

[News Home](#) > This Land O'Lakes farm tour packed a serious punch

ADVOCACY

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Sadie Frericks' advocacy efforts turns into a friend at CFTC



It was an early summer morning in 2015 when Sadie and Glen Frericks led commissioners from the U.S. Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), the government agency that oversees commodity markets, through a tour of their Blue Diamond Dairy. Two years later at his confirmation hearing for CFTC Chairman on June 22, Commissioner Christopher Giancarlo recalled his experience there when answering a question from Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), referencing Glen and Sadie's dairy farm as one of his key agricultural experiences.

"I often think about the Frericks family when I think about the most basic element of our market participants. Some of America's small family farms, even if they don't use these hedging instruments, they rely on the price signals that come from these futures markets to determine whether they are getting a fair price from their distributors," says Giancarlo. "So that brought that very much home to me. And so, our role as an agency is to make sure that the give and take of all the different market participants in our markets results in a fair price."

Because the CFTC is charged with fostering transparent, competitive and financially sound commodity markets, some CFTC commissioners have robust experience in the financial sector but little to no experience in agriculture. Yet farmers' incomes and risk management tools largely depend on the prices that come out of these markets. This relationship underscores the value of educating leaders on the importance of agriculture, and the impacts their decisions make on farm.

Sadie and Glen host farm tours often, but usually the people aren't in government. Because they never say no to a farm tour, they agreed to host commissioners from the CFTC after receiving a call from the Land O'Lakes, Inc. Government Relations team. Sadie remembers the group being curious about all aspects of the business and impressed with their constant string of business and financial questions, including from the now newly-elected chairman Christopher Giancarlo.

Sadie was excited when she heard Giancarlo had mentioned the impact Blue Diamond Dairy had made on him during his confirmation hearing.

"This is exactly why I always say yes to farm tours," says Sadie. "I never know what someone is going to take away from visiting our farm. Agriculture is so misunderstood right now. If we don't help them understand or show them what dairy farming really is, someone else is going to convince them otherwise and it's not always accurate."

Katie Zenk, manager, Government Relations, says Giancarlo's visit is a clear example of why advocacy is important.

"We talk a lot about the value of our members advocating for agriculture and educating people about their businesses," Katie says. "Commissioner Giancarlo oversees commodity markets every day, but it took talking to Sadie and Glen for him to think of how his decisions could impact family farmers and their livelihoods."

While any advocacy is beneficial, such as talking with your state representatives or maintaining an active online presence, Sadie believes the special experience of a farm tour is the most effective way to share your story.

"The sensory experience in a farm tour—smelling the air, walking around, touching the animals—doesn't compare to seeing a snapshot on a screen," Sadie says. "Tours are the best way for people to understand."

If you are interested in sharing your farm experience with others through a farm tour, [email Justin Potts](#) in Member Relations to help get you started and email Katie Zenks at governmentrelations@landolakes.com for more information on policy issues. ●