

Leadership Perspective: U.S. Dairy – Our Time is Now

A Letter from Barbara O'Brien, President & CEO, Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and President, Dairy Management Inc.

This week marks one year of worldwide lockdowns and business interruptions caused by COVID-19. During that time, we all wrestled with uncertainty and concern for the safety of our loved ones, employees and communities. We also navigated challenges to our businesses and the global food system, turning on a dime to ensure nutritious dairy foods kept getting to consumers. All this happened while acute food insecurity more than doubled.

In addition to the cracks exposed by COVID-19, we face an ongoing set of challenges – engaging a new and discerning generation of consumers and investors, and coalescing the industry to earn dairy's place in a more sustainable food system. Addressing these challenges is no small task, but we know U.S. dairy is part of the solution. Working together as an entire value chain, we demonstrate U.S. dairy's commitment to social responsibility and advance dairy's role in nourishing people, the planet and communities.



The U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment and our 2050 Environmental Goals are strong examples of that commitment. Thirty-two dairy cooperatives and companies representing approximately 74% of the U.S. milk supply have signed on to the Stewardship Commitment and are now using the Commitment's Processor Reporting Tool to track progress and contribute to the collective picture for U.S. dairy. Processor teams are meeting to advance work towards the environmental goals, and at the farm level, the Net Zero Initiative is working with partners across dairy and beyond to fill key research and measurement gaps and identify opportunities to demonstrate impact on fields and farms of all sizes.

We are also looking more closely at the types of demonstrable commitments U.S. dairy can make around other environmental topics, like biodiversity, and in additional key areas like food security. Our Food Safety Committee continues to raise the bar in trainings and resources available to support cutting-edge best practices, and the National Dairy FARM program continues its best-in-class programming that spans animal care, environmental stewardship and workforce development. With bold actions like these, U.S. dairy is well positioned to lead in the global social responsibility dialogue.

Very few industries have as positive an impact in the world as dairy. As we and the rest of the world prepare for the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September, it's critical that all of us within the U.S. dairy community tell dairy's story loudly and proudly: farmers, processors, companies and brands working together to help better feed families, build stronger communities and leave the planet a better place for future generations. We're delivering for today while investing in tomorrow, and we believe the future is bright.

In our last newsletter, Mike Haddad, Chair of the Innovation Center Board of Directors, encouraged you to think big and act boldly within your organizations in 2021. There's untapped potential in the collective impact of those actions as proof of U.S. dairy's commitment to a more sustainable future. Make your voice heard. This is U.S. dairy's moment to shine.

Thanks for all you have done and continue to do to generate new and continued belief in dairy as an environmental solution and an essential part of sustainable diets for people around the world.



Dairy Sustainability Alliance Virtual Spring Meeting

After hosting two virtual Dairy Sustainability Alliance meetings in 2020, we had hoped to be gathering in person with you this spring. However, ongoing disruptions due to COVID-19 mean the Dairy Sustainability Alliance Spring Meeting will again be a virtual event.

Save the date to join us on **Wednesday, May 19** from **10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Central**. We'll be taking a closer look at some examples of Net Zero Initiative projects that are currently underway, learning how cooperatives across the country are implementing the FARM Environmental Stewardship and Workforce Development modules, getting your input on how dairy can help implement innovative and long-term solutions to fight food insecurity, and more.

Registration will open in early April. Additional details and a full agenda will be available at alliancemeeting.usdairy.com soon!

If you have any questions, please contact Angela.Hessinger@dairy.org.

Nomination Period Underway for 10th Annual U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards



NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

AWARD SUBMISSIONS DUE BY

MARCH 26, 2021

USDairy.com/2021Awards



Nominations are currently open for the 2021 U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards. Nominees will be judged on measurable results, approach and innovative use of learnings, resources and the potential for adoption by other farms and businesses. Categories for the 2021 Awards include:

- Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability
- Outstanding Supply Chain Collaboration
- Outstanding Dairy Processing & Manufacturing Sustainability
- Outstanding Community Impact

If you know of a dairy farm, company, supply chain collaboration or community effort that advances resourceful leadership and demonstrates sustainable practices, help us recognize their efforts by visiting www.usdairy.com/2021awards.

Here you'll find easy to use templates to prepare your nomination, review guidelines for submission, and create a profile to submit your nomination through the Abstract Scorecard® system. You can also take a look at [last year's winners](#) for inspiration or watch our 2021 launch webinar ([recording](#), [slides](#)) to gain helpful hints for preparing nominations. **All nominations must be received by Friday, March 26.** Winners will be announced during June Dairy Month.

2021 also marks the 10th anniversary of the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards program. Watch for more details on how we'll be celebrating this milestone and our past winners throughout the year.

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly.Sheridan@dairy.org.

UN to Host Food Systems Summit

In September, the United Nations will convene the first-ever [UN Food Systems Summit](#) (UN FSS) "to transform the way the world produces and consumes food," an event that has the potential for significant implications for U.S. dairy.

As a part of the Decade of Action to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) by 2030, the UN FSS will propose solutions that focus on building healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems that deliver progress on all 17 of the SDGs. The UN FSS seeks to deliver this progress through five objectives or "[Action Tracks](#)" that are charged with seeking multi-stakeholder input on actions to transform the food system:

1. Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
2. Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
3. Boost nature-positive production at sufficient scale
4. Advance equitable livelihoods and value distribution
5. Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

To foster inclusivity among a large group of stakeholders, the UN FSS offers different engagement opportunities to provide input:

- Attending and/or hosting a [Food Systems Summit Dialogue](#)
- Participating in [Public Forums](#)
- Joining the [Food Systems Community](#) platform and submitting comments on Action Track [papers](#) developed by the UN FSS [Scientific Group](#).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will serve as the convener for the U.S. National Food System Dialogues. You can [learn more about USDA's role and hosting an Independent Dialogue here](#) or receive additional information and materials by contacting them at FoodSystemsDialogues@usda.gov.

We are committed to demonstrating, through commitments and action, that U.S. dairy farmers and processors produce foods that are a sustainable source of affordable nutrition, good for the planet and contribute to community vitality and resilience. In the coming months, it will be critical for the U.S. dairy community to participate in UN FSS-related opportunities and to be extremely proactive in communicating dairy's story.

The Innovation Center will also hold a webinar, **U.S. Dairy in Global Food Systems**, on **Wednesday, April 7 at 10:15 a.m. CST**. [Register here](#) to learn more about the UN FSS, global food systems and the role U.S. dairy plays.

Outcomes and implications of the UN FSS will be examined as part of this year's Dairy Sustainability Alliance Fall Meeting and Sustainable Agriculture Summit, November 17-19 in Las Vegas.

If you're interested in learning more about the UN FSS, follow and tag @FoodSystems on Twitter and use #foodsystems & #UNFSS2021 to join the conversation. If you have any questions, please contact Joe.McMahan@dairy.org or Angela.Hessinger@dairy.org.

Virtually Connected: Spring Webinar Series

We received a lot of positive feedback on our full lineup of webinars last fall, so we decided to bring you a Spring Webinar Series as well. March is National Nutrition Month, so we'll be highlighting the important role dairy plays in sustainable nutrition through a couple of our webinars this spring. These webinars will also provide additional context for sessions and discussions that will take place during the Dairy Sustainability Alliance Virtual Spring Meeting in May.

You can see the full list of all spring webinars and virtual events in the "Upcoming Events" section at the end of this Newsletter.

Nutrition and Bone Health Across the Lifespan presented by National Dairy Council

Wednesday, March 31 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. CST

It has been said that osteoporosis is a pediatric disease with geriatric consequences. While osteoporosis and low bone mass affect about 54 million Americans, the good news is childhood, adolescence and early adulthood are prime times to build bone density. Bones require ongoing support as they are continuously remodeled throughout life. Join the National Dairy Council and bone health expert Taylor Wallace, PhD for this in-depth look at building healthy bones across the lifespan. [Register here](#) for this NDC presented webinar.



U.S. Dairy in Global Food Systems

Wednesday, April 7 from 10:15-11:15 a.m. CST

As highlighted above, the [UN Food Systems Summit](#) (UN FSS) has the potential to transform the way the world produces and consumes food with significant implications for U.S. dairy. Join us to learn more about the UN FSS, global food systems and the role U.S. dairy plays. [Register here](#) for this webinar.



The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and What They Mean for Dairy

Thursday, April 15 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. CST

Grounded in sound science and focused on public health, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) serve as the cornerstone of official government guidance on dietary recommendations across the lifespan. As noted below (see "Dairy in the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines"), the [2020-2025 DGA](#) were announced in December. Learn more about what was included, what it means for dairy and how sustainability factors in. [Register here](#) for this webinar.



Spring Meeting Pre-Webinar: Sustainable Solutions to Food Insecurity

Tuesday, April 27 from 1:00-2:00 p.m. CST

Food insecurity continues to challenge our country with over 54 million people needing assistance. Last fall, the Innovation Center for U.S Dairy formed the Food Security Task Force to look at innovative ways to address the challenges of procurement and distribution of dairy to the food insecure via sustainable models. Join members of the Task Force who will discuss the group's efforts to define a clear vision, set meaningful goals, and identify the strategies necessary to get there. This webinar will lay the foundation for further discussion and input during the Dairy Sustainability Alliance Virtual Spring Meeting on May 19. If you plan to attend the Virtual Spring Meeting, we highly encourage you to attend this webinar. [Register here](#) for this webinar.



If you are interested in engaging with the Food Security Task Force and helping explore and test pilot areas, please contact Jacqi.Coleman@dairy.org or Tab.Forqac@dairy.org.

Advancing Progress Toward Dairy's 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals

Monday, May 3 from 2:00-3:00 p.m. CST

Based on your feedback as part of the annual Dairy Sustainability Alliance member engagement survey, this webinar will focus on the progress made to advance the dairy industry's 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals and Net Zero Initiative over the past year. It will include updates on the initiatives at the field, farm and processor level along with a discussion on work being done across the supply chain with diverse partners and strong collaboration. [Register here](#) for this webinar.

NET ZERO INITIATIVE

Newtrient to Host On-Farm Environmental Solutions Webinar Series

Beginning in March, Newtrient is kicking off a series of sponsored webinars to help farms better understand the economics, incentives and programs behind environmental solutions. The first webinar in this series, **How to Prepare for Conversations with RNG Developers**, is sponsored by American Biogas Council (ABC) and will take place **Today, March 17 at 12:00 p.m. CST**. This first webinar will walk through the key farm numbers to crunch and questions to prepare before meeting with a potential renewable natural gas developer. **Learn more and [register here](#) for this free Newtrient webinar.** All information and recordings of the webinars will also be available on [Newtrient's website](#).



If you have any questions, please contact Jamie.VanderMolen@newtrient.com.

UN Endorses Sustainable Global Feeding Recognizing Role Animal Agriculture Can Play



Last month, the United Nations Committee on World Food Security issued its [Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#) (VGFSyN) – the culmination of a multi-year effort aimed at providing guidance for achieving sustainable food systems, improving nutrition and ensuring that diets needed for adequate nutrition are accessible, available, affordable, safe and of adequate quality and quantity.

The guidelines provide a framework for creating more sustainable food systems, which include dairy, that nourish people and the planet. This is good news for U.S. dairy domestically and through exports:

- The VGFSyN note that the animal ag sector is an important player in sustainable food systems, and through sustainable practices and innovative approaches, the sector can foster biodiversity and more sustainable food systems
- “Healthy diets” are defined as “safe, diverse, balanced, and based on nutritious foods,” versus a listing of specific foods or nutrients

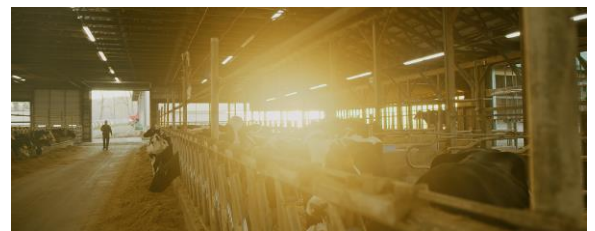
Integrated efforts between Dairy Management Inc. (DMI), Global Dairy Platform (GDP), U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC), National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the International Dairy Foundation contributed to these guidelines. DMI's Dr. Greg Miller served as a delegate to the discussion and represented the global dairy sector, including U.S. dairy, through his role as the GDP Nutrition Sector Lead.

The VGFSyN are important as they are foundational to existing global initiatives on sustainable food systems and nutrition, such as the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Food Systems Summit 2021.

If you have any questions, please contact Janice.Giddens@dairy.org.

Land O'Lakes, Inc. Unveils Dairy 2025 Commitments

Last week, Land O'Lakes, Inc. announced new on-farm sustainability commitments to be adopted by its more than 1,600 member-dairy farms by 2025. Within the next four years, all Land O'Lakes' dairy farmer-owners will complete an intensive, industry-leading on-farm sustainability assessment aligned with the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment while maintaining universal compliance with the National Milk Producers Federation's National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) program. This announcement is the next step in Land O'Lakes' enterprise-wide approach to on-farm sustainability.



“As a champion of sustainability practices, Land O'Lakes, Inc. is proud to partner with our member-owners and customers to build a system of measurement and improvement,” said Tim Leviny, Land O'Lakes' Senior Vice President of Global Dairy Ingredients. “This new commitment will help us measure our member-owners' on-farm sustainability footprint to meet our customers' sustainability goals. This is just the next step in our company's longstanding focus on quality, transparency and accountability across our supply chain.”

To support this effort, Land O'Lakes has created a new Dairy 2025 Commitment team dedicated solely to the collection of on farm data, and helping develop measurable ways for its farmer-members to improve on-farm efficiency and further reduce their environmental footprint.

(story continues on next page)

Many Land O'Lakes dairy farmer-owners are already participating in significant sustainability initiatives, but this assessment is intended to provide a cooperative-wide understanding of members' collective impact and set baselines for future goals. Examples of projects farmers are carrying out with Land O'Lakes' current customers, which are driving immediate results, include:

- Land O'Lakes and Bel Brands have initiated a project to increase the use of cover crops and other sustainable agriculture practices among the Land O'Lakes member-owners who ship milk to Bel Brands' facilities.
- Land O'Lakes is working with The Hershey Company and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to implement best management practices to reduce GHG emissions and help improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and other watersheds in the region.

Learn more about Land O'Lakes new initiative on their [blog](#).

WWF Case Study Concludes Net Zero Dairy Farms are Possible & Highlights Barriers to be Addressed



An Environmental and Economic Path Toward Net Zero Dairy Farm Emissions

In January, the World Wildlife Fund [released a case study](#) concluding it is possible, under the right conditions, for some larger dairy farms to reach net zero in greenhouse gas emissions within five years. The case study also shows the potential impact of larger dairies reaching net zero emissions as significant for the entire U.S. industry with smaller farms also benefitting from advancements in technology and lower implementation costs.

This independent review and perspective on the future of dairy sustainability reinforces that the U.S. dairy community can collectively achieve carbon neutrality or better. The report notes that financial support and other incentives are critical to making that possible, but pursuit of the goal ultimately will benefit farms of all sizes. The study also concludes: "By leading the charge on committing to net zero emissions through operational change, technology implementation, market-based solutions, and advocating for effective policy change, the dairy industry has the opportunity to pioneer change in the food system and demonstrate a pathway to greater economic and environmental progress. If this initiative can lead other types of animal protein production to significantly reduce GHG emissions, we could begin to take the environmental impact out of the question in making decisions about what we eat."

Although the Innovation Center was not a partner in this analysis, it did provide access to experts, data and an early concept model of what has evolved into the Dairy Scale for Good strategy, part of the larger Net Zero Initiative that supports the U.S. dairy industry's collective efforts toward achieving the [2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals](#).

If you have any questions, please contact Karen.Scanlon@dairy.org.

Barbara O'Brien Named Innovation Center CEO; Krysta Harden Tapped to Lead USDEC

Yesterday, the Innovation Center announced the promotion of Barbara O'Brien to chief executive officer. She will also retain her roles as president of the Innovation Center and president of Dairy Management Inc., the dairy farmer founded and funded checkoff program. For more than a decade, O'Brien has worked tirelessly to build trust in U.S. dairy and bring the dairy community together around shared priorities that are more effectively addressed collectively than by individual sectors or companies. In this new role, she will continue to lead future-forward initiatives that ensure U.S. dairy's relevance to global consumer needs and preferences, drive innovation, and contribute to a healthier planet and a profitable and agile U.S. dairy value chain.



Following his swearing in last month as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a post he previously held during the Obama-Biden Administration, Secretary Tom Vilsack [stepped down as CEO of the U.S. Dairy Export Council](#) (USDEC). During his tenure at USDEC, the Secretary expanded U.S. dairy's reach in key export markets, helped bring dairy-positive trade agreements across the finish line, communicated the U.S.'s approach to sustainability to global markets, and increased collaboration with international agriculture and dairy organizations.



With Secretary Vilsack's departure, USDEC announced the promotion of Krysta Harden from chief operating officer to president and CEO. Before joining USDEC, Harden was executive vice president of global environmental strategy at Dairy Management Inc., where she helped steer the U.S. dairy industry's sustainability initiatives. At USDEC, Harden will continue to be active in global organizations, including the World Economic Forum, World Federation of Exchanges, Global Child Nutrition Foundation, and the upcoming U.N. World Food Systems Summit.

As the country celebrates Women's History Month, we are proud to recognize O'Brien and Harden as the first female chief executives of these national dairy organizations. We also recognize the contributions of female leaders across the industry – from the farm to the boardroom – and their invaluable impact on the U.S. dairy community.

FARM Program Publishes Year in Review and Approves FARM Animal Care Taskforce Nominees

In February, the National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Program released its annual [FARM Year in Review](#), capturing achievements like the launch of Version 1.0 of FARM Workforce Development (WFD). The overview details the resources developed across all program areas, including how aspects of FARM were brought into a fully virtual environment. Events like the annual Evaluator Conference, monthly Evaluator Engagement Hours and the program's Quick Convos series gave FARM staff the ability to connect with all stakeholders and provided relevant and sought-after information as 2020 presented unrivaled challenges in providing on-farm social responsibility assurances.



As FARM Workforce Development continues to roll out, the FARM Program will host virtual evaluator trainings in March and April to equip evaluators to conduct evaluations for version 1.0 of the program.

Additionally, the National Milk Producers Federation Animal Health and Well-Being Committee approved nominations for the [FARM Animal Care Task Force](#). Formerly the Technical Writing Group, the multi-stakeholder Task Force helps ensure the FARM Animal Care Program evolves with the latest research and fosters a culture of continuous improvement. The group, which will support the development of FARM Animal Care Version 5.0, is made up of dairy farmers of varying operation size and geography, veterinarians, cooperative and processor representatives, animal scientists and academics, and a representative from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

If you have any questions, please contact Emily Yeiser-Stepp (eyeiserstepp@nmpf.org).

Dairy in the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines



At the end of December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans \(DGA\)](#). The DGA are grounded in sound science, focused on public health and serve as the cornerstone of official government guidance on dietary recommendations across the lifespan, including the school meal programs, WIC and SNAP. In fiscal year 2019, these federal feeding programs resulted in the movement of 10.7 billion pounds of milk, 684 million pounds of cheese and 662 million pounds of yogurt and other dairy foods.

Dairy's contributions were reinforced throughout the DGA as a core, nutrient-dense food group in healthy eating patterns that help Americans achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic disease throughout life. Specifically:

- Dairy maintained its own food group.
- The recommendation for three daily servings for Americans ages 9 and older continues in the Healthy U.S.-Style and Healthy Vegetarian Dietary Patterns.
- For the first time, the DGA provided recommendations (which included dairy) for pregnancy and lactation and from birth to 23 months, ensuring good nutrition across the entire lifespan.
- The DGA explored the role of food manufacturers and retail establishments in supporting Americans in achieving healthy eating patterns.

While sustainability was not included in the 2020-2025 DGA, it has been incorporated into a growing number of food-based dietary guidelines around the world, and conversations around the intersection of sustainability and nutrition are expected to continue.

[Register here](#) to join our upcoming webinar at **10:00 a.m. CST on April 15** and learn more about what was included in the 2020-2025 DGA, what it means for dairy and how sustainability factors in.

If you have any questions, please contact Erin.Coffield@dairy.org.

Dairy: A Modern Marvel

The History Channel recently relaunched its popular series "[Modern Marvels](#)." The show's 18th season has so far taken a closer look at food, with two of its first episodes focused on dairy. Viewers learn more about the [cheese](#) and [ice cream](#) making processes – from artisan methods to the innovations that allow dairy companies to produce enough product to meet the massive consumer demand – with lots of fun history and trivia about these favorite dairy treats sprinkled throughout. Two of the stories profiled include:



- The technology utilized at Dairy Sustainability Alliance member The Kroger Co.'s Crawfordsville, IN cheese plant where 2.5-3 million pounds of cheese is converted from 640-pound blocks into shreds, slices and cubes each week and packaged for sale in the supermarket chain's stores across the country. *(story continues on next page)*

- Following 2020 Dairy Sustainability Award Winner Turkey Hill Dairy's ice cream making process from the time the milk truck arrives at the facility until it leaves as one of the 25 million gallons of ice cream the company produces each year. The segment specially highlights the food safety measures taken at the plant, including testing the milk when it arrives for traces of bacteria and antibiotics as well as the traceability information added to the bottom of every carton.

Upcoming Events

Ongoing	Food Safety Basics for Ice Cream Makers Online Training Course	Online Training
Ongoing	Food Safety Basics for Artisan Cheesemakers Online Training Course	Online Training
March 17 12-1 p.m. CST	How to Prepare for Conversations with RNG Developers presented by Newtrient and American Biogas Council Click here to register for this Newtrient-hosted webinar.	Webinar
March 26	Deadline: 2021 U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards Nominations Due	
March 31 12-1:30 p.m. CST	Nutrition and Bone Health Across the Lifespan presented by National Dairy Council Click here to register for this NDC-hosted webinar	Webinar
April 7 10:15-11:15 a.m. CST	U.S. Dairy in Global Food Systems Click here to register for this webinar	Webinar
April 15 10-11 a.m. CST	The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and What They Mean for Dairy Click here to register for this webinar	Webinar
April 22	Earth Day	
April 27 1-2 p.m. CST	Spring Meeting Pre-Webinar: Sustainable Solutions to Food Insecurity Click here to register for this webinar	Webinar
May 3 2-3 p.m. CST	Advancing Progress Toward Dairy's 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals Click here to register for this webinar	Webinar
May 19 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. CST	2021 Dairy Sustainability Alliance Spring Meeting	Virtual Event
June	National Dairy Month	
September	UN Food Systems Summit 2021	New York, NY
Oct. 12	National Farmers Day	
Nov. 17-18	2021 Sustainable Agriculture Summit	Las Vegas, NV
Nov. 19	2021 Dairy Sustainability Alliance Fall Meeting	Las Vegas, NV