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## Dannon Responds to Ag Groups' Concerns

(<http://www.dannon.com/category/our-products/>) The

Dannon Company released a statement

([http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/dannons-](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/dannons-response-to-unfounded-accusations-about-the-companys-pledge-to-sustainable-agriculture-naturality-and-transparency-300346216.html)

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[companys-pledge-to-sustainable-agriculture-](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/dannons-response-to-unfounded-accusations-about-the-companys-pledge-to-sustainable-agriculture-naturality-and-transparency-300346216.html)

[naturality-and-transparency-300346216.html](http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/dannons-response-to-unfounded-accusations-about-the-companys-pledge-to-sustainable-agriculture-naturality-and-transparency-300346216.html))

Tuesday after being called out by agricultural

organizations ([http://agwired.com/2016/10/17/ag-challenge-food-co-s-retreat-from-](http://agwired.com/2016/10/17/ag-challenge-food-co-s-retreat-from-sustainable-ag-practices/)

[sustainable-ag-practices/](http://agwired.com/2016/10/17/ag-challenge-food-co-s-retreat-from-sustainable-ag-practices/)) for its plans to phase out GMOs in some major brands for the sake of sustainability.



“We were surprised to receive a divisive and misinformed letter about our efforts to continue to grow America’s enjoyment of dairy products, including yogurt,” reads the company statement release. *“Making yogurt begins with the wholesome milk that our farmers sell to us. Unlike any other large dairy processors, we have built direct and transparent relationships with our independent American dairy farmer partners. Together with them we are beginning to implement the Dannon Pledge (<http://www.dannonpledge.com/assets/pdf/Dannon%20Pledge.pdf>), announced six months ago, which commits to evolve three of our brands to be made with non-GMO ingredients, as well as non-GMO feed for the cows from which we source our milk, between now and 2018. These three brands – Dannon, Danimals and Oikos – represent about half of our portfolio of products.”*

In the letter sent Monday (<http://www.nmpf.org/files/Dannon%20letter%20-%20Final.pdf>) to

Dannon head of U.S. operations Mariano Lozano, the farm groups said that the company’s

strategy to eliminate GMOs “is the exact opposite of the sustainable agriculture that you claim to

be seeking. Your pledge would force farmers to abandon safe, sustainable farming practices that have enhanced farm productivity over the last 20 years while greatly reducing the carbon footprint of American agriculture.”



(<http://www.fooddialogues.com/>) U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance (<http://www.fooddialogues.com/>) (USFRA) chair Nancy Kavazanjian says they publicized the letter because they wanted to Dannon to hear the voices of farmers and ranchers. “We talked to them and tried to have some meetings with them and just couldn’t get any response so we really needed to raise our voices and put an end to this marketing ‘puffery’ that’s going on,” said Kavazanjian. “Dannon seems to imply that GMO crop traits make us less sustainable and that’s absolutely the opposite.”

In the statement, Dannon specifically notes “we believe the currently approved GMOs are safe” but at the same time they “believe that sustainable agricultural practices can be achieved with or without the use of GMOs.” The reason they give for “getting rid of GMOs” (<http://www.dannonpledge.com/assets/pdf/Dannon%20Pledge.pdf>) is “growing consumer preference for non-GMO ingredients.” They want to enable consumers to choose “which agricultural and environmental model they favor.”

Quoted in the release, Lozano said, “We believe strongly that the unparalleled range of choice that Danone’s US affiliates provide, from organic, to non-GMO ingredients, and to conventional dairy is a reason to celebrate rather than criticize.”

Kavazanjian says if people want to know more about how food is produced, they should ask a farmer or rancher directly through USFRA (<http://www.fooddialogues.com/>). Learn more in this interview with Nancy:



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