

Sustainably nourishing the world’s growing population by caring for people and planet

U.S. dairy farmers and the dairy community have long been stewards of land, air and water resources, and they are passionate about continuously improving to meet global needs.

Dairy’s environmental stewardship is demonstrated through a focus on innovation and efficiency. Thanks to increasingly modern and advanced dairy farming and processing practices, the dairy industry has made continual progress and is dedicated to doing more. Dairy farmers and companies are working harder than ever to mitigate their impact on climate change and protect limited resources and vital ecosystems for current and future generations.

U.S. Dairy’s Carbon and Water Footprints

U.S. dairy contributes ~2% total U.S. GHG emissions and uses ~5% of total U.S. water withdrawal.

Fluid Milk GHG Emissions		WATER USAGE
% contribution by life cycle stage		
Feed production	20.3	93.5% crop irrigation for dairy feed 3.5% milk production 1% processing 1.9% other uses
Milk production	51.5	
Processing	5.7	
Packaging	3.5	
Transportation	7.7	
Retail	6.5	
Consumer	4.9	

Sources: Thoma et al., Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Fluid Milk, 2010; Henderson et al., U.S. Fluid Milk Comprehensive LCA, 2012.

VISION & GOALS

U.S. Dairy is an Environmental Solution

By 2050, U.S. dairy collectively commits to:



BECOME CARBON NEUTRAL OR BETTER



OPTIMIZE WATER USE WHILE MAXIMIZING RECYCLING



IMPROVE WATER QUALITY BY OPTIMIZING UTILIZATION OF MANURE AND NUTRIENTS

OVERARCHING STRATEGIES



FOR FIELD AND FARM
U.S. Dairy Net Zero Initiative

An industry-wide collaboration to accelerate voluntary adoption of sustainability practices and technologies on farm by closing knowledge gaps, improving economic viability and increasing accessibility.



FOR PROCESSORS
Processor Working Group

Led by the Innovation Center, a working group of 45 participants representing 25 processing organizations convenes regularly and engages in facility-focused workstreams for GHG emissions, water, packaging and waste to drive action and demonstrate progress toward the goals.

COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY

Quantitative and credible measures of progress will be reported every five years.

2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals

Setting industry-wide goals helps accelerate collective action. Representative leadership across the dairy value chain, including farmers, cooperatives, processors, retailers and other stakeholders, led the 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals development process, which included an extensive stakeholder and public comment period.

Following the yearlong consultation process, the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy announced an ambitious new vision of dairy as an environmental solution, with goals in areas where dairy collectively has the greatest impact. The 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals encompass the field, dairy farm and

processing stages of the supply chain collectively and represent the industry’s commitment to reducing GHG footprint and water impacts. The goals focus on the most pressing areas of environmental sustainability and are consistent with the 2019 materiality assessment and the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment.

Not every farm, cooperative or processor is expected to reach each goal individually, but together the industry can leverage its diversity to meet them collectively. Progress toward the goals will be reported every five years, beginning in 2025. This reporting will also help reinforce technological and other advancements that can drive improvements, enable nimble adaptation and be scaled for maximum impact.