

# U.S. DAIRY

## A GLOBAL LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY

### In Brief:

- Each day, the U.S. dairy community strives to earn a place on tables around the world while fulfilling commitments that will sustainably nourish generations to come. A long legacy of dairy stewardship has culminated in the United States being recognized as having the world's lowest emissions intensity per liter of milk produced while being the largest single country producer of cow's milk. Continued investments in new technologies and regenerative practices further reduces dairy's environmental footprint, making U.S. Dairy a valuable contributor to sustainable food systems and a source of choice for consumers around the world that want nutritious, high quality dairy products produced in a responsible manner.

### Environmental Stewardship: A commitment to continuous improvement

- In 2008, the U.S. dairy industry was the first in the food agricultural sector to conduct a [full life cycle assessment \(LCA\)](#) at a national scale. That LCA, which focused on fluid milk, showed that U.S. dairy accounts for just 2% of total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, 5.1% of U.S. water use and 3.7% of U.S. farmland.
- A [Journal of Animal Science report](#) that found that the environmental footprint of U.S. milk production from field to farm gate shrunk significantly between 2007 and 2017, involving 30 percent less water, 21 percent less land, and a 19 percent smaller carbon footprint while producing 20 percent less manure.
- According to a [recent FAO report](#), in the decade since 2005, North America (where the U.S. is the primary dairy producer) was the only region in the world to increase milk production while also reducing absolute emissions, making its **GHG intensity for dairy products the lowest in the world.**
  - North America reduced emissions intensity by 2.2% per year, even as milk production increased 2.1%. In addition, total emissions decreased by 5% over the entire time period.
- In 2020, U.S. Dairy set aggressive new environmental sustainability goals to achieve carbon neutrality or better, optimize water usage and improve water quality by 2050.
  - To reach these goals, the U.S. dairy supply chain is working together to spur new technology and incentivize science-based research and data collection while expanding practices, resources and tools to support all farmers, cooperatives and processors.
  - The [Net Zero Initiative](#) is an industry-wide effort that will help U.S. dairy farms of all geographies and sizes continue to implement new technologies and adopt economically-viable practices in feed production, cow care, energy efficiency and manure management – making progress toward GHG emissions reductions and significant improvements in water quality and quantity and farmer livelihood, from field to farmgate.

INDUSTRY-WIDE GOALS		
		
Become carbon neutral or better	Optimize water use while maximizing recycling	Improve water quality by optimizing utilization of manure and nutrients



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## Social Responsibility: A commitment to future generations

- The U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment – initiated in 2018 and adopted by 32 companies representing 74% of U.S. milk production as of December 2020 – is a social responsibility pledge through which the U.S. dairy community demonstrates progress in important areas like animal care, environmental stewardship, food safety/traceability and community contributions.
- Animal care has always been a priority for the U.S. dairy community. Today, 99% of the domestic milk supply comes from farms that participate in the National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Animal Care program, setting high standards for animal care, housing and antibiotic stewardship. FARM is:
  - The first livestock animal care program to become internationally certified by meeting the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Animal Welfare Management standard.
  - Part of U.S. Dairy’s One Health approach to ensuring that science-based stewardship informs on-farm socially-responsible principles for exceptional care of animals and the planet.
- U.S. Dairy is helping communities thrive and make dairy accessible to those who need it by focusing on product innovation that will fuel wellness – mind and body – with nutrition and versatility for global cuisines.
  - Healthy eating patterns that include dairy foods are linked to [reduced risk of chronic diseases](#), including [cardiovascular disease](#) and [type 2 diabetes in adults](#), as well as [improved bone health](#). Furthermore, consumption of dairy foods is linked to health benefits like [reduced inflammation](#), improved digestive health and healthy immune systems.
- Recent modeling published in the [Journal of Dairy Science](#) assessed the impacts of completely removing dairy cows from the U.S., thus removing dairy from all American diets. [The results showed](#) no material decrease in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions but a notable threat to human health, as nutrients provided by dairy are not easily replaced by fruits, vegetables, nuts and pulses (beans, lentils, peas).

## Economic Profitability: A commitment to long-term viability

- U.S. Dairy is diverse, representing more than 31,000 farms, 9 million cows and 6 million hectares which generated 2.1 million MT (milk solids equivalent) worth \$6.6 billion USD of exports in 2020.
- Rules-based international trade makes food systems more resilient and better able to withstand increasing climatic pressures and unexpected crises by diversifying the food and agriculture supply chain. This has a positive ripple effect that encourages job creation both locally and internationally for each part of the global supply chain.
  - Not all environments are suitable for efficient, cost effective, and ecologically sustainable production of all products but U.S. Dairy export allows countries with lower efficiency to have access to safe, dependable and affordable source of high-quality, nutrient-rich dairy that has been produced with the lowest environmental impact and highest efficiency in the world.
- U.S. Dairy is committed to collaborating with multi-discipline leaders and organizations to accelerate bold action and demonstrate how dairy farming contributes to global sustainable development goals.

### Sources

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Videos: [Net Zero Initiative](#); National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management ([FARM](#)) Program

Infographics: [Sustainable Ingredient Solutions](#)

Handout: [U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment](#)

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