

# THE U.S. DAIRY STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



### What is the Stewardship Commitment?

The [U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment](#) (“Stewardship Commitment”) is U.S. dairy’s social responsibility pledge to consumers, customers and other stakeholders. The Stewardship Commitment is grounded in strong programs and standards focused on continuous improvement against shared social, environmental and economic priorities.

Through the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, 34 leading dairy companies – both cooperatives and processors -- representing more than 75% of U.S. milk production currently have aligned around and adopted the Stewardship Commitment.

### Why?

Transparency and authenticity about where food comes from and how it’s produced is essential today. U.S. dairy is committed to earn and build the trust of consumers and stakeholders. Complementing work at the individual company level, this collective and voluntary effort demonstrates U.S. leadership in the prevailing complex, competitive global marketplace.

### How?

Through the Stewardship Commitment, adopting companies will demonstrate progress against shared social responsibility priorities important to the dairy value chain and consumers. We will understand where we stand today through voluntary reporting mechanisms, and then aggregate that information to share with stakeholders as a reflection of the whole. This foundation also will allow us to form and work toward meaningful goals for the future.

### Who can adopt?

Both dairy cooperatives and dairy companies that make dairy ingredients and/or products may adopt the Stewardship Commitment. But the support and input of the entire chain – farmers, foodservice, retailers and stakeholders – will be critical to success.

### What does adoption mean?

Companies (cooperatives, processors and manufacturers) that adopt the Stewardship Commitment voluntarily meet defined criteria for important areas like the environment, animal care and food safety. By adopting the Stewardship Commitment, these companies affirm, quantify and communicate U.S. dairy’s longstanding values of responsible production, nourishing communities and continuous improvement.

### Specifically, what is required of adopting companies?

A company’s executive officer signs a document affirming that his/her company, in the exercise of its independent business judgment, commits to the priorities below in the following ways:

**Animal care:** Dairy cooperatives are enrolled and in good standing with the [National Dairy FARM Animal Care Program](#), and dairy processors source 100% of milk from FARM-enrolled farms.

**Environment:** Dairy cooperatives currently use or plan to use the FARM Environmental Stewardship Sampling Protocol to enroll farms (or enroll 100% of farms) in [FARM ES](#) to measure on-farm GHG and energy metrics.

**Traceability:** Dairy processors implement the voluntary [U.S. Dairy Traceability Guidelines](#).

**Community contribution:** Companies publicly report at least one community contribution metric.

**Engagement:** Companies are active members in the [Dairy Sustainability Alliance](#)®. They participate in voluntary initiatives to discuss and inform the development and reporting of U.S. dairy’s social responsibility story.

**Public Recognition:** Companies recognize the Stewardship Commitment in sustainability messaging, customer outreach and on their website.

Adopting companies reaffirm satisfying Commitment Terms of Adoption through completion of an annual survey.

## What are the benefits to adopting companies?

### Expands business development opportunities

- Drawing upon globally recognized best practices, substantiates U.S. dairy's leadership in the increasingly competitive global marketplace by aggregating and reporting on important social responsibility metrics.

### Simplifies measurement and reporting

- Reduces demands of multiple and overlapping external surveys and reporting requirements.
- Employs tools and metrics developed with direct input from U.S. dairy farmers, cooperatives and processors.

### Saves time and money

- Reduces need to invest in developing individual programs and protocols.

### Ensures dairy's voices are heard and reflected in discussions with key stakeholders

- Provides ongoing interaction with customers, nonprofits, government and other key stakeholders through Dairy Sustainability Alliance® involvement.

### Validates the combined work of U.S. dairy farmers, cooperatives and companies

- Earns recognition for the dairy community's commitment to nourish communities, continuously improve and be socially responsible.

## What are the benefits to dairy customers and stakeholders?

- Provides confidence that U.S. dairy farmers and companies advance key aspects of social responsibility by employing consistent, credible and recognized reporting mechanisms.
- Reduces need to develop costly internal assurance programs and validation processes.
- Assures alignment with globally recognized sustainability standards and protocols.
- Provides recognized pathways to meet sustainable sourcing expectations from leading dairy customers
- Offers opportunity for direct input on dairy's social responsibility priorities and metrics, to contribute to the future of U.S. dairy sustainability.

## How can customers and stakeholders drive impact through the Stewardship Commitment?

- Stay informed about the Stewardship Commitment and take advantage of opportunities (e.g., actively participate in Dairy Sustainability Alliance® meetings), to share your thoughts and provide input as Stewardship Commitment priorities and metrics are discussed and evolve.
- Use the Stewardship Commitment as a discussion-starter with your suppliers and/or constituents as we all work together to make forward progress on behalf of U.S. dairy. The logos of dairy cooperatives and processors who have affirmed adoption are found at [commitment.usdairy.com](https://commitment.usdairy.com).
- Support industry-aligned reporting advocated in the Stewardship Commitment to promote consistency across U.S. dairy.
- Inform, advocate for, and contribute to Stewardship Commitment-aligned initiatives that demonstrate positive impact.
- Highlight to stakeholders how the Stewardship Commitment supports your organization's sustainability goals and share supply chain success stories.

## Where can I get more information?

To learn more, contact Jennifer Block ([Jennifer.block@dairy.org](mailto:Jennifer.block@dairy.org)) at the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, and visit [commitment.usdairy.com](https://commitment.usdairy.com).