledge and expertise to dairy product innovation. Tomorrow’s product developers can showcase novel ways to use dairy in products that help meet consumer needs. Students also have the opportunity to integrate their work on product formulation with packaging, pricing, and marketing to create a product that would meet consumer needs in the marketplace.



Competition Details

Develop **Innovative, Dairy-Based Products for consumers seeking “Bone Health, Muscle Health, and Weight Management”**.

The new product must follow the guidelines below:

- Must contain greater than 51% dairy ingredients by weight of the finished product
- Use any form of fresh or dry milk, whey, milk fat, milk proteins, cheese, lactose fractions or other dairy ingredients
- Must provide at least a **good** source of dairy protein (the product should contain 10% or more of the Daily Value (please follow [this](#) link) per reference amount (please follow [this](#) link)).
- Meet food labeling and regulatory criteria as specified by the Code of Federal Regulations [here](#)
- Be fit for human consumption

* Failure to meet the above guidelines would lead to disqualification of your submission.

Eligibility Guidelines

DMI Product Development Competition is open to all undergraduate and graduate students within the U.S. and enrolled during the 2025-2026 year (including students graduating in May or August 2026).

Students must follow these guidelines:

- All submissions must be the work of students under the supervision of a faculty adviser who ensures the rules are being followed.
- Team entries (minimum of two individuals) will be accepted, with no limit of entries per school.
- There is no limit to the number of team members, but all team members must attend the same college or university.
- Entries may stem from a previous research project, course or product development team project, but products must not:
 - Be entered into more than one product development contest with the same entry within the same academic year ¹
 - Be commercially marketed
- First-, second- and third-place products from previous Dairy Research Institute/ National Dairy Council®/DMI competitors may not be entered in future National Dairy Council®/DMI product development competitions, unless the entry has been changed and improved upon.

¹ An exception to this rule: Teams are allowed to enter their submission in their local/state dairy products “accelerator” programs such as CMAB excelerator, NY Milk Launch, etc.



Entry Guidelines

There are three phases to the competition.

Phase One: Preliminary Report and Cover Letter

A cover letter and preliminary report must be submitted to Dairy Management Inc. (addressed to Rohit Kapoor at rohit.kapoor@dairy.org) by no later than **Jan. 12, 2026**.

The **cover letter** must include school affiliation, student names, adviser names and ingredient supplier names. The cover letter must also include the **email, contact phone number, and department mailing address** of the team captain or the designated team contact. In addition to the above attachments, please also include the T-Shirt sizes of all team members and advisors in the body of the email.

The **five-page preliminary report** must follow these guidelines:

- The report must **NOT** indicate school affiliation, student or adviser names, or ingredient supplier names (unless an integral part of the ingredient name)
- The report must not exceed five pages, double-spaced, font size minimum 11.
- Should include, but is not limited to:
 - Title page (not included in page limit)
 - Product description (in this section, in addition to the product description and other relevant details, please also ensure that you clearly highlight that your product meets the guidelines as set forth in the “competition details” section on page 2 of this document)
 - Feasibility of production and/or process description
 - Marketability/target market
 - Preliminary sensory data
 - Dairy ingredient functionality in product
 - Demonstrate how the product is linked to [DMI consumer and marketplace insights](#)
 - List of citations (not included in page limit)
 - Process flow diagram (not included in page limit)
 - Photograph of product (one 5 X 7; not included in page limit)
- The **preliminary report** will be judged on the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
Innovativeness of concept	10
Link to DMI/NDC consumer and marketplace insights	10
Product description	5
Process description	5
Use of dairy ingredients (>51% dairy by weight is required)	5
Commercial feasibility/Problem solving	5
Marketing/Potential	5
Safety/shelf life	5
Sub-total	50

- Based on these five-page reports, six entrants will be selected for full report submission.



Phase Two: Full Report & Product/Webinar Presentation

Top six entrants will submit a full project report which will be reviewed by a panel of judges selected by DMI. The final report with accompanying cover letter must be emailed to Rohit Kapoor (rohit.kapoor@dairy.org) no later than **March 23rd 2026**. The cover letter must again include school affiliation, student names, adviser names, or ingredient supplier names along with the email and contact number of the team captain or the designated team contact. The report must be composed by at least one student team member with guidance from the designated faculty adviser.

Guidelines for the reports include:

- Must not indicate school affiliation, student or adviser names, or ingredient supplier names (unless an integral part of the ingredient name)
- Must not exceed 10 pages, double-spaced, font size minimum 11
- Should include, but is not limited to:
 - Title page (not included in page limit)
 - Product description
 - Feasibility of production and/or process description
 - Marketability/target market
 - Dairy ingredient functionality in product
 - Demonstrate how the product is linked to [DMI consumer and marketplace insights](#)
 - Sensory evaluation
 - Safety/shelf life
 - Challenges overcome
 - List of references (not included in page limit)
 - Process flow diagram (not included in page limit)
 - Photograph of product (one 5 X 7; not included in page limit)

The top six entrants will submit the product for sampling and present via webinar for final judging. The finalist teams must submit enough product for 18 servings. The product (along with storage, preparation and serving instructions) must reach Dairy Management Inc. office no later than **first or second week of April** (details to come closer to the finals).

The webinar will be presented during the **third or fourth week of April** (details to come closer to the finals) at a mutually agreed-upon time by teams and judges. Webinar details follow:

- Presentations will be made by up to three student team members.
- Questions from judges may be answered by any student team members (with no participation from faculty advisers).
- Each presentation will be no longer than 15 minutes with 10 minutes of additional time for questions.



Phase Three: American Dairy Science Association Meeting

The top three teams will be invited to and honored at the American Dairy Science Association Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, WI from June 21 - 24, 2026. The exact date and time will be communicated closer to the meeting date. Winners also will be featured in promotions, including newsletters, websites and publication articles.

A judging panel will make the final assessment and selection. The panel will include objective experts from the dairy industry and members of DMI.

The varied experience of the panel members allows for assessment from diverse perspectives as they evaluate and select the winners based on the full written report, webinar presentation and final product tasting.

A 200-point evaluation scale will be used to judge the final report, webinar presentation and product.

Judging Criteria

Criteria	Points
The final report will be judged on the following criteria:	
Originality of concept	10
Product description	5
Process description	5
Use of dairy ingredients (>51% dairy by weight is required)	10
Commercial feasibility/Problem solving	10
Marketing/Potential	5
Safety/shelf life	5
Sub-total	50
The webinar presentation will be judged on the following criteria:	
Enthusiasm of presentation	5
Slide quality/clarity	5
Organization	10
Professionalism of student(s)	10
Feature of dairy ingredient(s)	5
Overall coverage of material	10
Handling of questions	5
Sub-total	50
The product will be judged on the following criteria:	
Meets expectations (overall liking)	20
Flavor/Aroma	20
Texture/Body/Appearance	20
Ease of use/Consumption	20
Packaging	10
Prominence of dairy	10
Sub-total	100
TOTAL	200



Platinum Dairy Innovator Award of \$10,000 for first place

Gold Dairy Innovator Award of \$7,000 for second place

Silver Dairy Innovator Award of \$4,000 for third place

Dairy Innovator Award of \$2,000 each for the rest of the 3 teams that make it to the top six and successfully complete Phase 2 of the competition

- DMI will provide up to \$1,500 that can only be used to support travel and meeting for the three winning team members to attend the American Dairy Science Association Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, WI from June 21 - 24, 2026.
- Cash awards for the top 3 winning teams will be distributed during the ADSA meeting. In case the students are not able to attend, award cheques will be sent to faculty adviser/team leader within 30 days of the meeting, for distribution to team members per discretion of the school and adviser.
- Cash awards for the 4th, 5th, and 6th place teams will be sent to faculty adviser/team leader within 30 days of the meeting, for distribution to team members per discretion of the school and adviser.
- Applicable taxes are the sole responsibility of any winners who receive awards.
- Entry into the contest constitutes an agreement by the contestants to the following:
 - Use of names, likeness and quotes
 - Recipes, product formulation and process descriptions and images can be used by Dairy Management Inc./National Dairy Council® in the promotion of its programs and in communications with the food and beverage industry.
 - Availability for press interviews as requested.
 - Use of the product for demonstration purposes
- All product formulations remain property of the entering individuals and/or teams or universities, according to the school's regulations.