

## Letters to the Editor

B-2 January 27, 2011

### Cabot CEOs: Let Process Work

Cabot Creamery is a good corporate citizen, values our reliance on our Vermont connections and does right by the communities in which we farm, work and sell products. The well-being of the environment is essential to our success—both for the farmers who own the brand and for the quality of our products. A recent letter to the editor suggested otherwise.

Cabot has a number of state-approved permits for the land spreading of our dairy washwater. Washwater is the water pumped through the pipes that carry milk to vats to make our dairy products. Approximately 0.075% of the washwater we use to irrigate and enrich our farmers' fields represents residue from cleaning agents. They are all approved for use by FDA, EPA and ANR, and their rate of dilution is measured in parts per million—all legally allowable and significantly below state and federal limits.

While adherence to state permits may not reassure some, the fact remains that any discharges that cause environmental harm are legally prosecutable. Claims against Cabot under these laws have been found groundless by state regulators.

This water is spread on fields which have been reviewed, tested and approved. All fields used are closely monitored for carrying capacity and impact. This program has been in place since 1990 and represents a more regulated version of programs that pre-date this one from the upper Midwest.

Our land application program, which is a result of collaboration among the state Agency of Natural

Resources, UVM, engineering firms and consultants, was a viable solution when building a waste treatment plant was not. We continue to remind detractors of the physical characteristics of our watershed that make a treatment plant impossible.

The water withdrawal from our private wells has changed very little in 20 years despite a growing business. This is attributable to several successful water conservation efforts. Further, withdrawals are well within state-mandated limits. Federal water resource data from United States Geological Survey conservatively places annual rainfall in our most local watershed at over 16 billion gallons. The amount of well water we withdraw on a yearly basis represents approximately 0.02% of that volume.

Cabot had an ammonia spill several years ago. We immediately took responsibility. We have worked with local citizen and environmental groups to not only repair and reverse our damage but to improve the Upper Winooski watershed. This effort recently earned the State of Vermont's highest environmental stewardship award.

So many high-profile companies (though rarely cooperatives) have cheated and lied that the average citizen is numb. Apparently it is so much easier to believe whatever bad is said or implied about us. Without the time to study the volumes and volumes of scientific data and field and water testing results required by our permits and in the public record, how could the average citizen know? This assurance is what environmental regulation is designed to

provide. For every accusation about our environmental programs, the government oversight bodies have shown there are no devious actions here at Cabot.

Our farmers would not have a cooperative and a business to rely on if we did the damage our detractors claim. As we do every five years, our programs will be reviewed in Act 250 hearings soon. I sincerely hope that Vermonters will respect the process and appreciate that we are doing everything by the book, and better, for the sake of our collective futures—the farmers, the employees, and Vermonters and Vermont.

Richard Stammer, CEO  
Cabot Creamery Cooperative