



## **VIRGINIA STATE DAIRYMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Virginia State Dairymen's Association Announces \$115,000 Grant from the Van der Lely Foundation to Expand Milk Dispenser Program in Virginia Schools**

Bridgewater, VA - The Virginia State Dairymen's Association (VSDA) is excited to announce it has received a \$115,000 grant from the Van der Lely Foundation to expand the use of bulk milk dispensers in school cafeterias across the Commonwealth.

This investment marks a major step forward in helping more Virginia schools transition from single-use milk cartons to a cleaner, greener, and more student-friendly way of serving milk. With the foundation's support, VSDA will provide milk dispensers and sustainable storage equipment to additional school districts beginning in 2026.

"This support from the Van der Lely Foundation accelerates a project that's already proving its value in Virginia schools," said Eric Paulson, Executive Director of VSDA. "We're seeing less waste, higher milk consumption, and an overwhelmingly positive response from school staff and students. It's a simple change with a big impact."

The milk dispenser program has shown impressive results in early-adopting schools. Switching to milk dispensers eliminates cartons, dramatically lowers packaging waste, leads to significantly higher consumption, and the milk stays colder. Roughly three-quarters of children ages two through eighteen do not consume the daily recommended amount of real dairy. At one of the state's early pilot schools, milk packaging waste dropped by nearly 90%, while overall milk consumption rose more than 50%. Schools receiving milk dispenser grants across the Southeast have consistently reported an average increase of at least 14% in the movement of milk. To date, the milk dispenser grant program has supported 54 schools across 19 districts, resulting in the implementation of 77 dispensers throughout the Commonwealth.

With the grant funding, VSDA will expand the project to 18 additional cities and counties, supplying equipment and technical support to help school nutrition teams prepare, install, and maintain the systems. The effort will run from January 2026 through July 2027, with ongoing data collection to measure environmental impact, milk usage, and student response.

"At its heart, this project is about strengthening the connection between Virginia students and the local dairy farms that feed their communities," Paulson added. "We're grateful to the Van der Lely Foundation for believing in this work and helping us scale something that benefits kids, farmers, and the environment."

For more information about the milk dispenser project or VSDA's work across the Commonwealth, please contact VSDA at [info@vsdaonline.com](mailto:info@vsdaonline.com).

**About the Virginia State Dairymen's Association (VSDA)**

The Virginia State Dairymen's Association is the statewide voice for dairy farmers, working to strengthen an industry that has shaped Virginia's rural communities for generations. The VSDA is a member organization founded in 1907 to represent and promote the dairy industry in Virginia. VSDA is committed to ensuring a profitable and sustainable dairy across the Commonwealth.

**About the Van der Lely Foundation** The Van der Lely Foundation is an independent initiative of the Van der Lely family, rooted in their firm conviction to contribute to a better world through entrepreneurship and innovation. The foundation is ANBI-registered and aims to support initiatives in the areas of education in science, entrepreneurship, innovation and technology; healthcare; climate and sustainability; arts and culture. Visit [vanderlelyfoundation.com](http://vanderlelyfoundation.com) for more information and to submit project proposals.