In Brief:

The U.S. dairy industry takes pride in the way its rich heritage of land stewardship and long-term commitment to sustainable dairy farming strengthens the industry’s economic, environmental and social contributions. The dairy cow plays a key role in an environmentally-responsible, sustainable U.S. food system that serves the needs of current and future generations.

Environmental Stewardship: A commitment to continuous improvement

— The U.S. dairy community has reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 63% over the past 60 years, and has set a voluntary goal to reduce GHG emissions by 25% by 2020.

— The U.S. dairy industry accounts for approximately 2% of the total U.S. GHG emissions.

— Since 1944, milk production has quadrupled, but uses:
  - 90% less cropland
  - 76% less manure
  - 65% less water

— The U.S. dairy industry uses anaerobic digester systems to convert manure and commercial food waste into electricity, fuel for cars and trucks, and fertilizer and fiber.

— In 2014, the number of operating anaerobic digester systems in the U.S. reached a total of 247 on-farm systems with 82% located on dairy farms.

— Applying manure back to the land maintains soil fertility and reduces the need for synthetic fertilizer.

— By returning most nutrients from their feed back to the land, U.S. dairy cows create an efficient nutrient cycle. This recycling of nutrients helps make producing crops more sustainable.

— On dairy farms, water is typically re-used as many as five or six times. For example, water used to clean milking parlors is re-used to clean production areas and then to irrigate fields.

— From 2013 to 2014, milk production increased 2.4% to 91 billion litres. The rate per cow, at 9,809 liters, was 195 litres above 2013.

— To maintain a healthy and clean environment, many dairy farmers voluntarily participate in research efforts to help measure and monitor air quality more accurately.
Social Responsibility: A commitment to future generations

— In 2013, 9.2 million dairy cows on 46,960 licensed dairy farms produced 88.6 billion litres of milk.
— 90% of U.S. schools provide low-fat and/or non-fat milk to their students.
— 18% of protein in the American diet is provided by dairy products.
— In 2014, 6,943 new milk, cheese and yogurt dairy product claims were introduced. Of these, 11.7% were low-calorie, low-fat, no-transfat, low-sodium, low-sugar, no added sugar and/or sugar free claims.
— According to 2013 Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) statistics, the rates of injuries on dairy farms and in dairy plants declined for the second year running.
— U.S. dairy farmers work closely with animal nutritionists and veterinarians to make sure their cows have the nutritious feed they need.
— U.S. dairy farms keep their cows comfortable in many ways, including using fans and water misters to keep cows cool during the summer.
— In 2014, the Great American Milk Drive, a charitable organization led by U.S. milk companies and dairy farmers, delivered 1.1 million litres of milk (and its nine essential nutrients) to families.

Economic Profitability: A commitment to long-term viability

— In 2011, industry stakeholders invested nearly 54,000 hours, reflecting an estimated $6.2 million in business value.
— U.S. dairy products are affordable and readily available.
— Milk is the lowest-cost food source of dietary calcium.
— Adequate dairy consumption can lower risk of certain chronic diseases, which has the potential to lower healthcare costs by as much as $200 billion over a five-year period.
— Dairy farms and businesses support rural economies in all 50 U.S. states and Puerto Rico.
— In 2012, 169 dairy farms completed energy audits with associated energy cost savings estimated at more than $600,000.
— Since 2011, the Farm Energy Efficiency program has helped promote nearly 900 on-farm energy audits, resulting in more than $2 million in potential cost savings.

Resources

U.S. Dairy’s Environmental Footprint, The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy
How One Cow Contributes to a Sustainable Food System, The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy

Video resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kemGWE4dd-M

For more information please see: thesustainabilityalliance.us or contact info@thesustainabilityalliance.us