



**U.S. Dairy
Sustainability Awards**
Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy®

Joseph Gallo Farms

Atwater, California

Winner: Outstanding Dairy Processing and Manufacturing Sustainability

A heritage of sustainability contributes to the long-term success of Joseph Gallo Farms

With a sustainability mindset from day one, Joseph Gallo Farms aims to maximize the operational efficiencies of a vertically integrated business and work toward its goal of zero emissions and zero waste. With this approach, the operation has the potential to develop valuable business advantages and award-winning products.

Joseph Gallo founded his namesake business more than 65 years ago, pioneering the art of sustainable cheesemaking. Today, the operation consists of two dairies, as well as cheese, whey and packaging plants plus surrounding farmland. Joseph Gallo Farms is one of the largest private employers in its county, bringing green collar jobs to the area.

Best Practices

1 Water conservation

Summary

Water usage is a critical component in achieving the zero waste goal at Joseph Gallo Farms. Processes consist of repurposing wastewater, including 100 percent of the cheese effluent, as well as capturing steam from pasteurizers and engines. The wastewater and cheese effluent flush manure to an anaerobic digester before being used for irrigation, while the steam is used to heat the operation's boilers. In addition, Joseph Gallo Farms accepts as much as 10 million gallons of stormwater and wastewater from surrounding communities to reuse across the dairies and processing plants.

Key benefits

These actions help Joseph Gallo Farms conserve 8 to 12 million gallons of water each day, with 1.8 million gallons coming from cheese effluent alone. The recaptured steam saves 400,000 gallons of propane each year. Along with significant utility cost savings, the operation's water conservation measures help make its green energy program possible, thus generating additional value and savings. Plus, accepting outside wastewater helps bolster community relations with the surrounding areas.



2 Reducing waste

Summary

From batteries, tires and engine oil, to packaging and the product itself, Joseph Gallo Farms reuses as much as it can throughout the cheesemaking process. Partnering with other service providers allows the business to recycle corrugated cardboard, pallets, engine oils and low-density polyethylene (LDPE) plastic. In addition, the Joseph Farms cheese brand redesigned its packaging to reduce the need for material, processes its whey into whey protein isolate and permeate and sells excess product to be made into process cheese.

Key benefits

Reusing materials generates additional revenue streams at Joseph Gallo Farms while minimizing the business' environmental impact and waste disposal costs. More than 250 tons of corrugated cardboard is recycled each year; 100 percent of the pallets are reclaimed; 5,720 gallons of engine oil is recycled and 77-plus tons of LDPE plastics are recycled. Packaging materials were reduced by 40 percent through the redesign, and 2.5 million pounds of excess cheese is sold annually.

3 Community Relations

Summary

Joseph Gallo Farms supports its community by accepting agricultural waste and wastewater, providing renewable energy to the grid and donating thousands of acres of land for wildlife preservation. In addition to its sustainability-focused programs, the business has invested in health initiatives that improve community health and well-being.

Key benefits

The business is a model project for the Merced County Planning department and enjoys an established partnership with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

At Joseph Gallo Farms, sustainability is not one project nor a specific focus; instead, it is part of the organization's lifeblood, present in each decision the business makes. Along with the processor-focused best practices detailed previously, Joseph Gallo Farms buys goods and services that are environmentally friendly and responsibly farmed.

Results of these actions include: eliminating the use of 550 tons of chemical fertilizers, devoting 8,200 acres dedicated to growing wildlife-compatible crops, repurposing agricultural waste such as lettuce and tomatoes as cow feed and mulching green waste into animal bedding. Together, these processes save 45,000 tons of waste from entering landfills.

With 65 years of sustainable history, this operation knows how to implement changes that have a positive impact on the triple bottom line, and they are not finished making improvements. Projects are underway that will help continue to increase efficiency of specific agricultural equipment, as well as a project that will make even better use of the methane digester.



The Sustainability Awards are part of the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Commitment, an industrywide effort to measure and improve the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the dairy industry. The award program recognizes dairy farms, businesses and collaborative partnerships for their contributions to healthy people, healthy products and a healthy planet and showcases that sustainability makes good business sense. An independent panel of judges evaluates all nominations based on the program's or project's results as measured by triple-bottom-line success – economic, environmental and social. For more information, please visit USDairy.com/Sustainability/Awards.