



2026 Dairy Outlook

Thursday, January 29, 2026



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2026 Dairy Industry Outlook

Corey Geiger

Lead Dairy Economist

Farm Credit East
January 29, 2026



Dairy is dynamic and growing

\$80.3 billion
Retail dairy sales in 2025



Largest category
in retail grocery
(alcohol is no. 2)



Up 3.2% from 2024



Dairy is the world's
largest refrigerated
supply chain



Production
and processing

Consumer
demand

Cattle
inventory

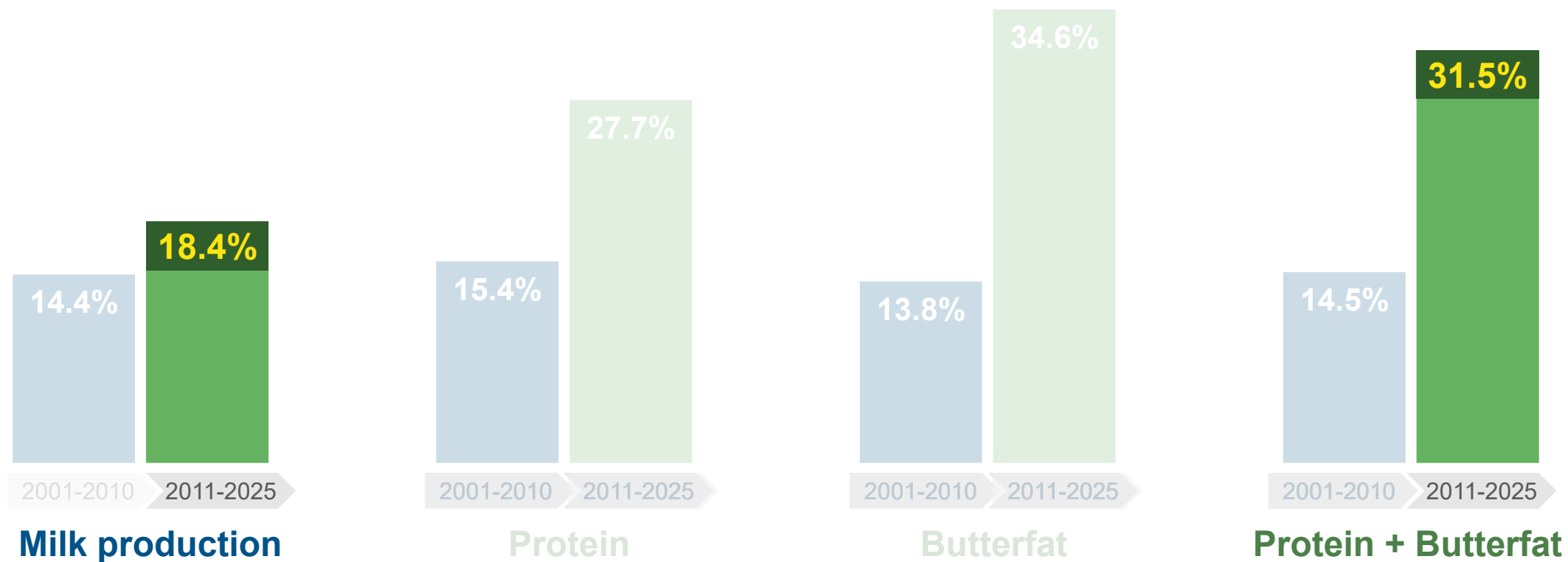
Looking
ahead



Production
and processing

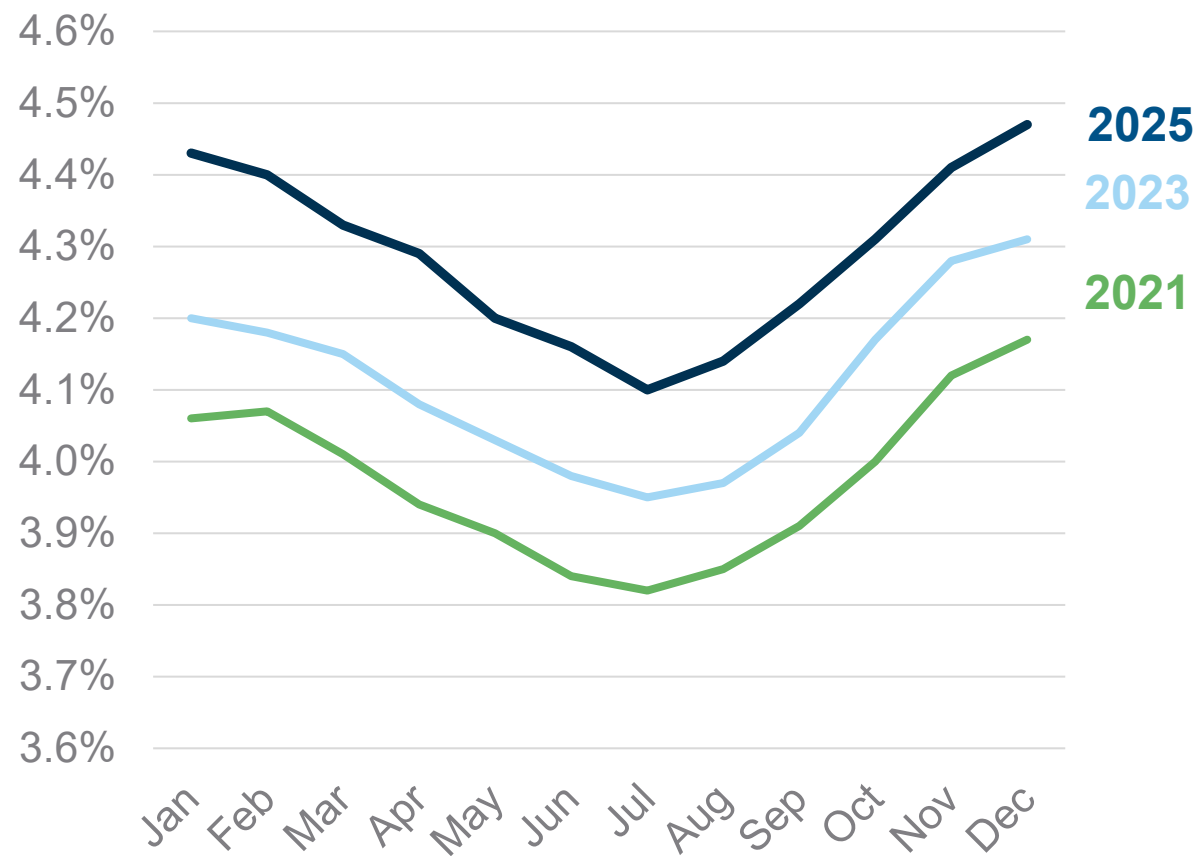
Milk components matter more than milk production

Percent change

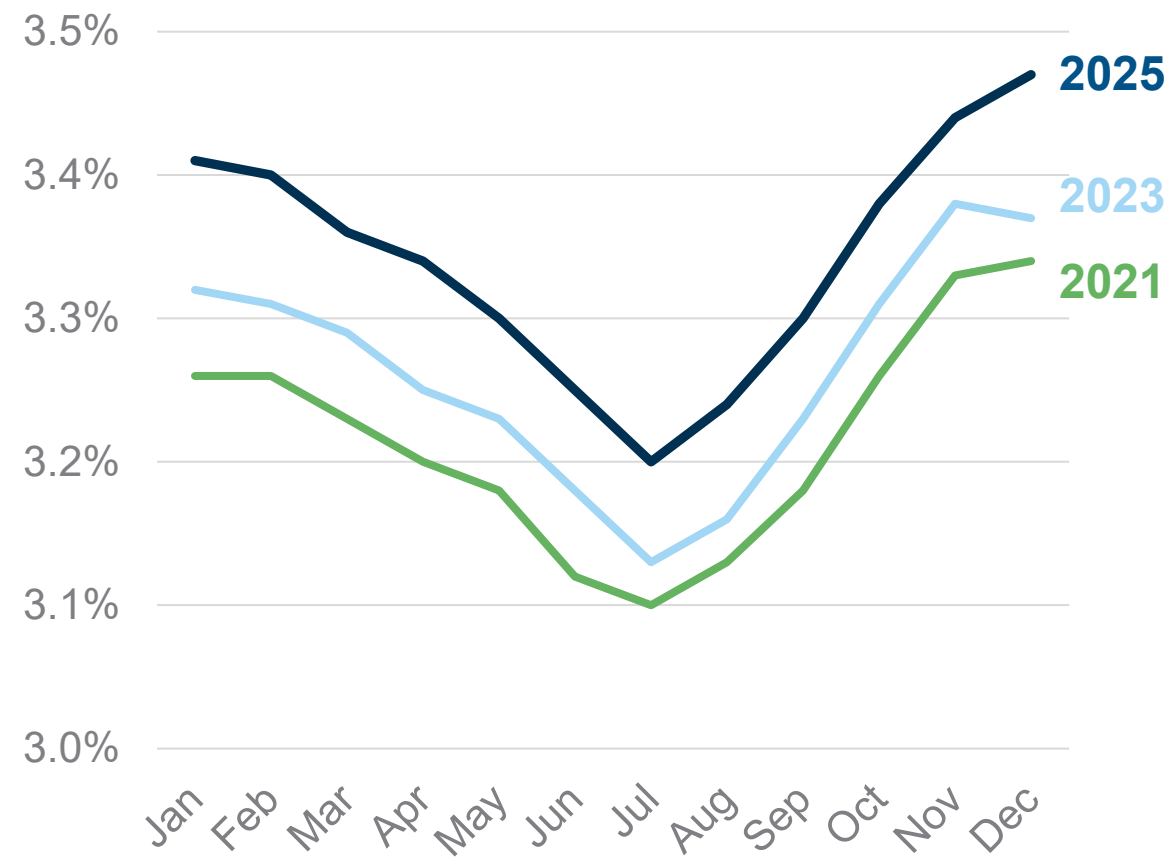


Big shifts in butterfat and protein levels

FMMO butterfat 2021 to 2025

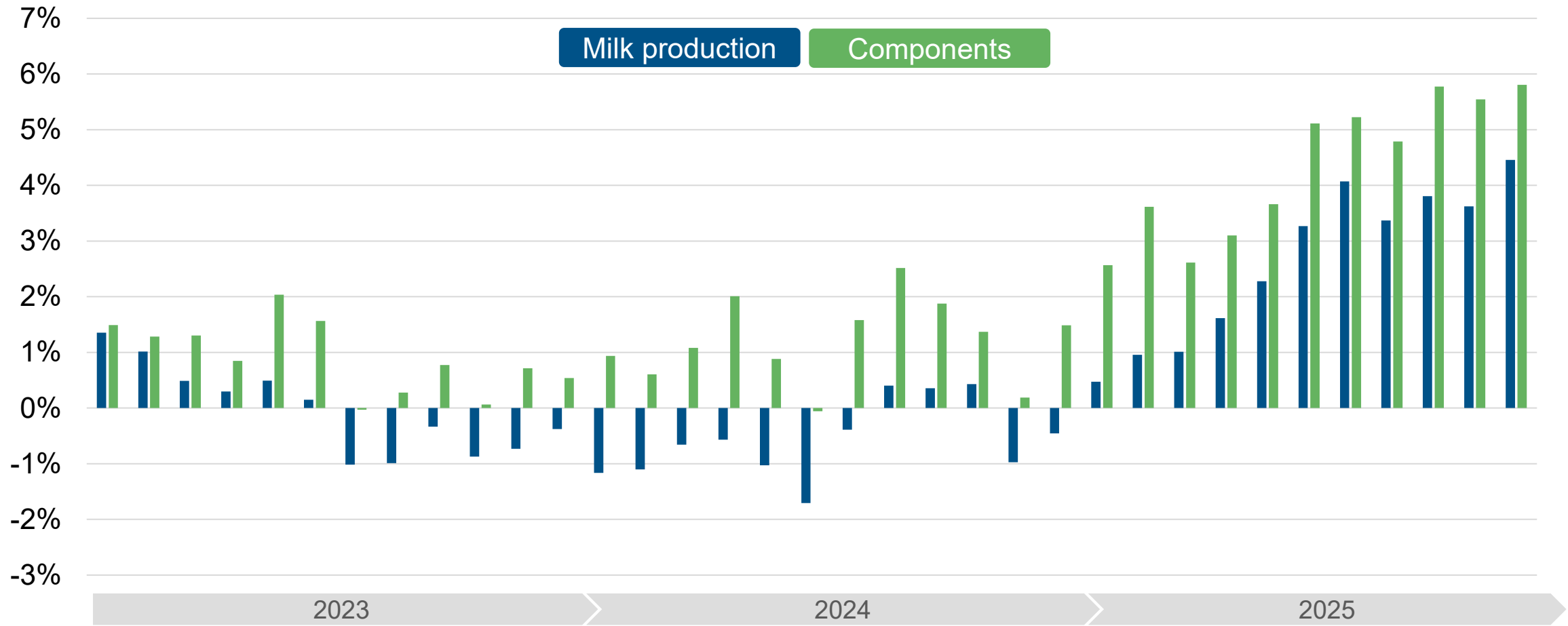


FMMO protein 2021 to 2025



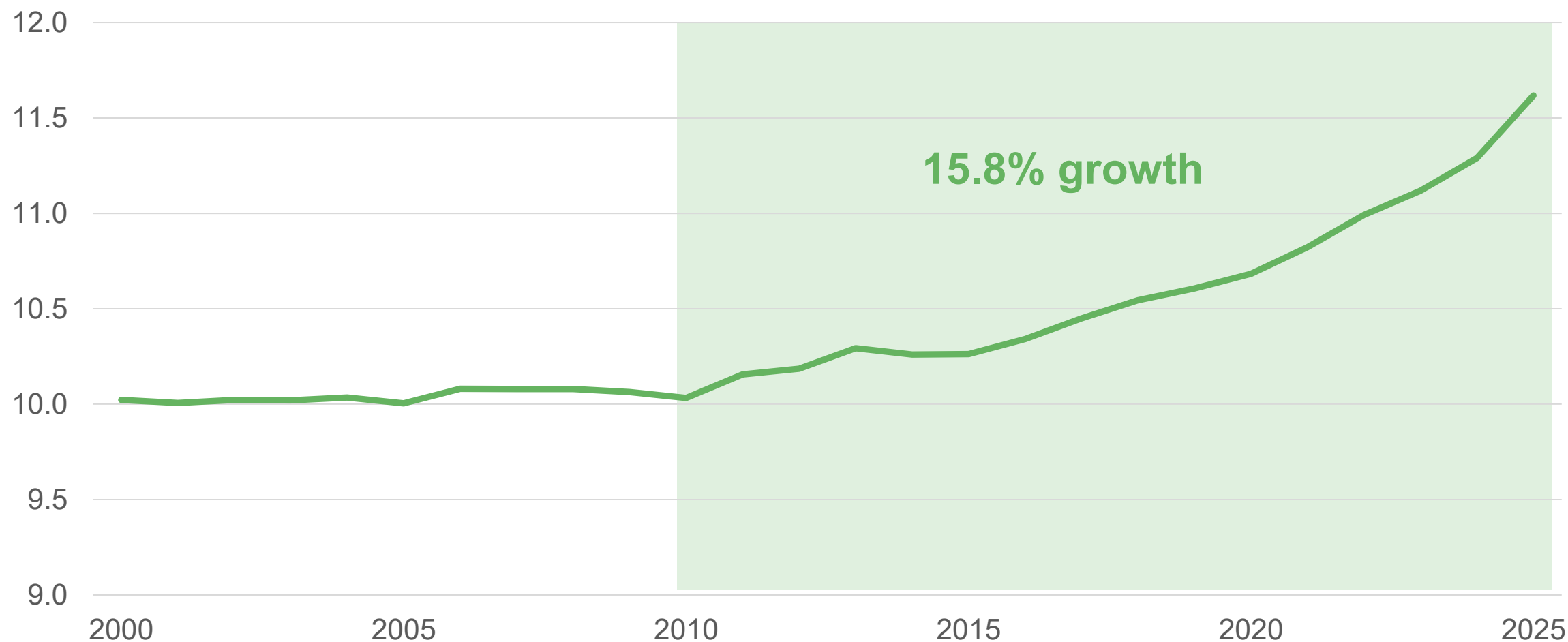
Milk production is picking up steam, but components keep growing at a faster rate

Year-over-year percent change



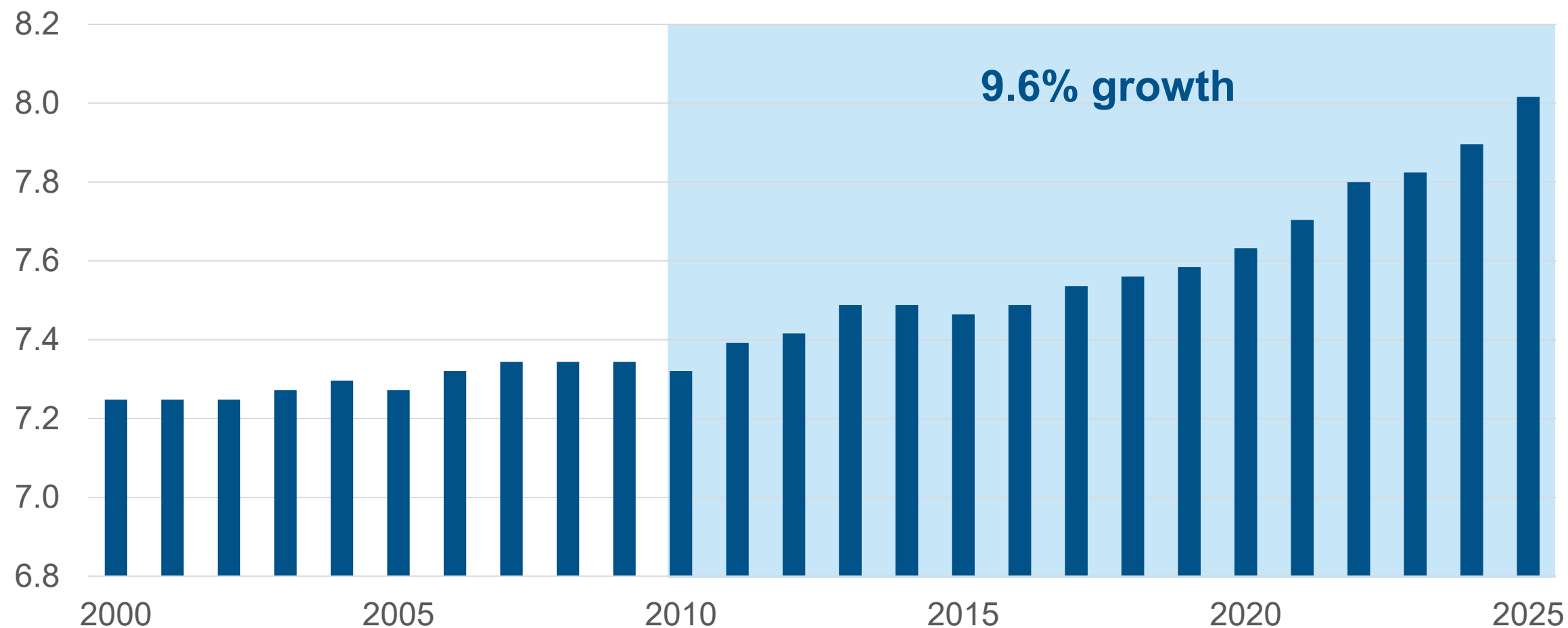
Farmgate milk yields more dairy products

Pounds of **cheese** yield per hundredweight of milk



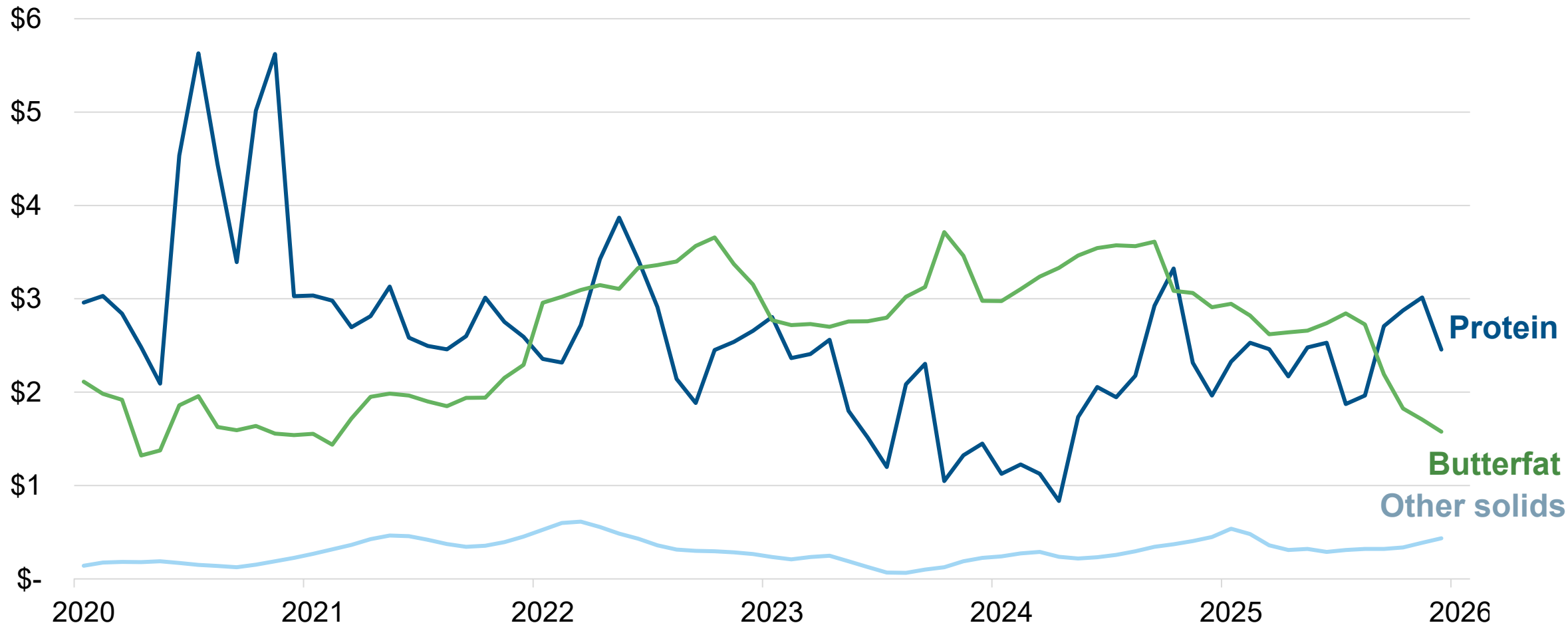
More grams of protein in every serving of fluid milk

In grams per serving



Over 90% of milk priced on Multiple Component Pricing

Monthly federal order butterfat, protein, and other solids prices (dollars per pound)



Dairy processing expansion is moving quickly

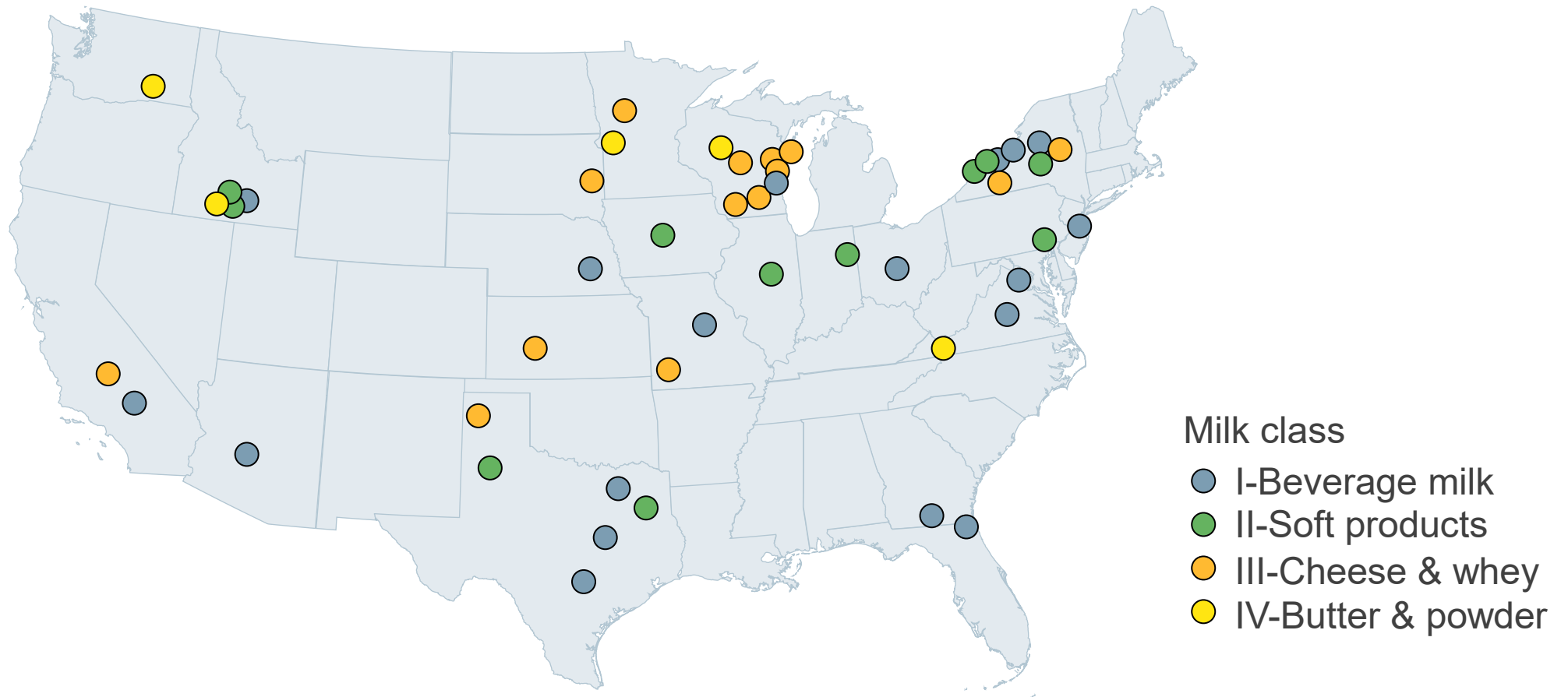


\$11 billion

Generational investment in the U.S. dairy industry

What's the future for U.S. dairy consumption?

New or recently completed plants through 2028 – \$11 billion



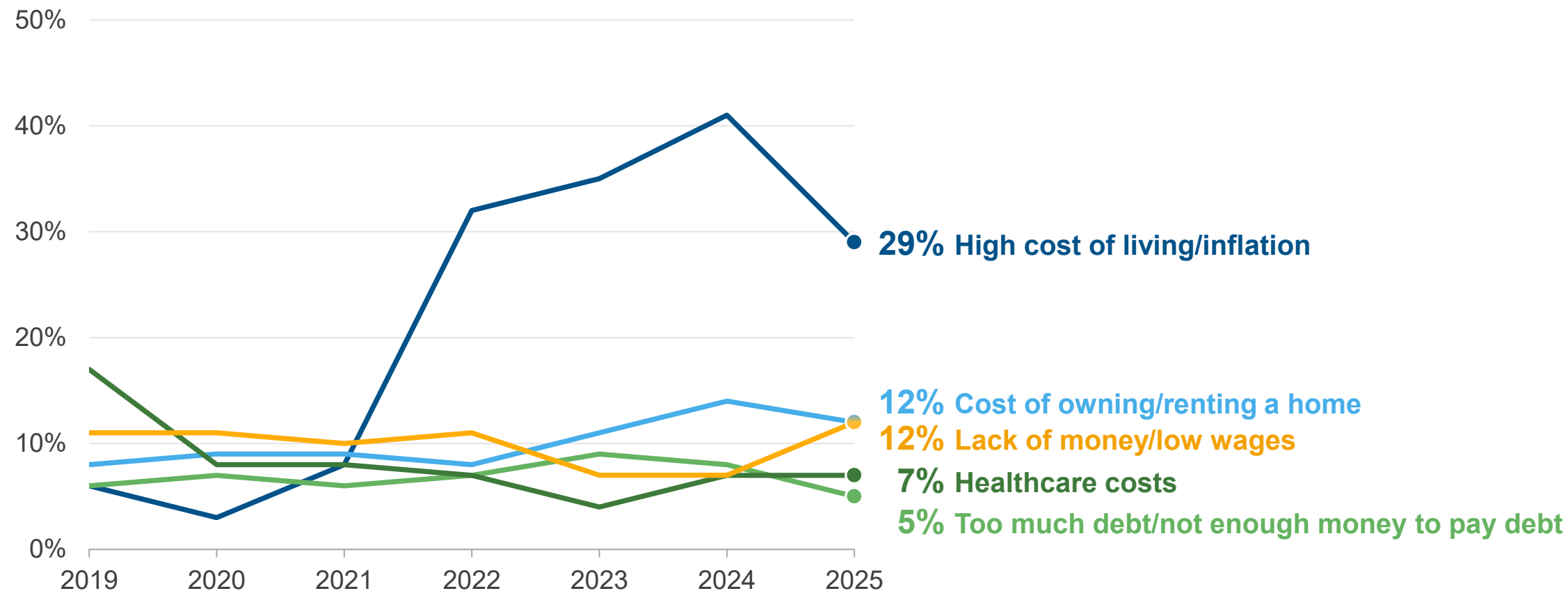


Consumer
demand

Consumers say high cost of living is number one problem

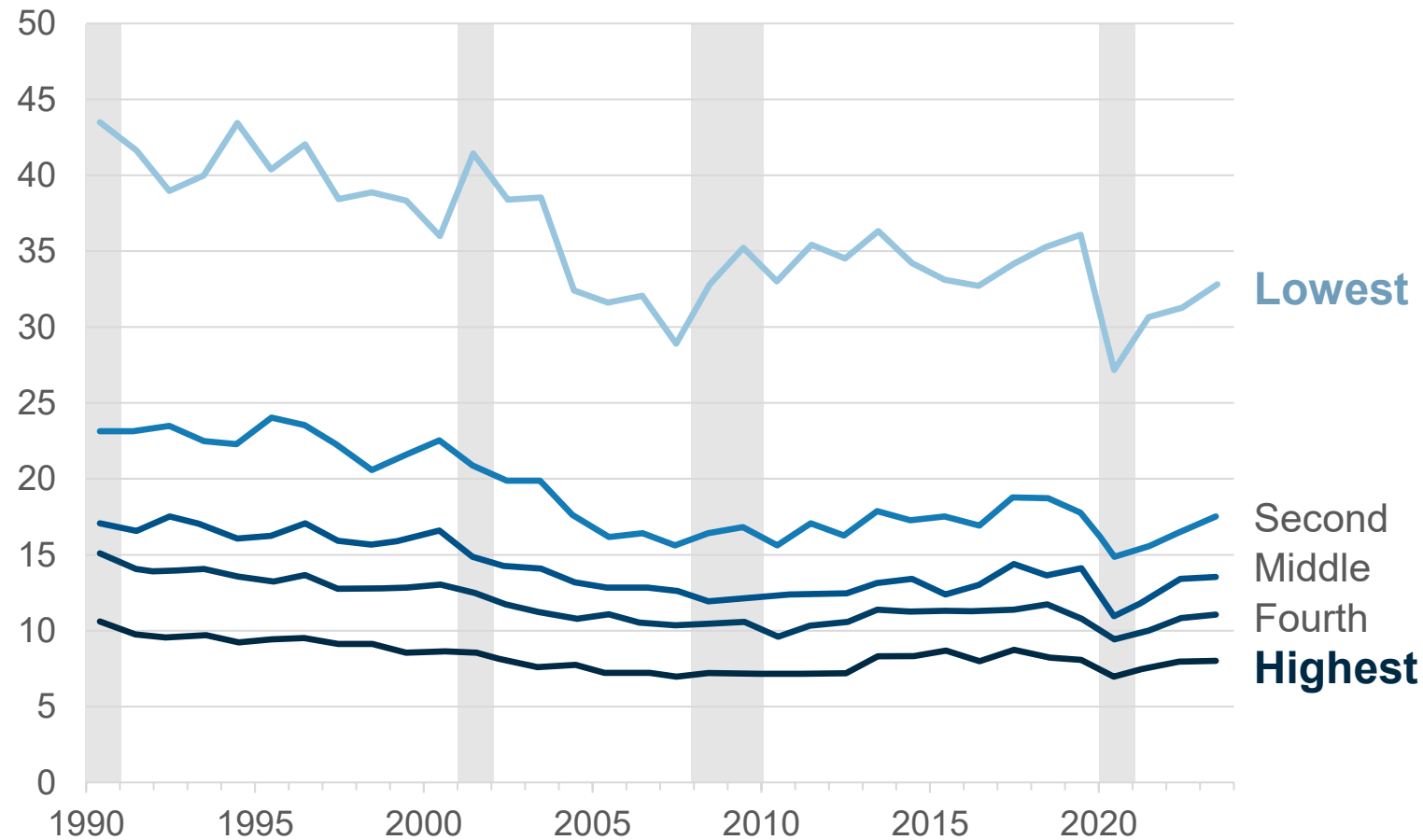
What is the most important financial problem facing your family today?

Percent of respondents

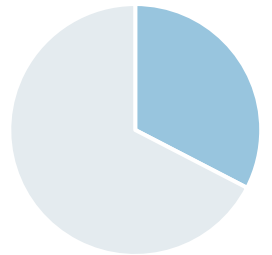


Food prices have impacts across the economy

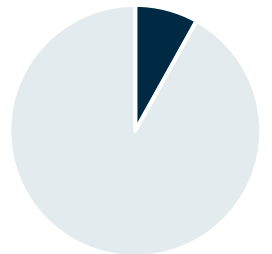
Percent of after-tax income spent on food by income quintile



Lowest income quintile spent **\$5,300** in 2023 (32.6% of income)



Highest income quintile spent **\$17,000** in 2023 (8.1% of income)

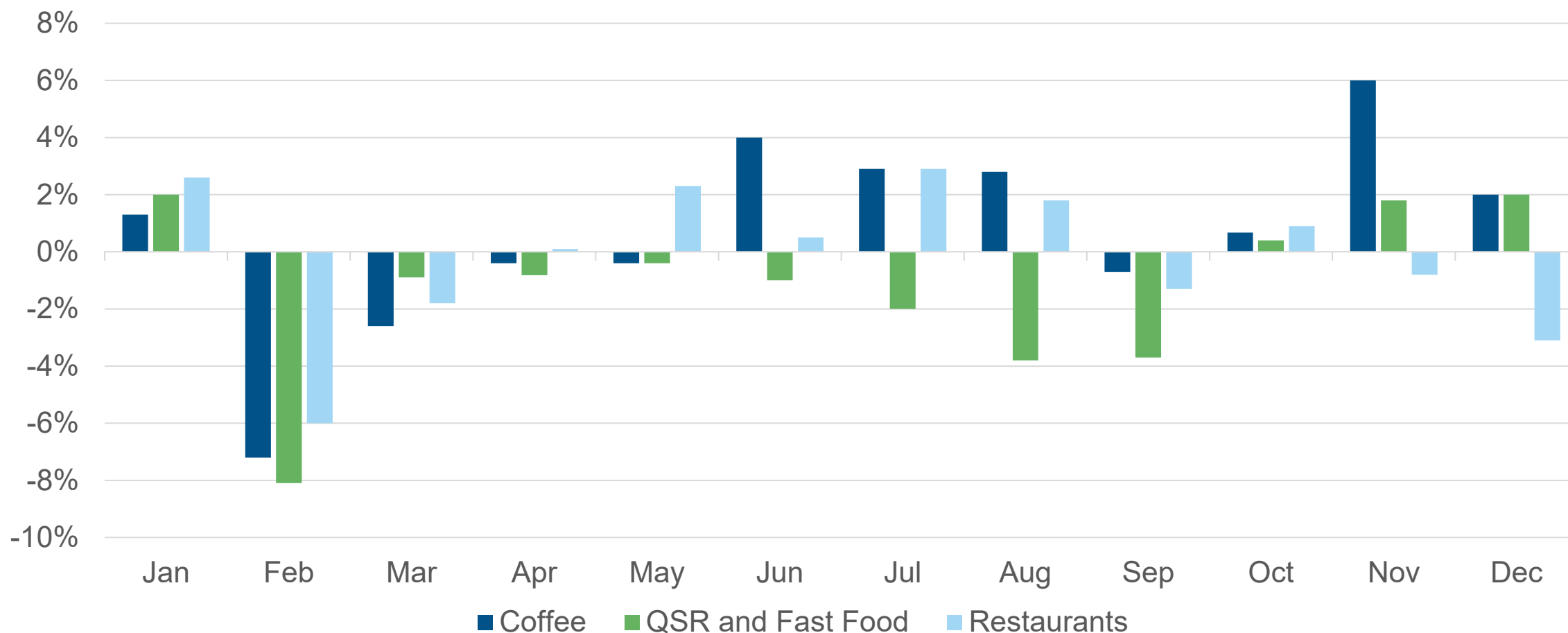


Shading indicates a recession

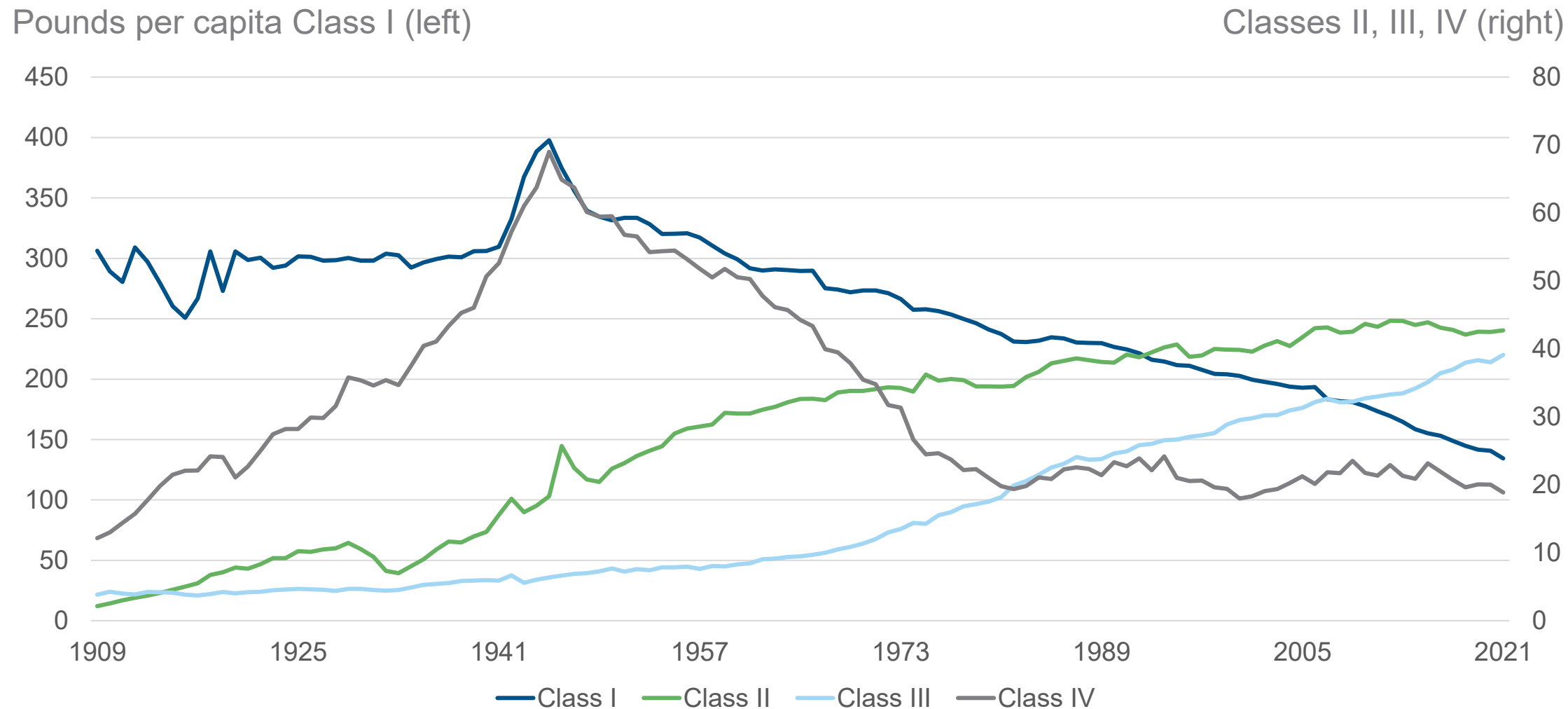
Source: Megan Sweitzer, USDA ERS, using BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey. Presentation by Corey Geiger and Abbi Prins, CoBank.

Restaurant visits show a shift in consumer behavior in 2025

Restaurant visits per location by restaurant type (% change YoY)

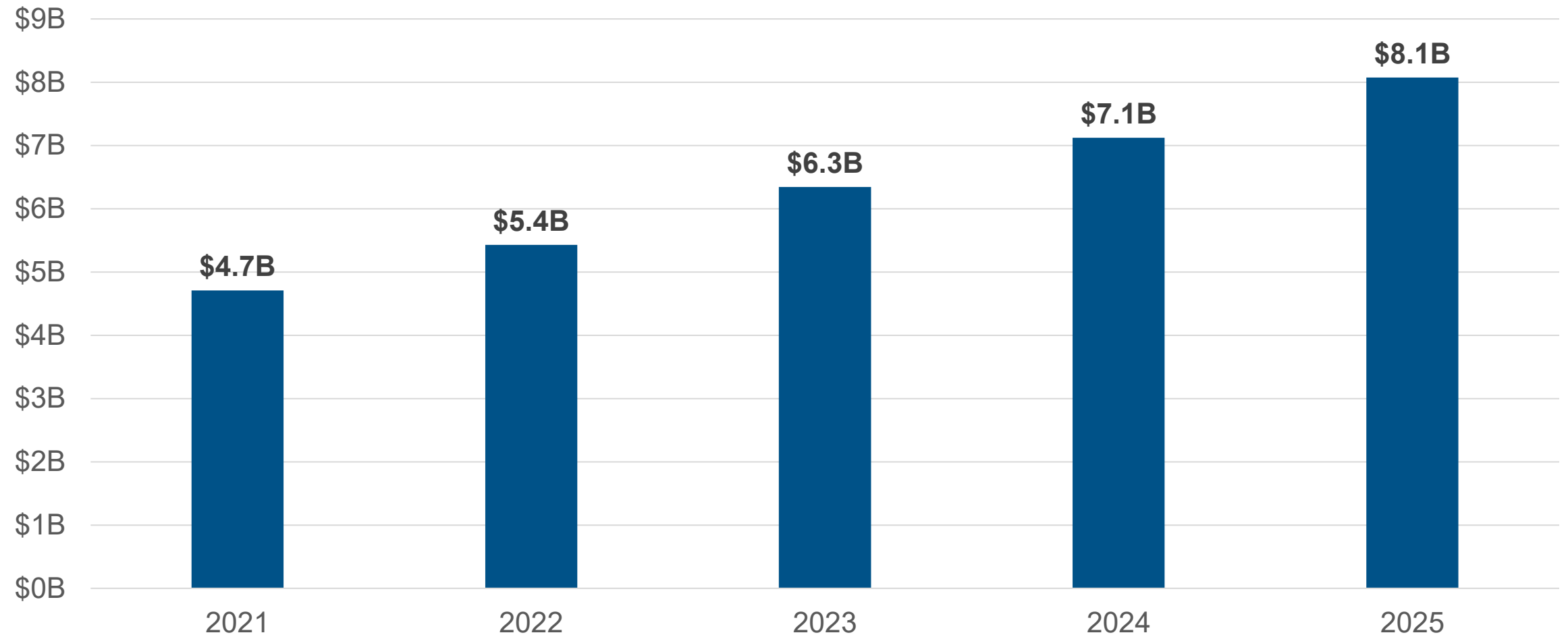


Consumers are eating dairy more than they are drinking



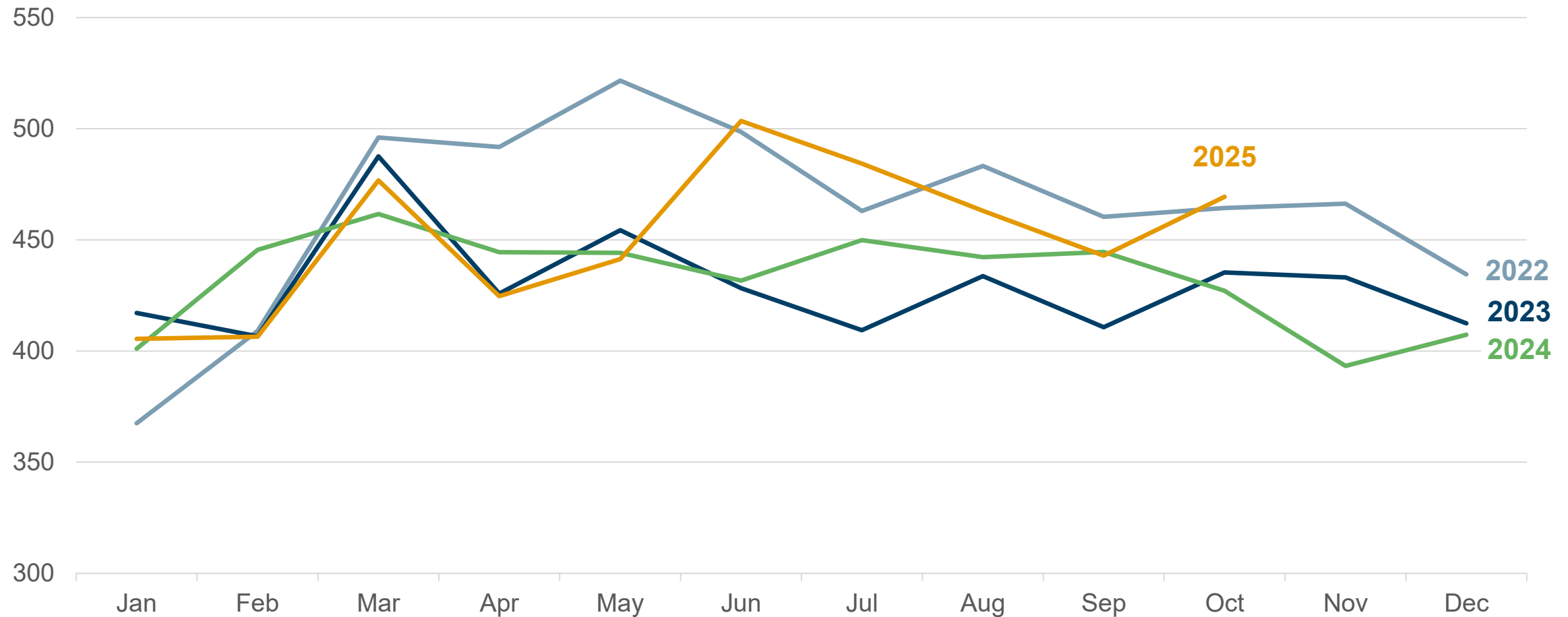
Ready-to-drink protein dairy shakes and nutritionals sales up 71% in four years

Dollar sales



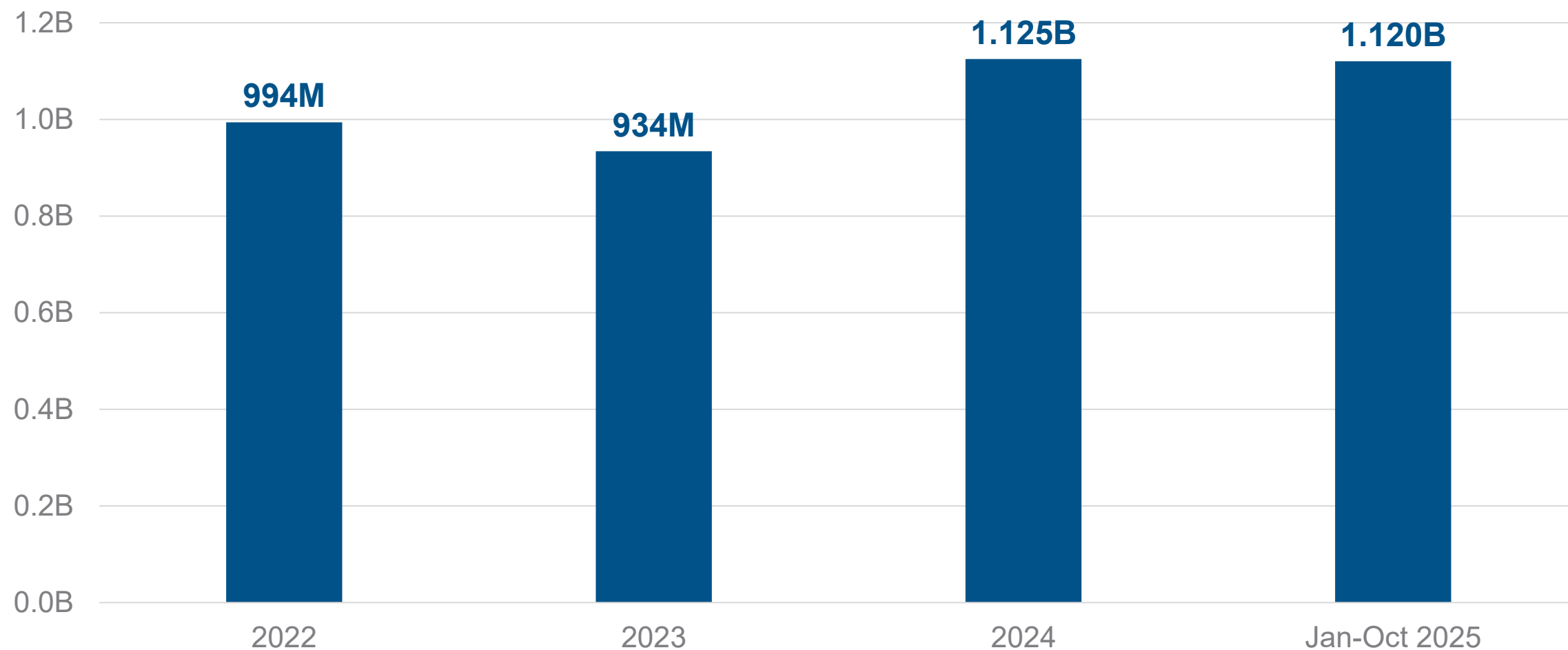
Roughly 17% of U.S. milk production is exported

U.S. dairy exports by month (million pounds)



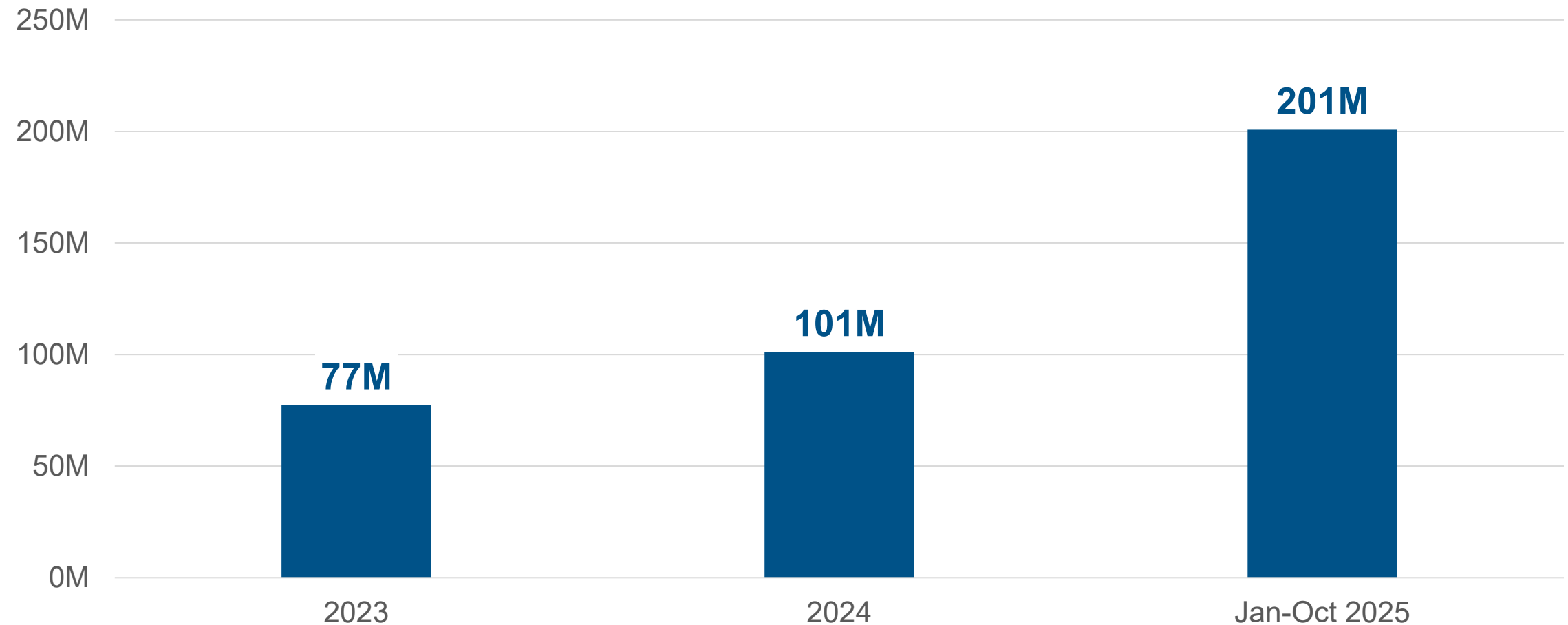
New records for cheese exports in the making

U.S. cheese exports (pounds)



2025 butterfat exports will be over double of 2024

Butterfat exports (pounds)





Cattle
inventory

Dairy herd is growing based due to fewer cull cows

529,300

Pullback on dairy cow culling since Labor Day 2023



So far, 90,700 fewer cows in 2025 than last year



Fewer heifer replacements leading to fewer cows culled



Culling has picked up since August

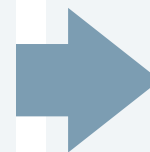
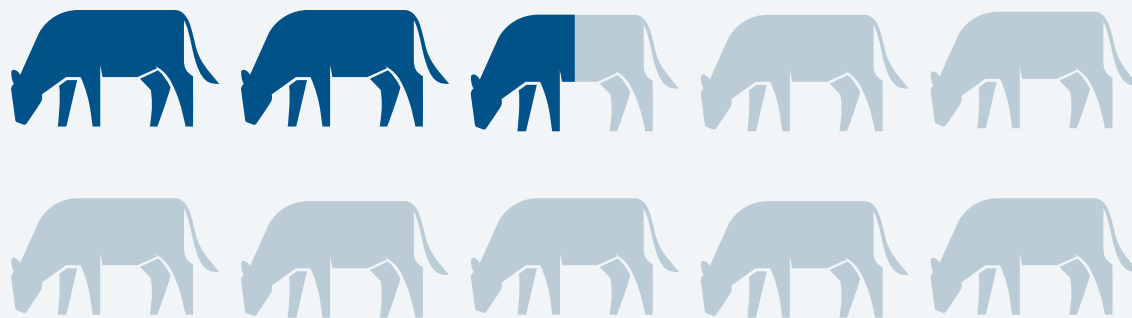
The dairy triple play

Sexed semen

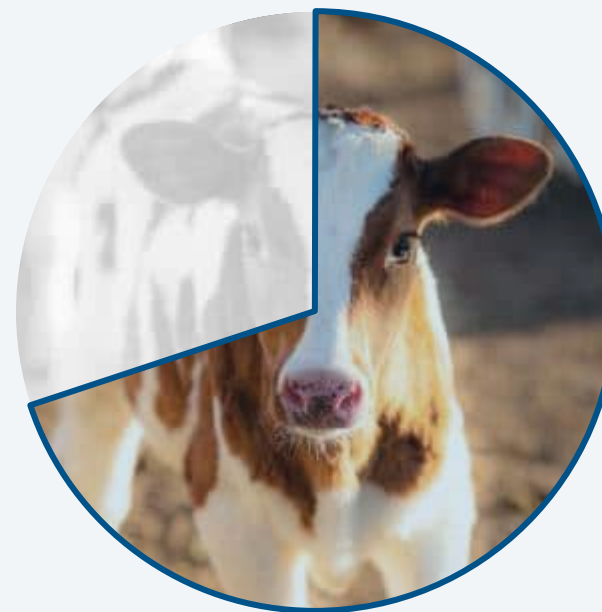
Genomics

Beef-on-dairy

20%-25% of U.S. dairy heifers have genomic tests



Revealing **70%** of genetic ability while still a calf



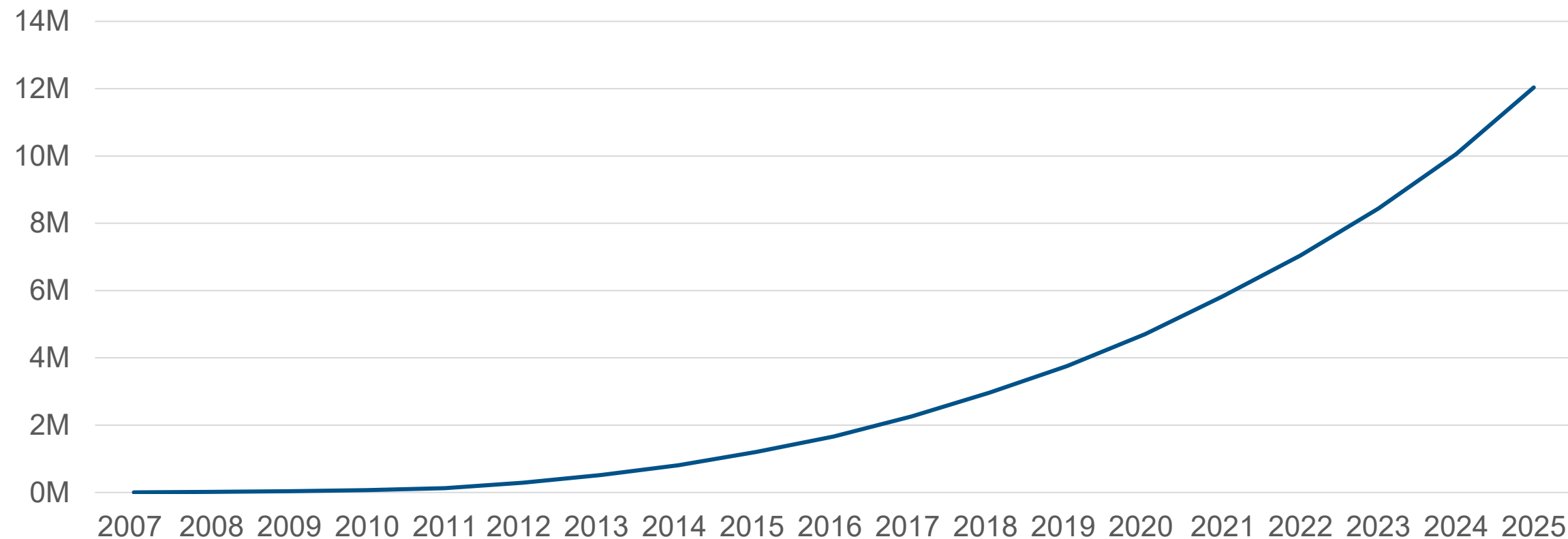
The dairy triple play

Sexed semen

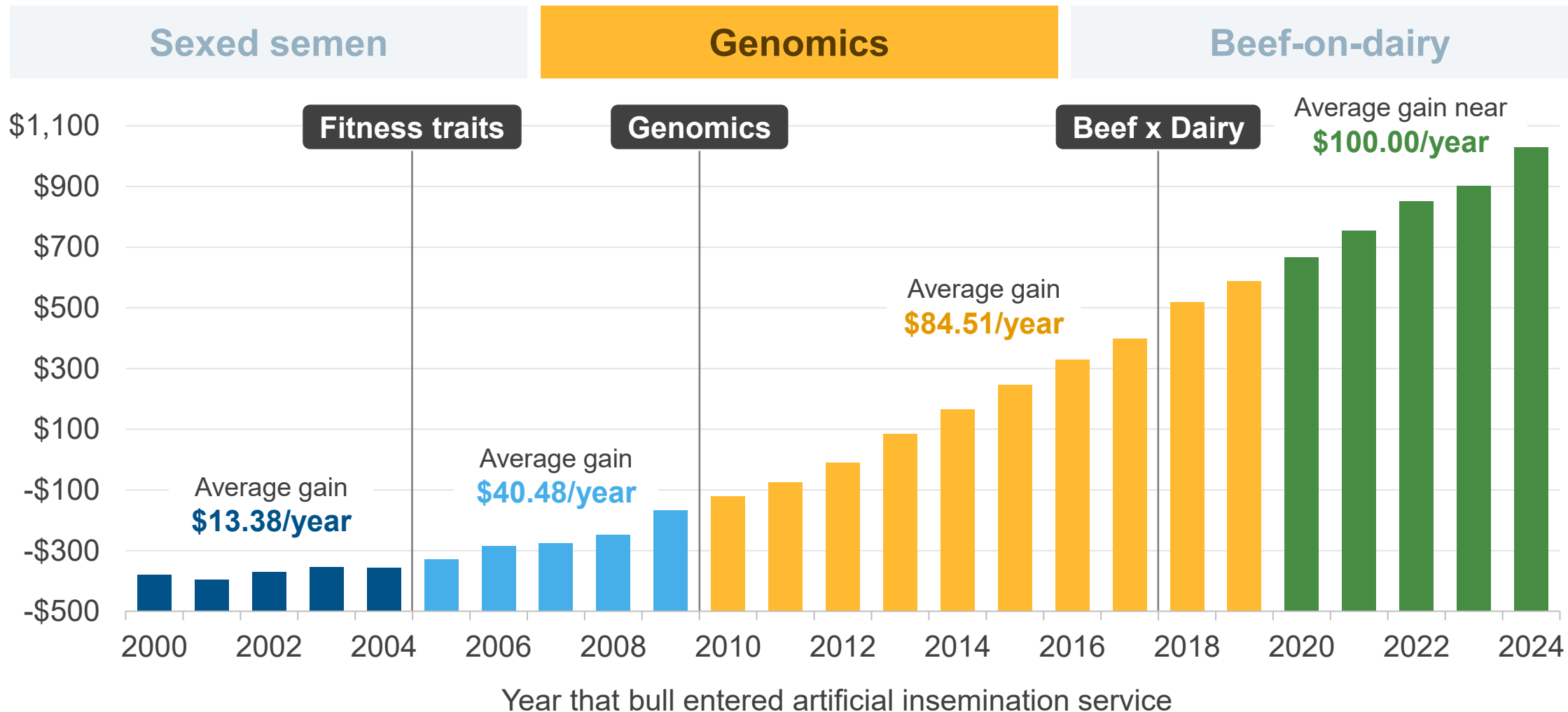
Genomics

Beef-on-dairy

Animals genotyped in National Cooperator Database



Genetic merit of marketed Holstein bulls



Lactation shift in butterfat & protein at Oakfield Corners

<u><i>By LACT</i></u>	<u><i>Pct</i></u>	<u><i>Count</i></u>	<u><i>Av PCTF</i></u>	<u><i>Av PCTS</i></u>
1	36	1197	5.0	3.6
2	23	783	5.0	3.6
3	23	773	4.8	3.5
4	15	510	4.7	3.4
5	2	73	4.4	3.3
6	1	27	4.2	3.2
7	0	4	3.5	3.2
Total	100	3367	4.9	3.5

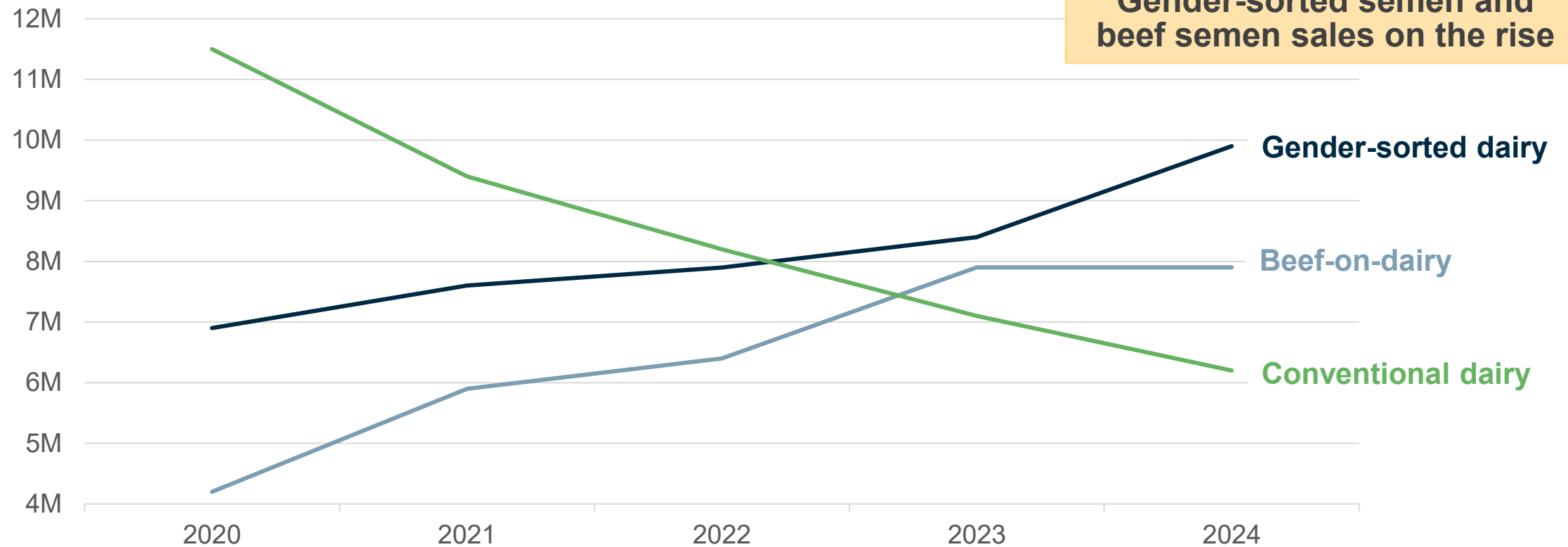
Replacements will limit ability to raise U.S. milk production

Sexed semen

Genomics

Beef-on-dairy

Units of semen sold



Beef-on-dairy continues to transform category

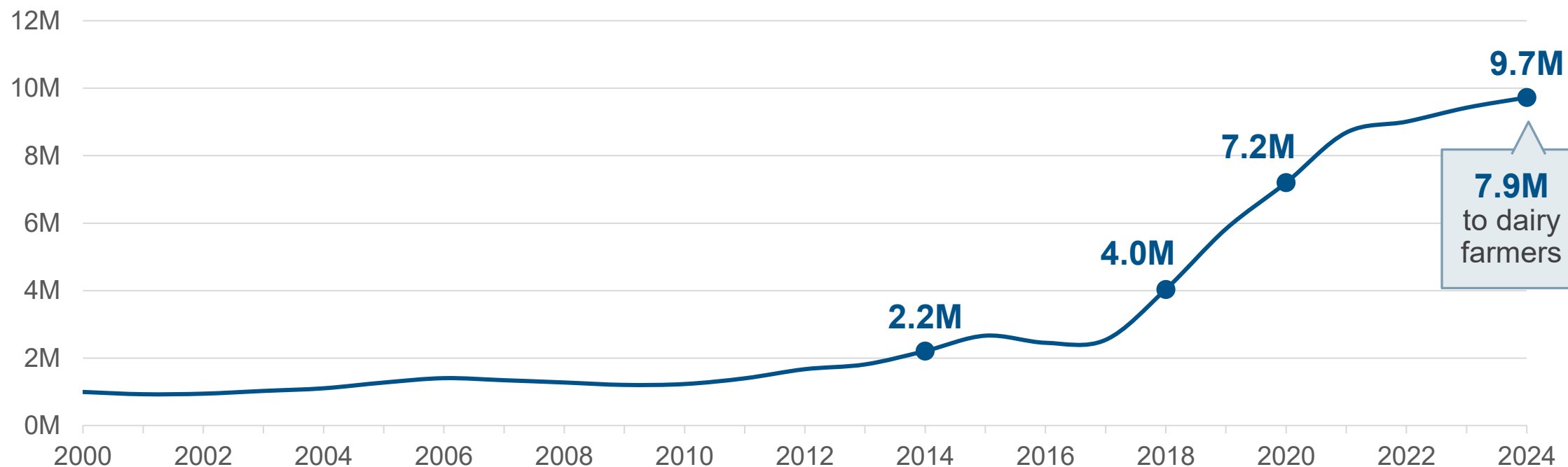
Sexed semen

Genomics

Beef-on-dairy

Domestic beef semen sales climbed substantially

Units sold



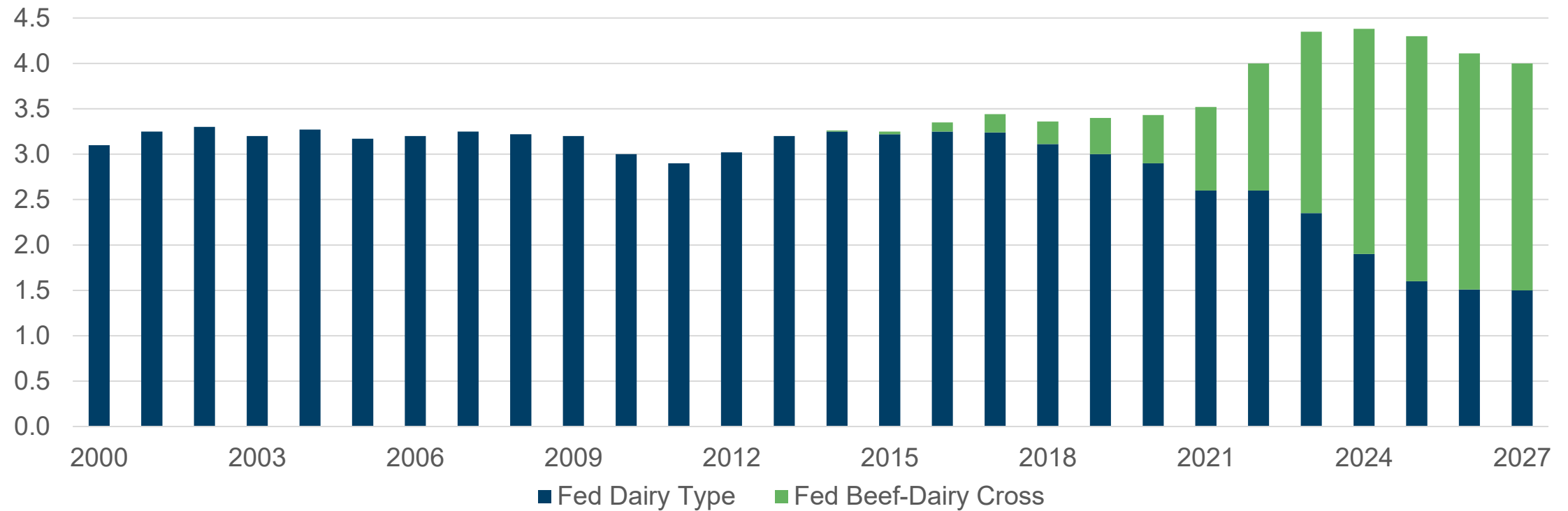
Beef on dairy cattle add more head to the feeder supply

Sexed semen

Genomics

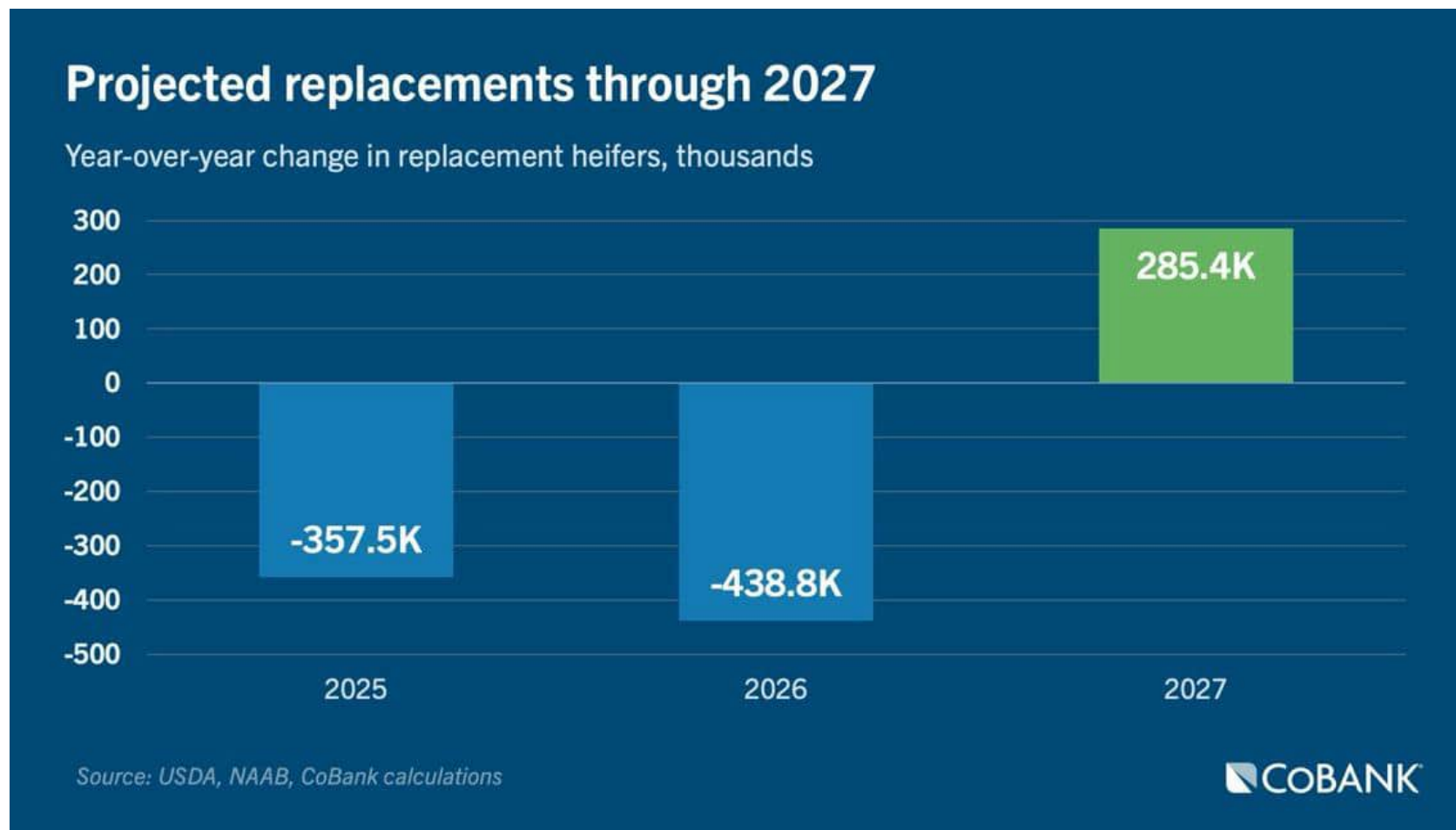
Beef-on-dairy

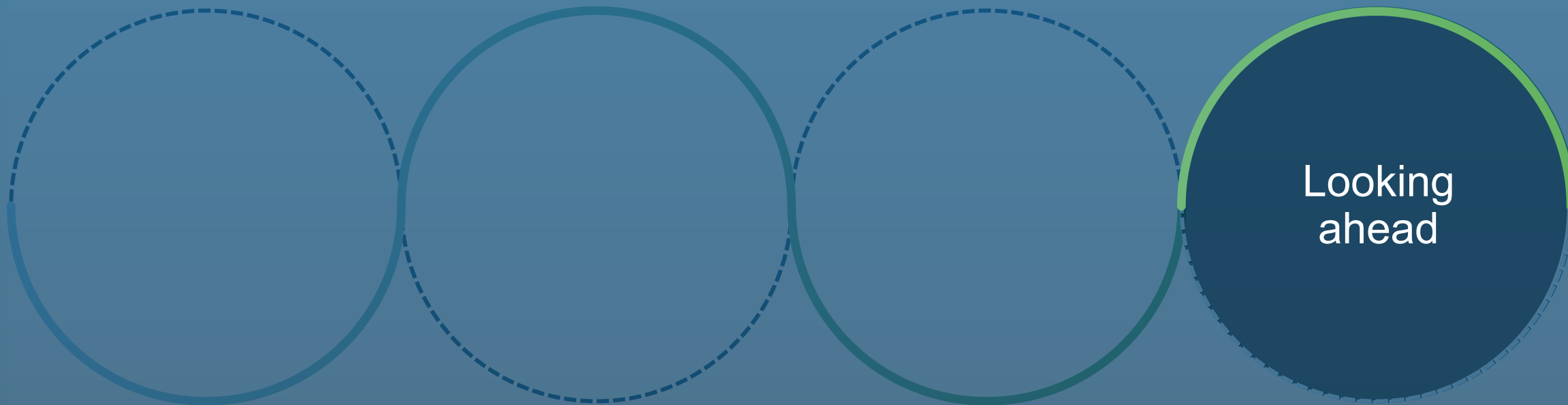
In millions of head



Dairy replacements will shrink further until 2027

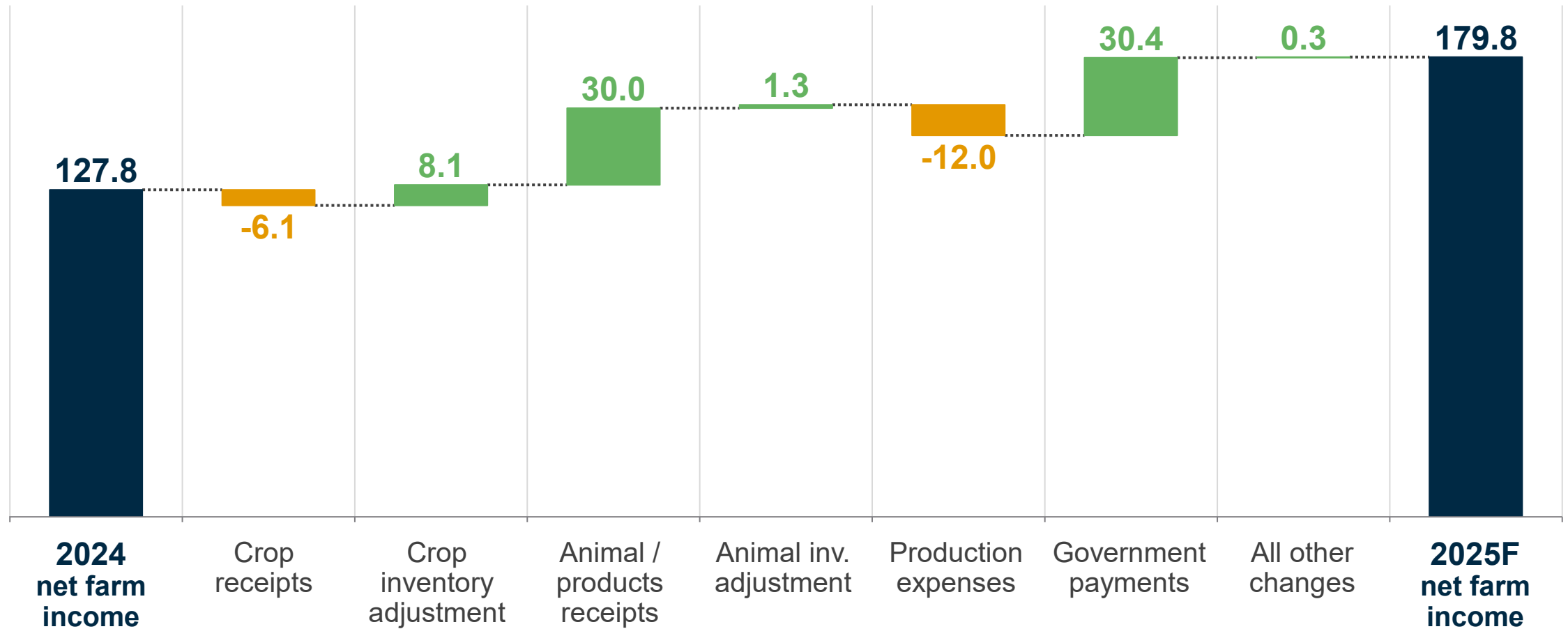
Dairy replacements available to enter the milking string on U.S. dairy farm (year over year)





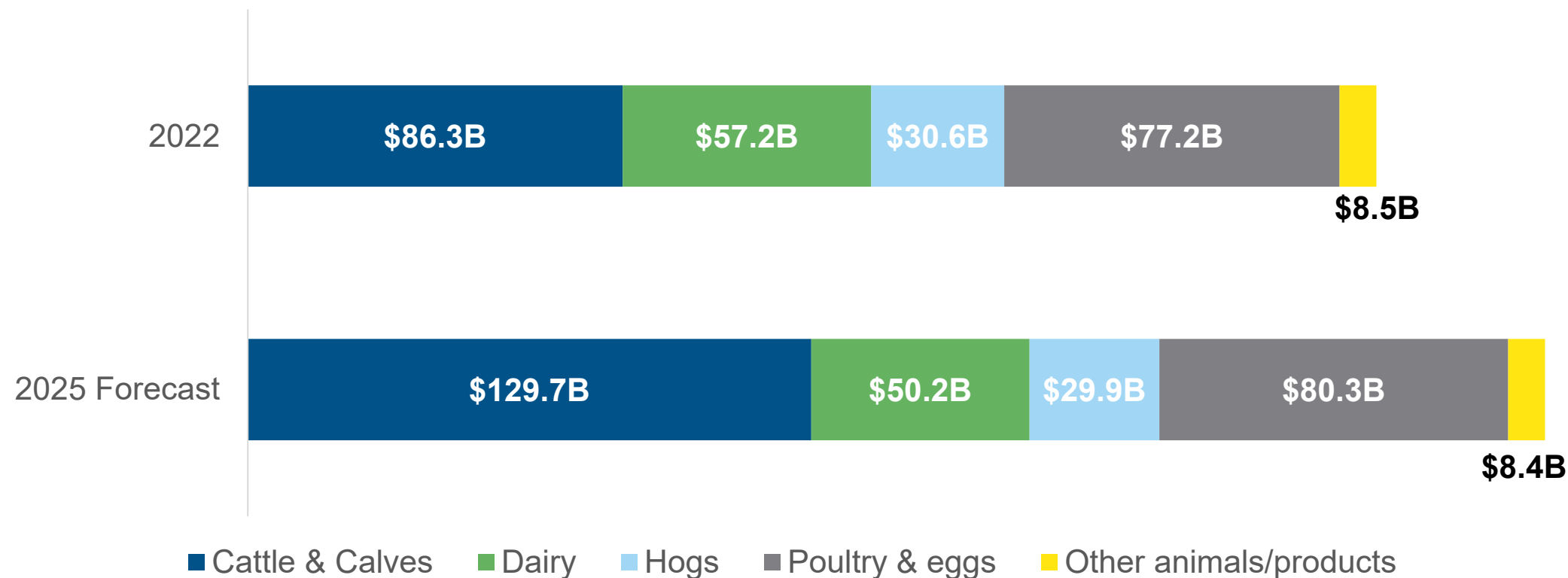
Net farm income sees \$52B increase from 2024

Net farm income (billion dollars)



Cattle and poultry are driving livestock gross income growth

U.S. animal / animal product cash receipts



Largest dairy cow herd in 30 years

Monthly dairy cow inventory



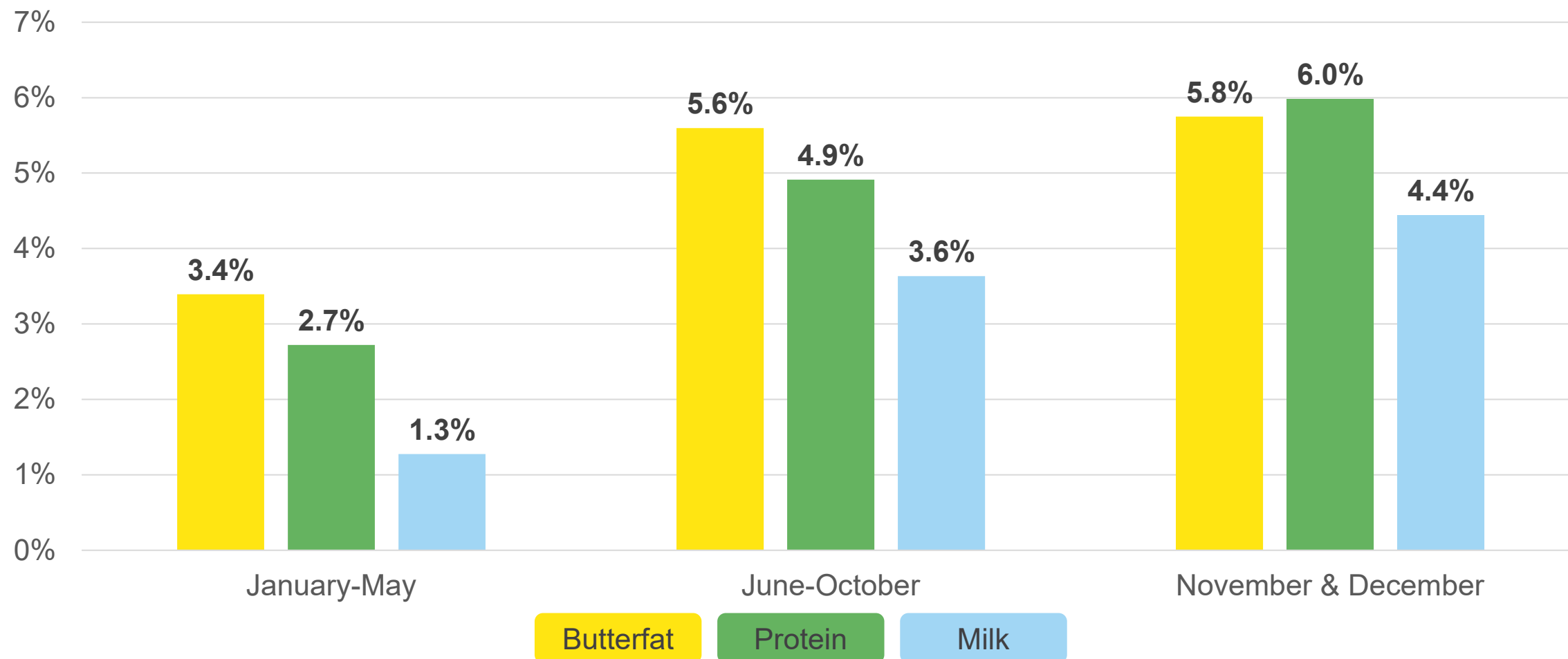
Why cow numbers and milk may not contract quickly

Pennsylvania beef-on-dairy calf pricing (price per calf)

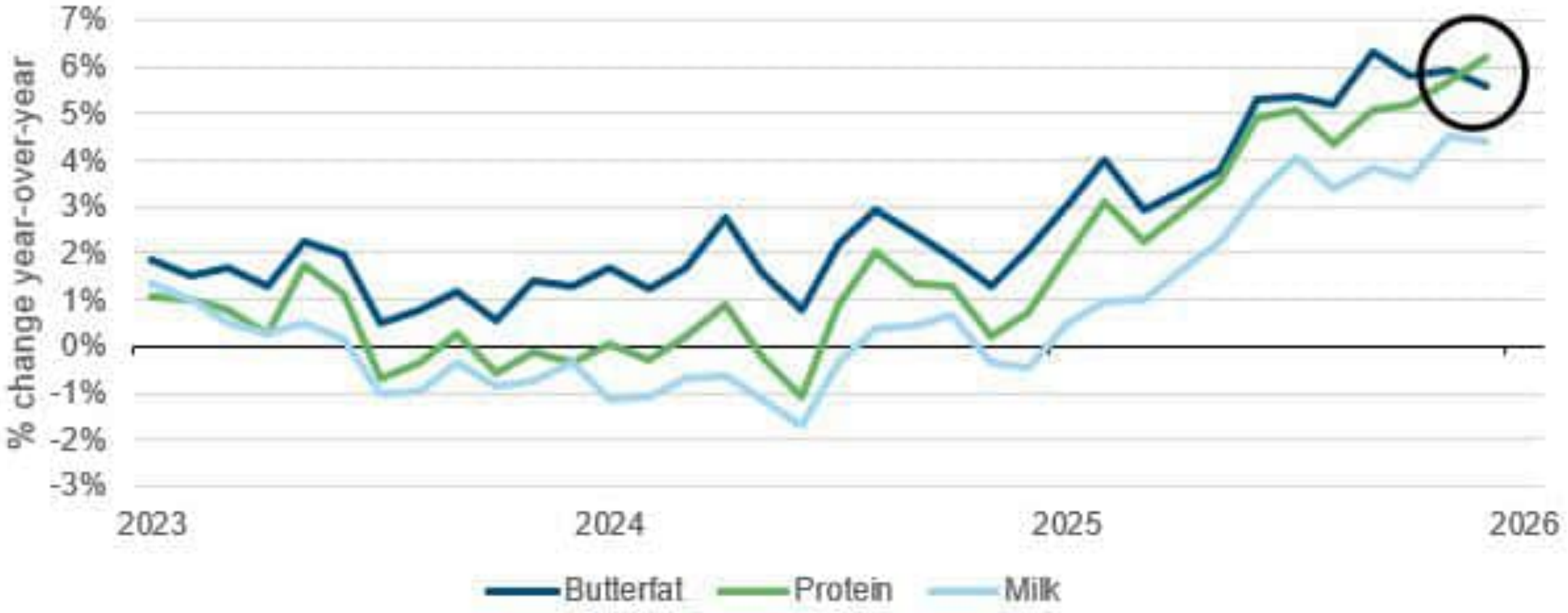


Butterfat continues to outpace milk and protein

% change year-over-year



Growth in protein outpaced butterfat in December 2025



Source: USDA-NASS and FMMO data. Presentation by Corey Geiger and Abbi Prins, CoBank.

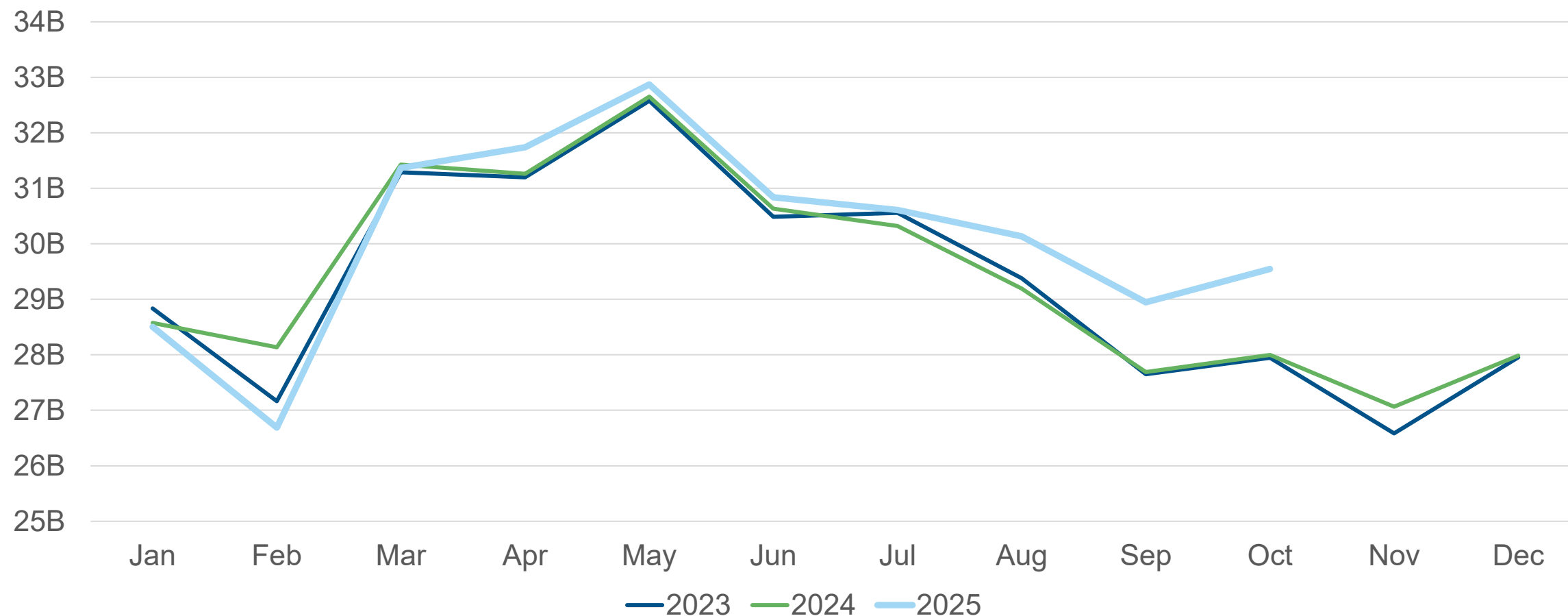
Global Dairy Trade (GDT) pricing fell for 5 months before rebound

Average weighted price (in USD per MT)



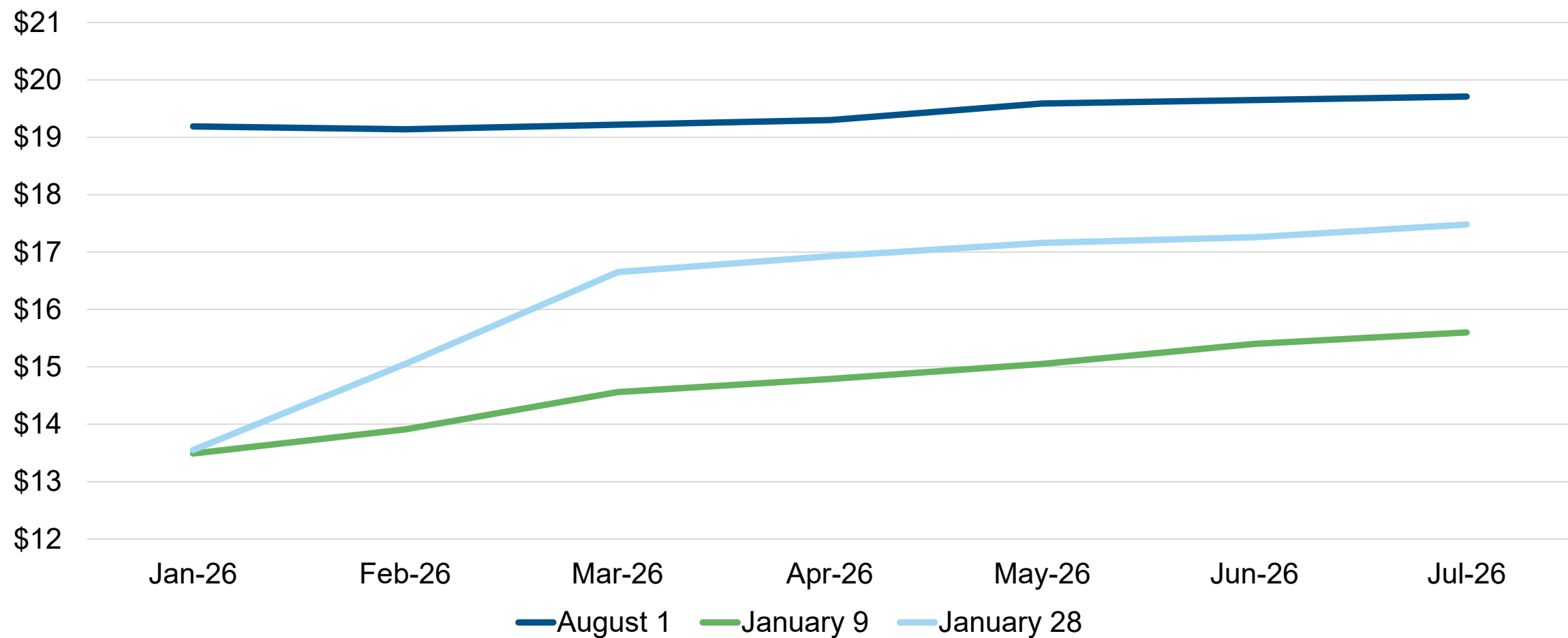
EU milk production has been moving higher

EU milk production (pounds)



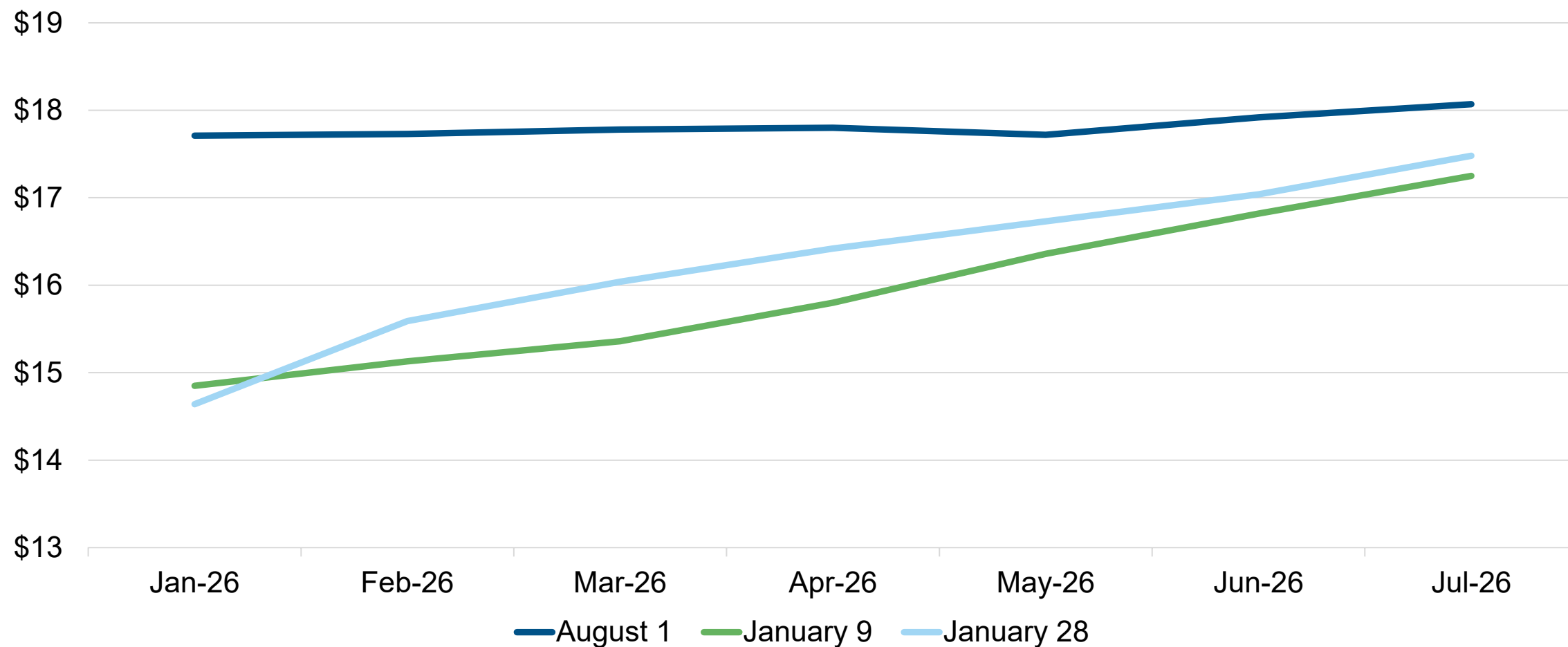
CME Class IV futures quickly turned bearish

Class IV Milk (in \$ per hundredweight)



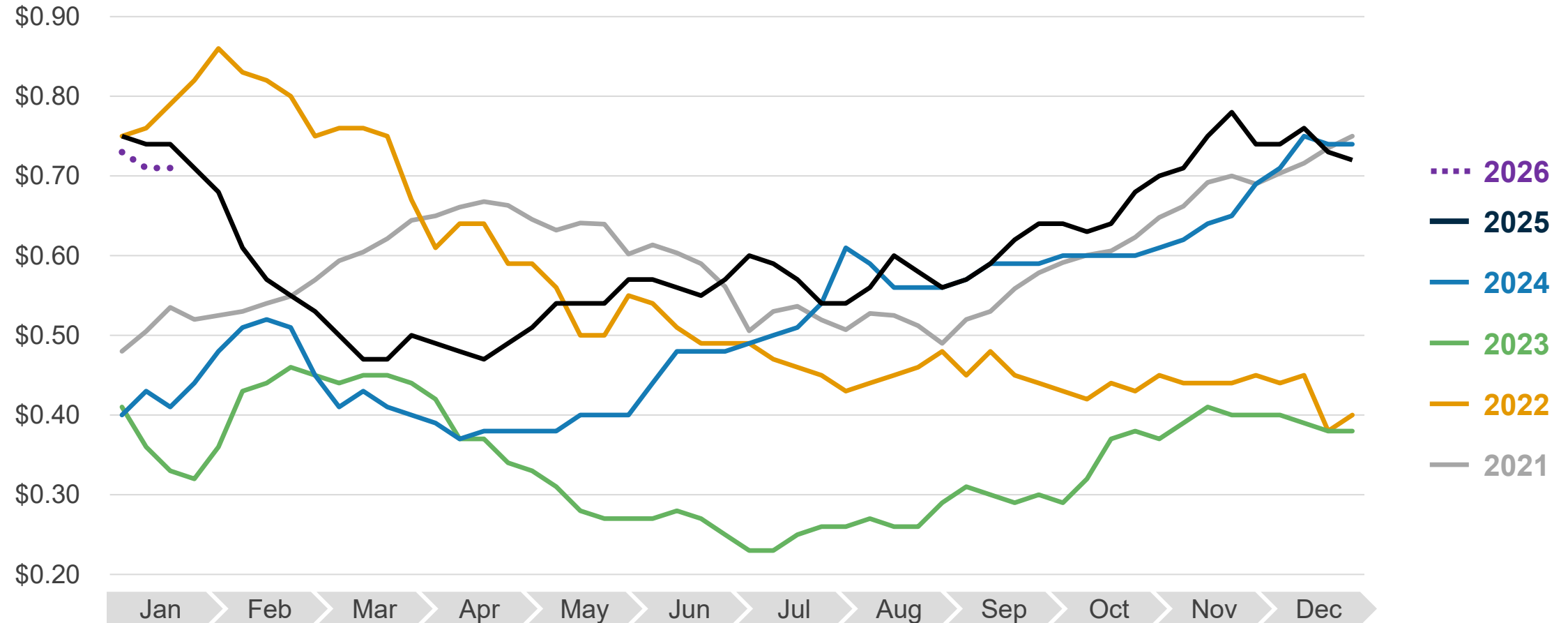
Class III Milk Futures Have Turned Lower

Class III Milk (in \$ per hundredweight)



Whey values keep growing driven by consumer demand

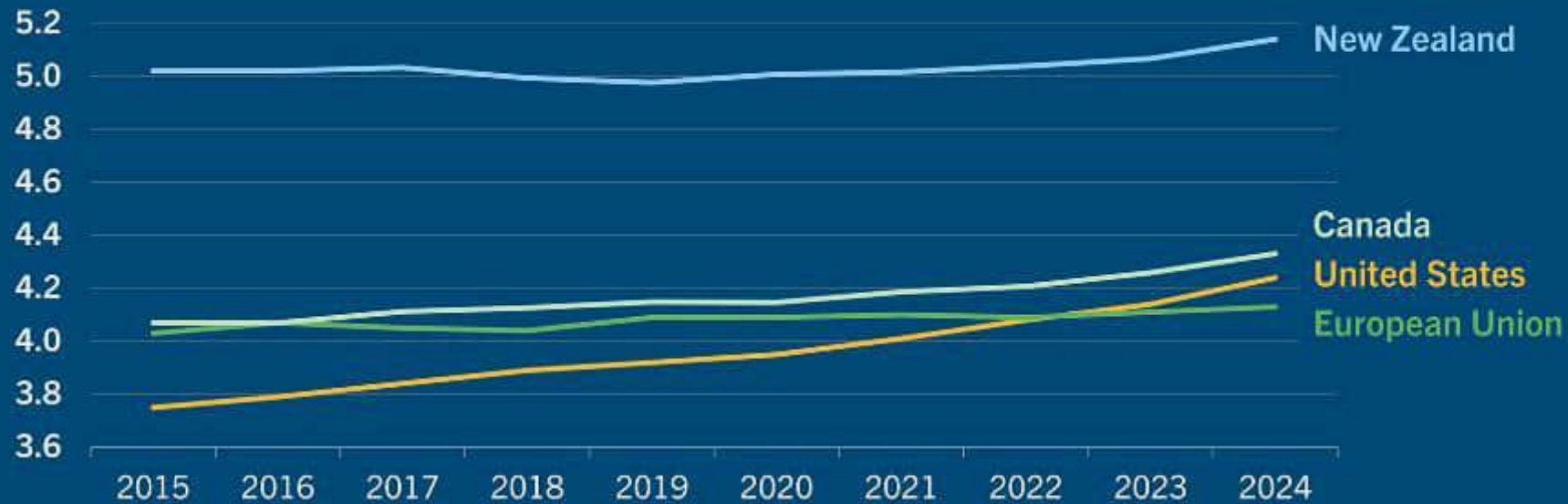
CME weekly average cash dry whey prices (dollars per pound)



U.S. butterfat percentages have grown over 13% in past decade

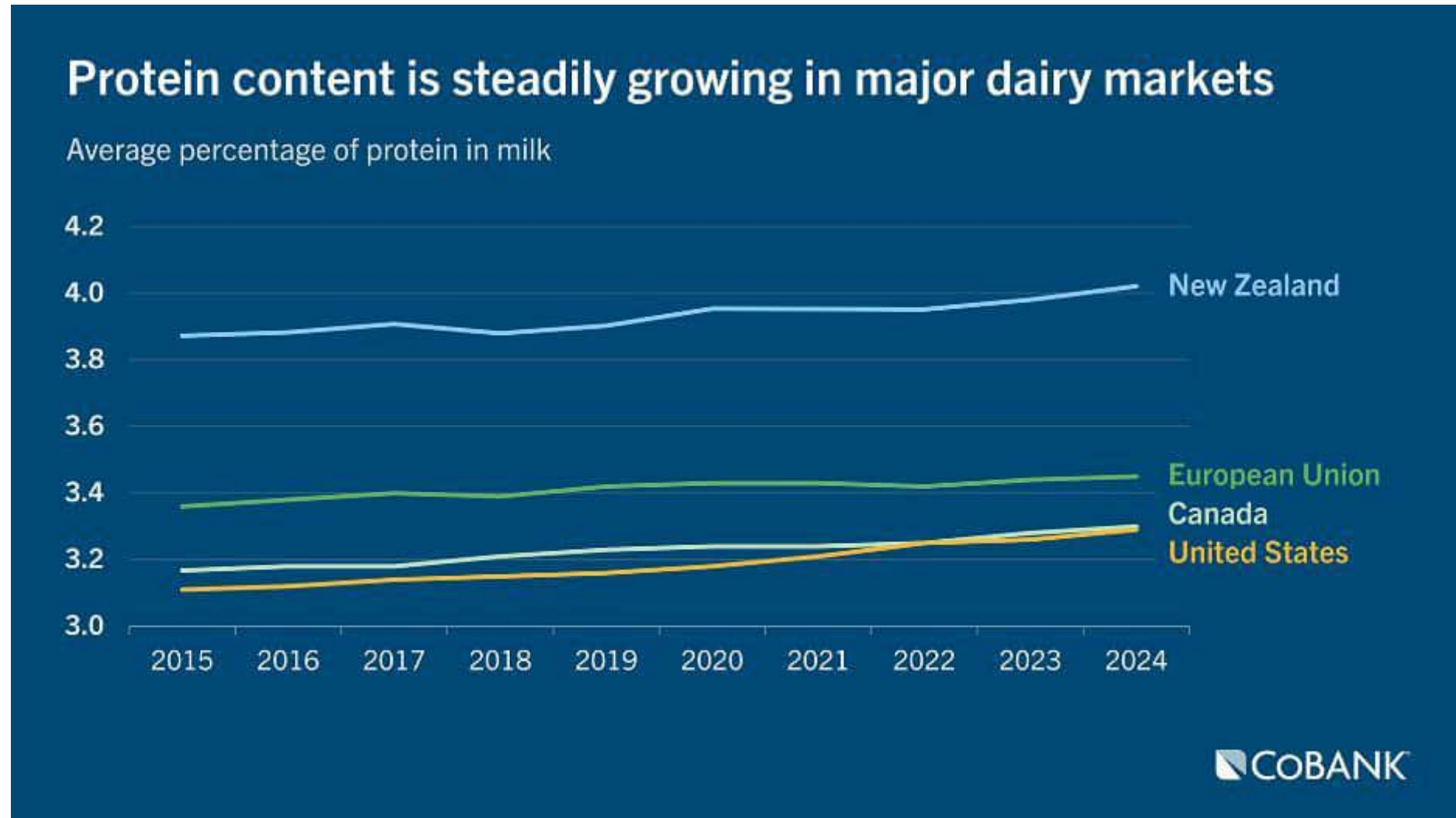
Butterfat levels are growing for the second and third ranked dairy exporters

Average percentage of butterfat in milk

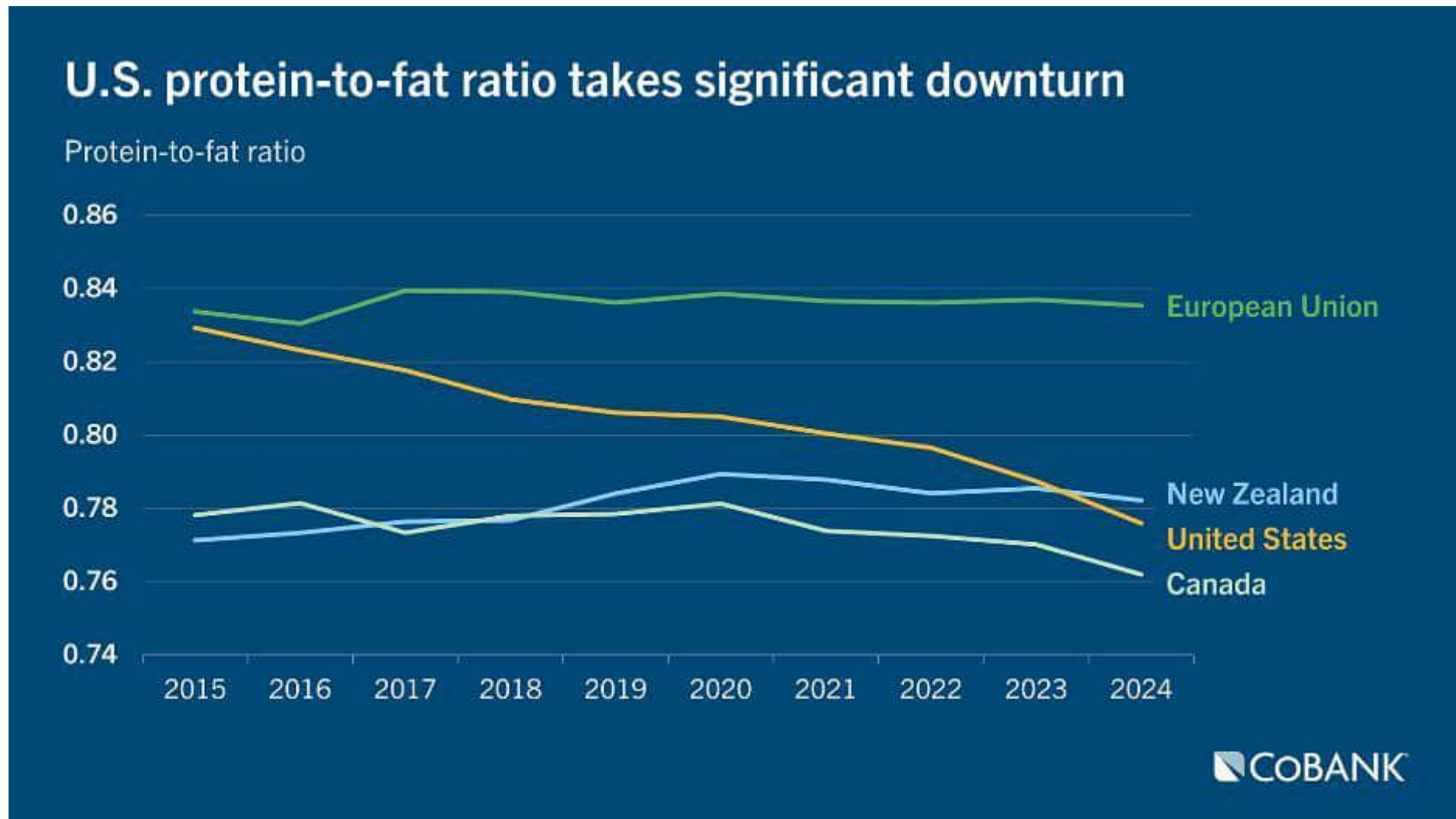


COBANK

U.S. protein percentages have grown 6% in past decade

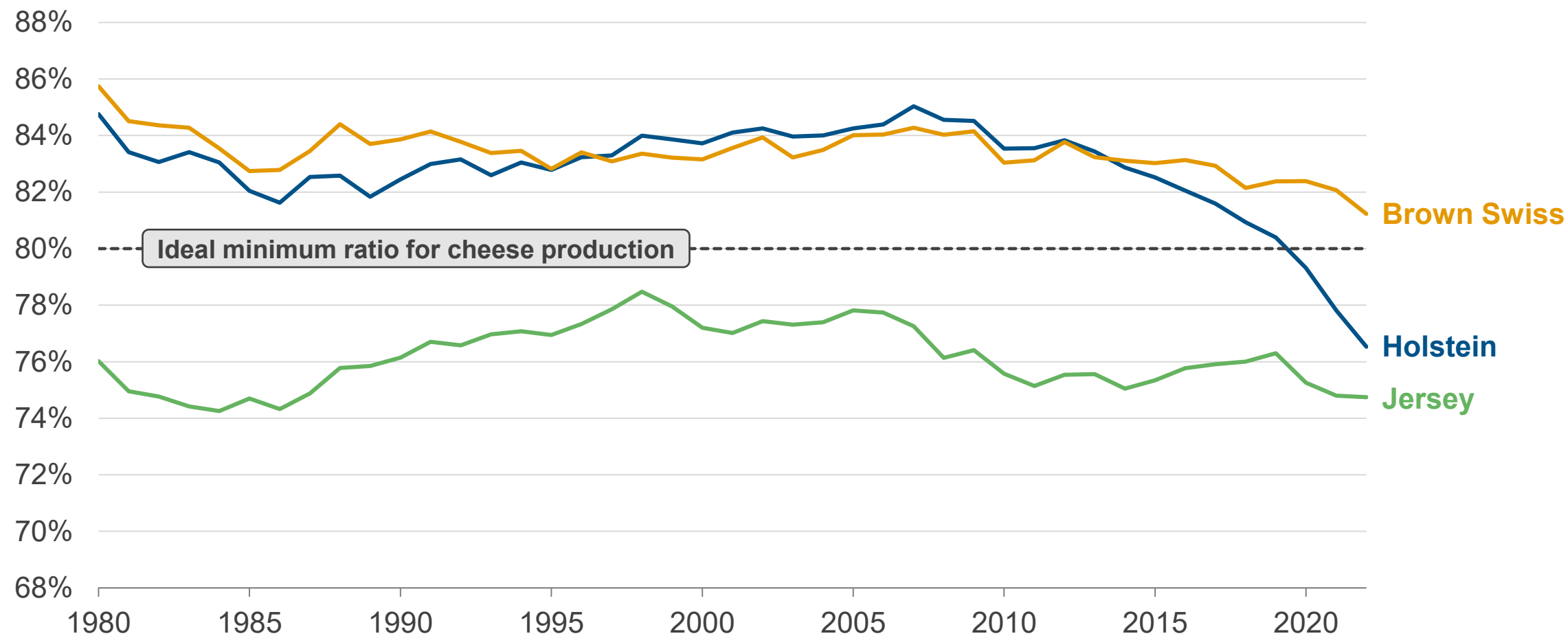


U.S. protein-to-fat ratio brings issues to cheesemakers



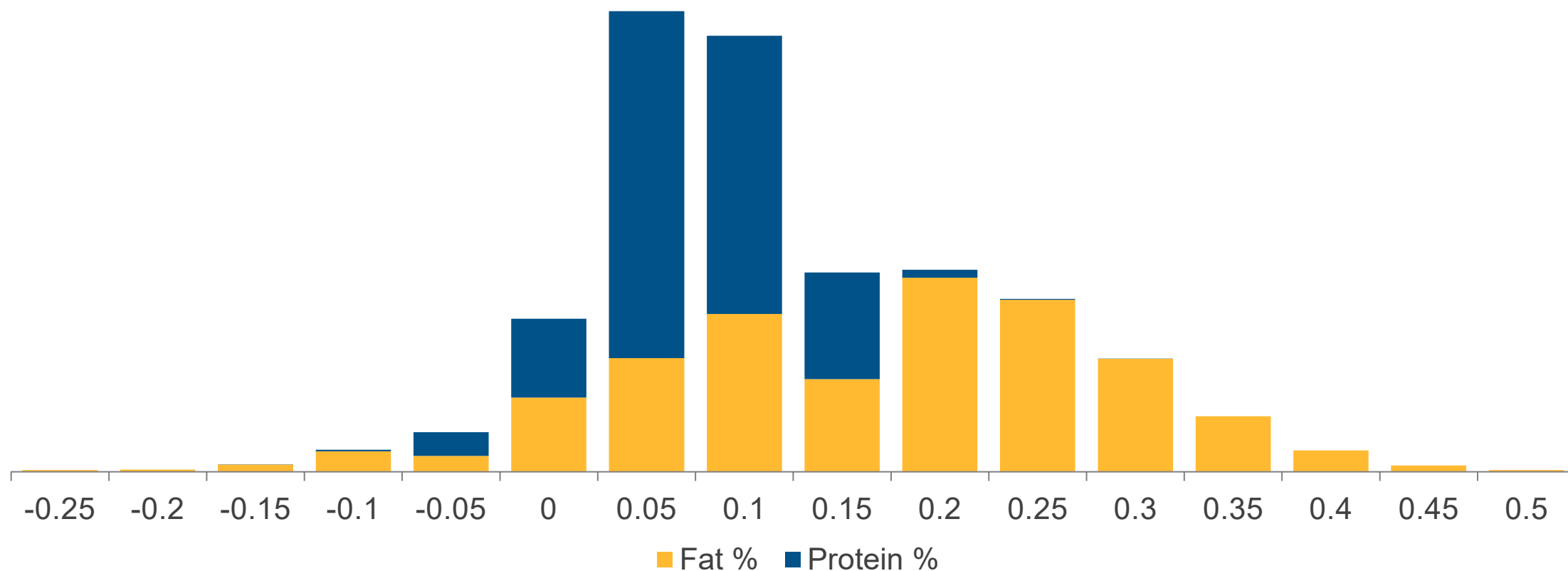
Protein to fat ratios have been steadily declining

Percentage of milk protein relative to milk fat



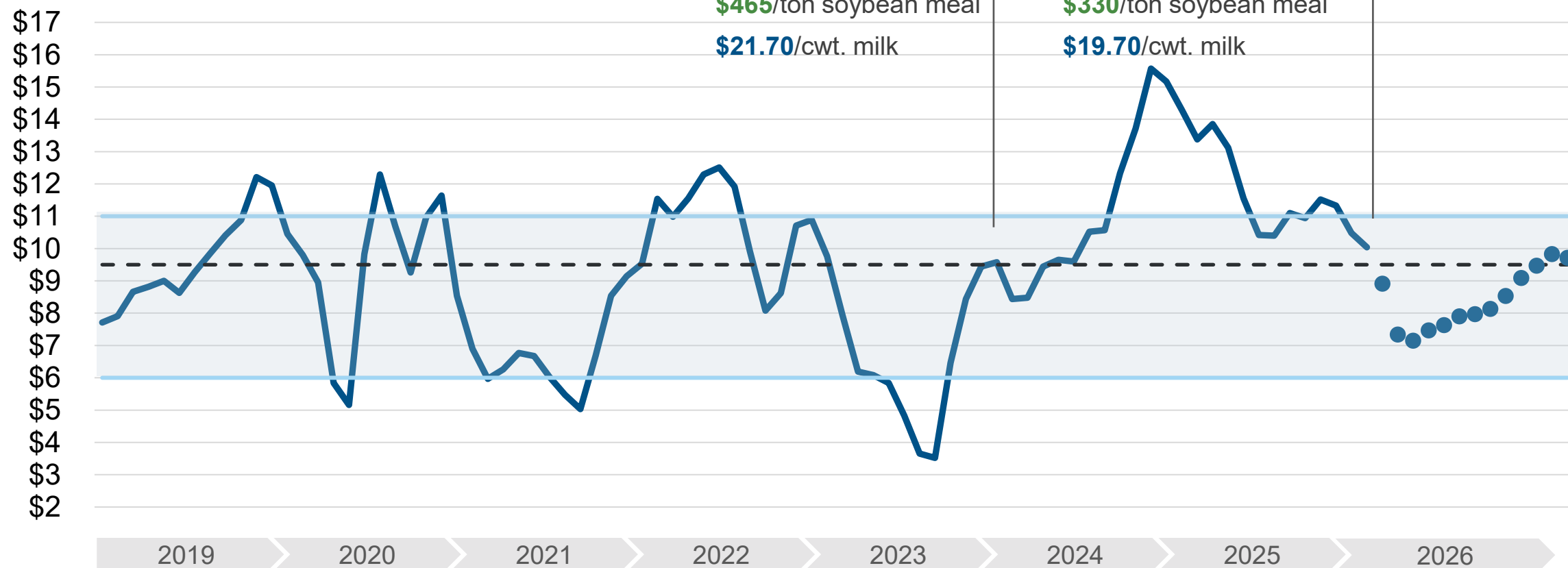
More genetic variation for fat than protein

Predicted transmitting ability (PTA) for fat and protein percentages of Holstein A.I. bulls born since 2020. (62% of contemporary butterfat gains have been genetics – number climbs to 72% for protein.)



Dairy margins to be hindered until milk price rebound

Actual and forecast dairy margin
(dollars per cwt.)



Key themes



Dairy is a growing food category

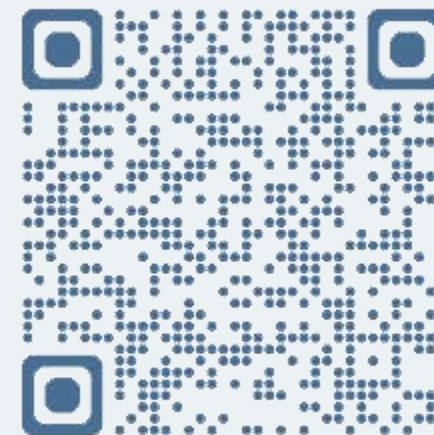


Historic growth in milk components



Beef brings more to dairy

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2026 Dairy Industry Outlook

Corey Geiger

Lead Dairy Economist

Farm Credit East
January 29, 2026

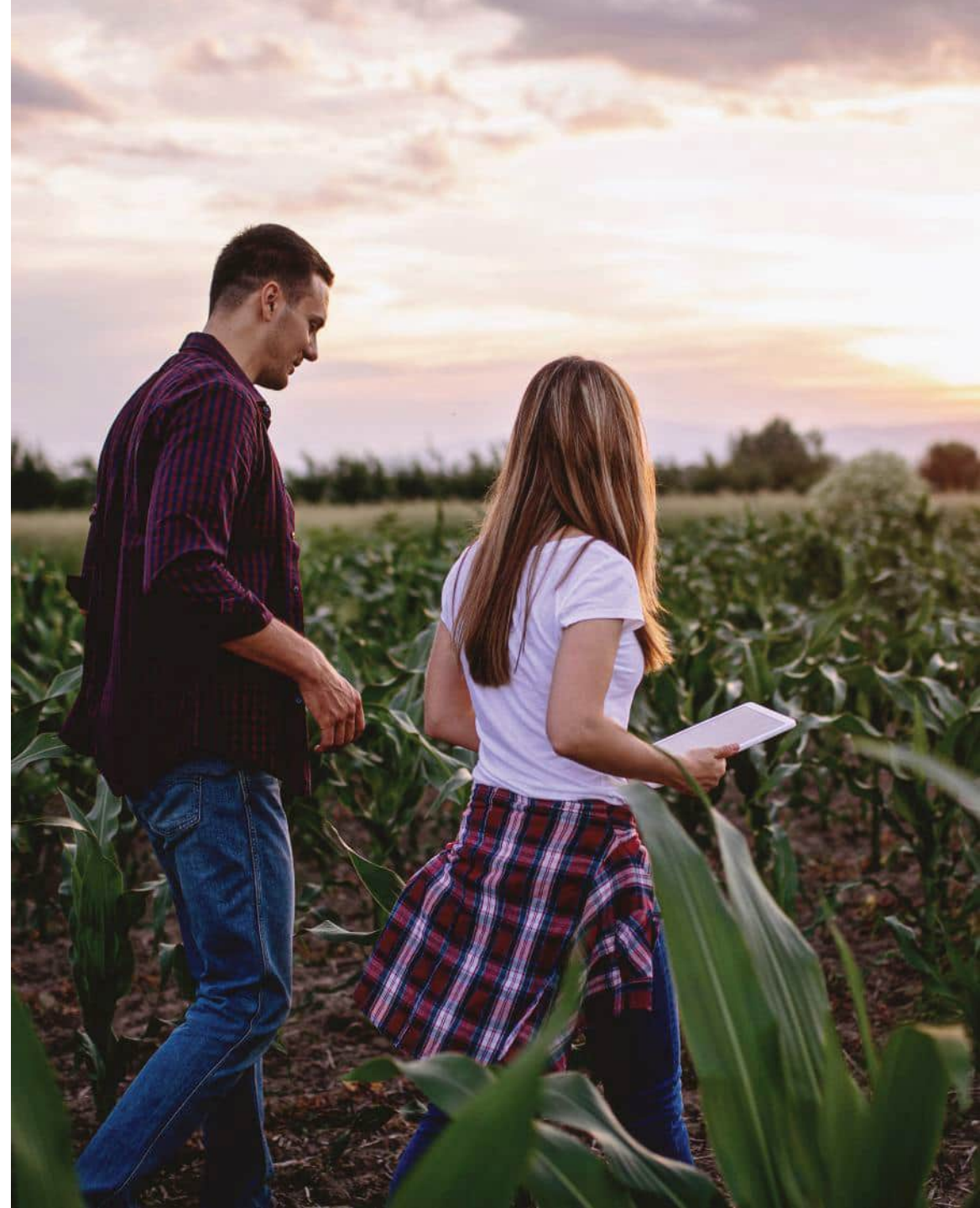




Risk Management: Planning for 2026



January 29, 2026



Turning Outlook Into Action



Volatility is the new normal



2026 planning = protecting revenue

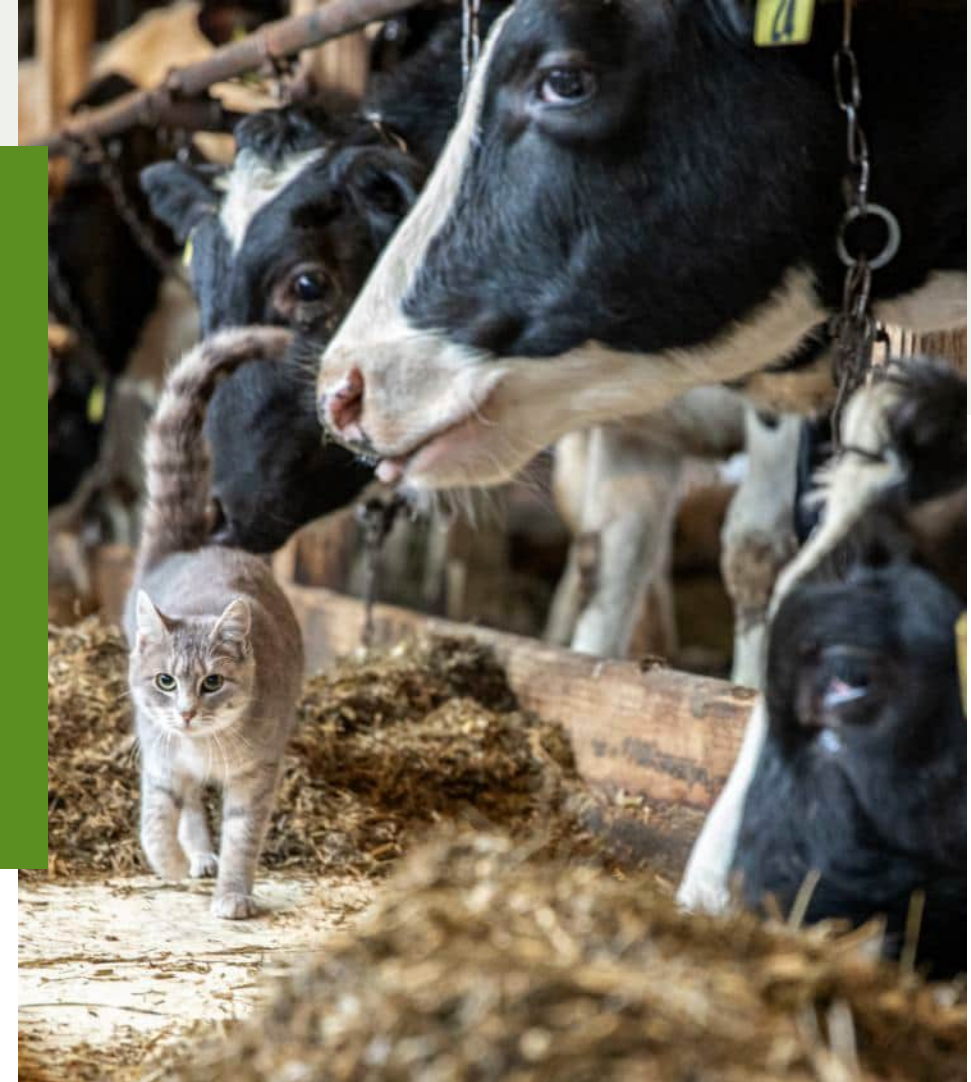


Risk management supports stability



Risk Management

- Strategies to protect against market volatility, price fluctuations and input costs
- Protection Tools:
 - Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC)
 - Dairy Revenue Protection (DRP)
 - Livestock Gross Margin Dairy (LGM-Dairy)
 - Livestock Risk Protection ★
 - Hedging and futures options

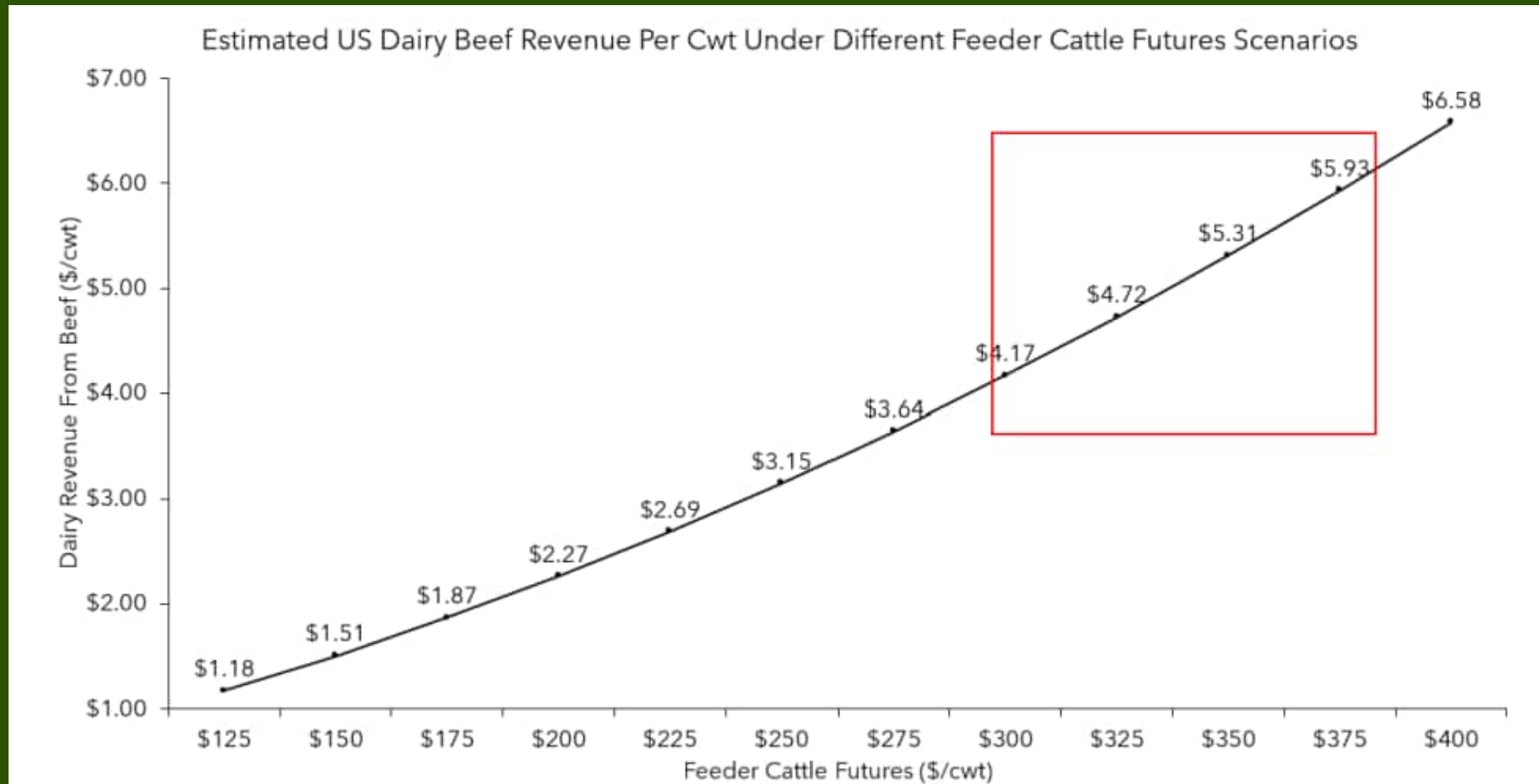


Dairy Revenue Protection

- Protects against revenue declines
- Highly customizable
- Creates revenue floor on milk

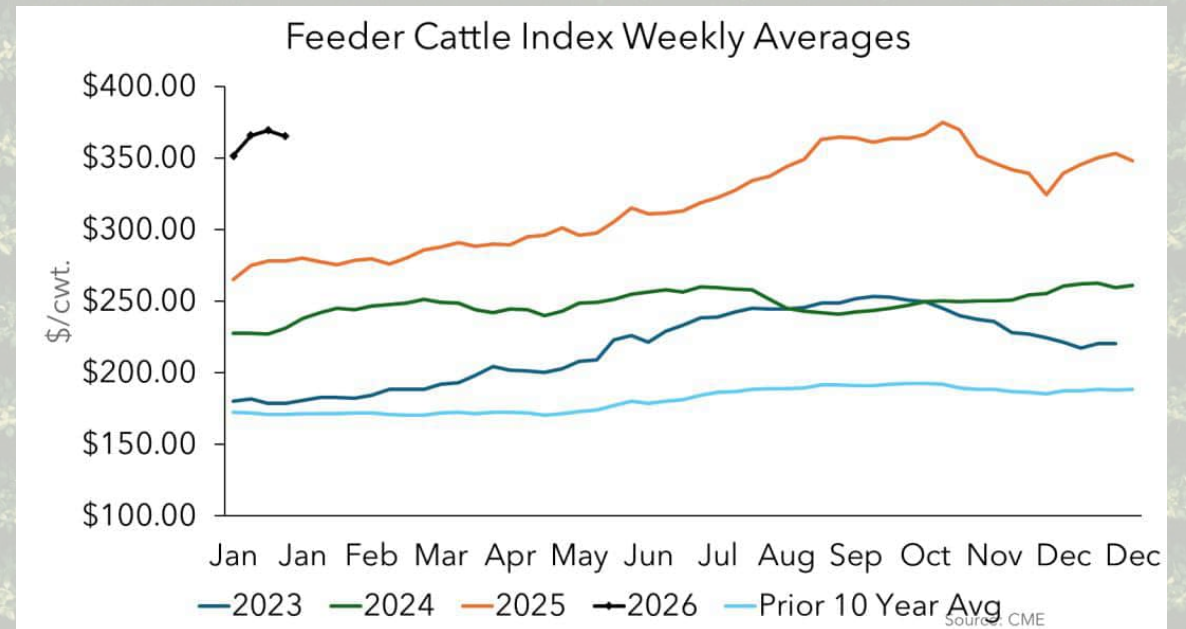


Beef Income: Key Driver



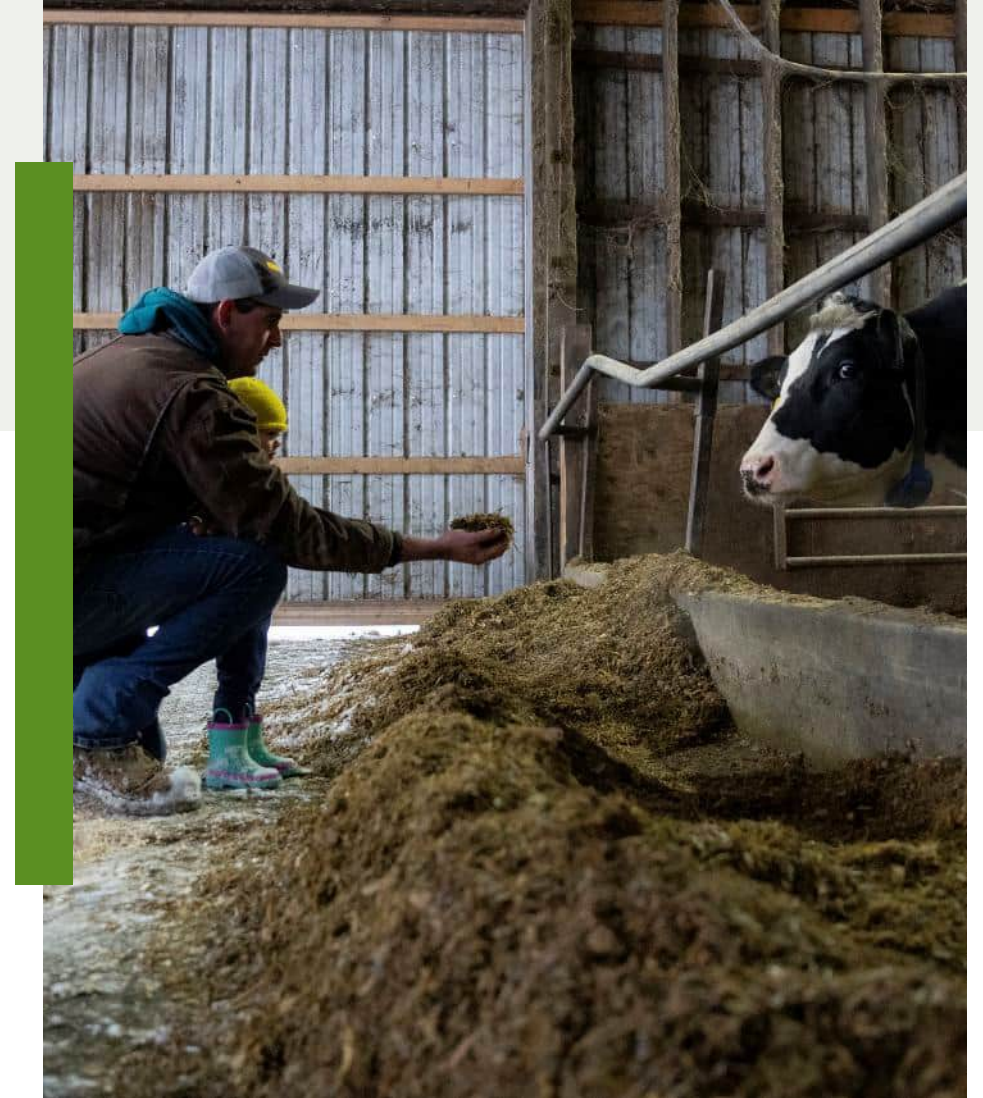
Livestock Risk Protection

- Protects a floor on cattle prices
 - Dairy beef cross calves
 - Beef calves
 - Cull cows
- Customizable protection



Building Risk Management Resilience

- Stabilizes income in times of uncertainty
- Supports diversification strategies
- Adapts to evolving trade policies
- Encourages proactive financial planning
- Strengthen farm business resilience



Planning for 2026

- ☒ Understand risk management
- ☐ Assess your risks (beyond milk)
- ☐ Develop mitigation strategies
- ☐ Implement and budget
- ☐ Update your business plan
- ☐ Monitor and review





Important Dates

- 
- Dairy Margin Coverage
 - February 26, 2026
 - Dairy Revenue Protection & Livestock Risk Protection
 - Sign up: now
 - Transfer by June 30, 2026
 - Spring Crop Insurance
 - March 15, 2026

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Action Plan



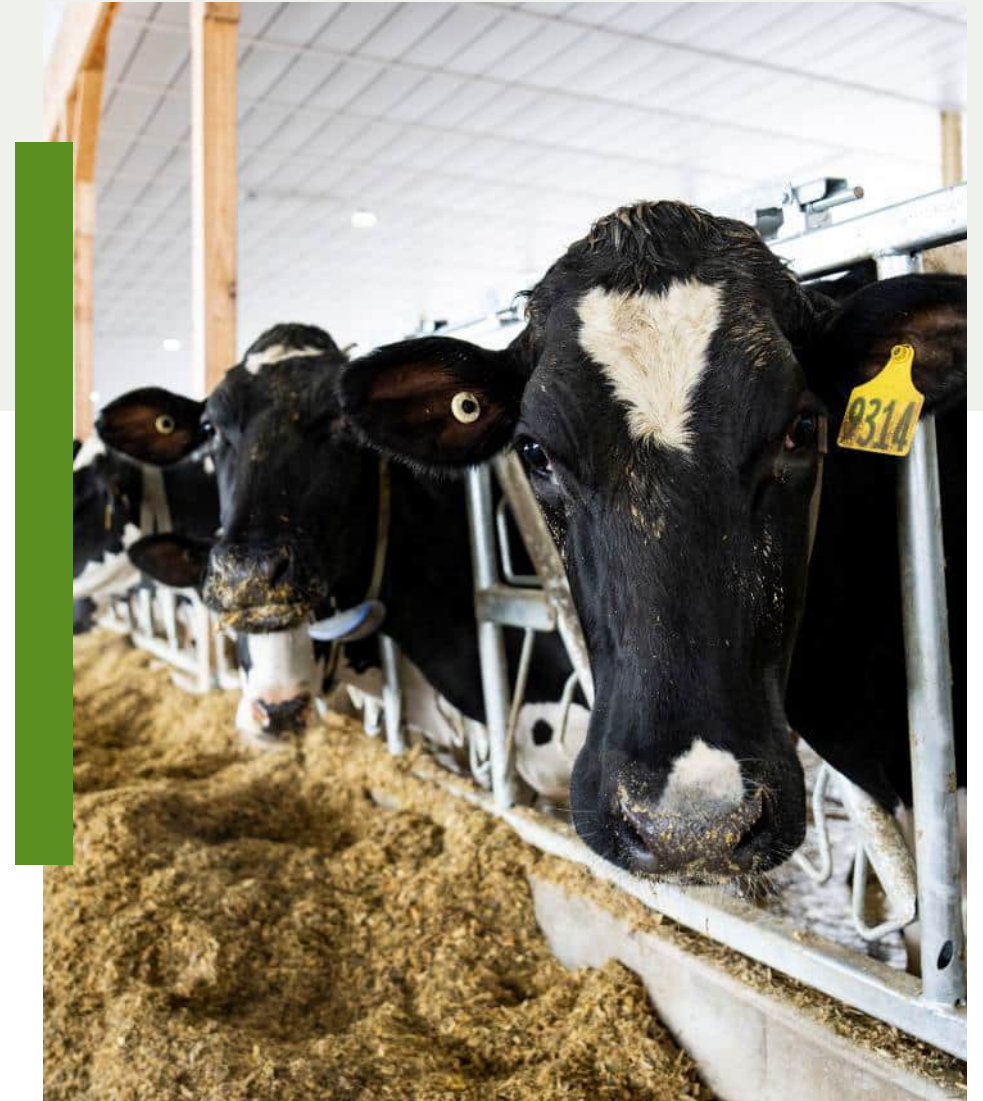
Review your strategy



Identify gaps, evaluate & adjust



Coordinate with your team



Questions?



Thank you!

