



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

2019 Winners

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 **INNOVATION
CENTER FOR U.S. DAIRY.**
HEALTHY PEOPLE • HEALTHY PRODUCTS • HEALTHY PLANET

Sponsors

The strength of the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards has been the unprecedented collaboration with leaders and experts from within and outside the dairy industry. The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy® is pleased to recognize the following organizations for their support of the 2019 awards program:



CHANGING THE EQUATION FOR GOOD BUSINESS

The eighth annual U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards recognize and honor outstanding dairy farms, businesses and partnerships for socially responsible, economically viable and environmentally sound practices. These practices, large and small, are steps that add up to promote the health and well-being of consumers, communities, cows, employees, the planet and business.

This year's recipients show how innovation and improvements sparked by one farm, one person or one organization can have a ripple effect that goes well beyond their farm gate or front door.

Winners are recognized in the following categories:

- Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability
- Outstanding Supply Chain Collaboration
- Outstanding Community Impact

An independent panel of judges, which included leading experts on the economic and environmental issues and opportunities of today's dairy industry, evaluated nominations on the following criteria:

- Program or project results as measured by triple-bottom-line success: economic, environmental and social
 - Evidence of shared learning, innovation and improvement
 - Potential for adoption by other dairy farms and businesses
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OUTSTANDING DAIRY FARM SUSTAINABILITY

Cinnamon Ridge Farms

Donahue, Iowa



How Feeding Cows Created Environmental Benefits

John Maxwell began his dairy farm business after graduating from college in 1984 and immediately faced a challenge: He needed cow feed.

Maxwell used his ingenuity and found a way grow feed and benefit the environment by using cover crops. Many farmers may not keep a crop in the ground all year because of unfavorable growing conditions during certain months.

Maxwell began experimenting and found that rye grass survived the winter and was a great feed option for his herd of Jersey cows.

The 400-acre cover crop offers a destination for his cows' manure as a natural fertilizer. Maxwell saw that opting not to till minimized soil and earthworm disruption, thereby preventing nutrient runoff and erosion. This created fertile ground for the ensuing corn or soybean crops to thrive while cutting his feed bill in half.

Having a variety of crops for feed allows for a higher-quality and balanced diet for the cows, resulting in increased milk production for the farm.

Maxwell enjoys sharing his cover crops story with other farmers and sees momentum growing.

The dairy, Cinnamon Ridge Farms, also repurposes food for its cows that couldn't be sold at retail, such as products that simply may have been mislabeled. One such product was coffee creamer. The Maxwells checked with their cow nutritionist, who determined the creamer was a good addition to the cows' diet as a carbohydrate source. The creamer also gives the feed an added flavor the cows love. Now, about 2,000 pounds of creamer arrive at the farm each week instead of a landfill.

Successes such as these keep the Maxwells seeking more.

"It's important to be curious in everything you do," Maxwell said. "Don't be satisfied where you are. What fuels me is not only how can we grow but how can we educate others."

Part of being sustainable is being economically solvent to keep producing dairy foods. Cinnamon Ridge is an agritourism destination and last year hosted 7,000 visitors from 50 countries.

- The farm hosts an annual ag summit and farm-to-table events to connect farmers with consumers and key thought leaders.
- Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey recognized the Maxwells in 2016 as agritourism leaders for their willingness to educate and promote the state's industry.



OUTSTANDING DAIRY FARM SUSTAINABILITY

Majestic Crossing Dairy Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin



How Two Words Make a Big Impact on Sustainability

Wisconsin dairy farmer Dean Strauss enjoys the journey of new possibilities. It's why he often precedes many questions during team meetings with "what if?"

His farm, Majestic Crossing Dairy, is a testament to where "what if" can lead.

"In terms of sustainability, we're always looking for the what-ifs," Strauss said. "What if we tried something else or considered something new that's out there? We're always looking for energy savings, labor savings, time efficiencies. How can we do projects better related to our land or our animal-welfare program? It's all about a bigger picture."

Strauss further enhanced his sustainability commitment by adopting a GPS guidance system on his tractors and other machinery. The farm grows 3,600 acres of corn, alfalfa, wheat and soybeans for cow feed, and the technology helps Strauss identify efficiencies in seed distribution as well as reducing fuel, pesticide and fertilizer use.

The 2,000 cows at Majestic Crossings are the result of a unique strategic shift when Strauss began building a herd of crossbreeds. The cows are a genetic mix of Holsteins, Viking Red and French Montbéliarde. They are moderate in size, therefore eating less food and producing less manure while providing milk that is higher in milkfat and protein, ideal for cheese production. And that is beneficial to the end user of Strauss' milk, the Sartori cheese company. This relationship also brings another element of sustainability—Strauss' milk only travels seven miles to the plant.

These successes, and others, keep Strauss and his team on the lookout for more ways they can help protect the planet.

"I like that fork in the road where some people are going the other way," Strauss said. "There's value in that fork. You have to find where that fork is and that's kind of been part of our success to doing things a little differently. I enjoy the journey."

Milk travels only seven miles to the cheese plant.

- Majestic Crossings invested in robotic milking machines to address lack of available labor, though the farm soon realized additional sustainability benefits.
- Dairies use water to wash the milking area and to rinse cows' udders. Strauss said the robots have reduced his farm's water use by 30 percent, or about 20 gallons per cow each day.



OUTSTANDING DAIRY FARM SUSTAINABILITY

Philip Verwey Farms

Hanford, California



A Farmer's Innovation Leads to Cleaner Air, Lower Costs and Better Feed

Driving home one afternoon, Philip Verwey started thinking about changes he could make to improve air quality. His on-road brainstorm led to innovation that cut his dairy's tractor-related emissions substantially, the equivalent of taking 7,800 passenger cars off the road. "I thought maybe I could convert my diesel-powered feed-mixing operation to electric," said Verwey, who milks 9,000 cows.

Philip Verwey Farms' diesel-to-electric conversion was one of 56 funding applications—and the only dairy-related project—to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's Technology Advancement Program. His idea: Rather than blending feed ingredients for his cows in a mixing wagon powered by a diesel tractor, he would blend using an electric stationary mixer. This change significantly reduced the amount of run time by his diesel engines, lowering diesel consumption by 71 percent per month.

"In addition to being good for the environment, the change provided other positive benefits," Verwey said. "The texture and composition of the feed improved, which is good for our cows."

Verwey's idea reduced oxides of nitrogen emissions by 90 percent, providing the inspiration and model for other dairy farmers to take similar action to improve air quality.

"The air district saw the success of our project," Verwey said. "That led to an expanded program that will fund up to 75 percent of the cost of future conversions to electric mixers for dairy feed."

To date, 15 California dairy farms have submitted applications to the program and four are under contract to begin converting their feed mixers to electricity.

"I'm a true believer that you have to produce what the public wants, and that includes being green," Verwey said. "We're also doing that in a way that makes economic sense, which benefits everyone."

Philip Verwey Farms converted its feed-mixing program from diesel-powered to all-electric, reducing nitrogen oxide by 90 percent and saving costs.

- The electricity that powers the feed mixer is generated on the dairy from a manure digester, which can also generate enough energy to power 3,000 additional homes.
- The electric feed mixer reduces oxides of nitrogen emissions from 22 tons annually to just 2, saving 90,000 gallons of diesel.
- 7,800: The number of cars one would need to remove from the road for equal emissions reductions to those achieved by Philip Verwey Farms, electric feed mixer conversion.



OUTSTANDING SUPPLY CHAIN COLLABORATION

General Mills & Foremost Farms

Reed City, Michigan



General Mills and Foremost Farms USA Collaborate to Reduce GHG Emissions

As a leading dairy cooperative, Foremost Farms knows its customers and consumers are interested in what's happening on their members' farms and how they're conserving resources, protecting the planet and caring for animals.

General Mills, one of Foremost Farms' largest customers, is committed to purpose-driven growth powered by a sustainable supply chain, as the health of its business depends on the health of the planet. As part of this effort, the company has set an ambitious science-based target to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 28 percent across its full value chain by 2025 to help mitigate climate change.

General Mills knew the U.S. dairy industry also had set a voluntary goal to reduce its GHG intensity 25 percent by 2020. As a priority ingredient for several of its well-known brands, such as Yoplait yogurt, Foremost Farms was an obvious partner for GHG reduction collaboration.

In 2016, Foremost Farms convened a powerful network of 16 Michigan dairy farmers who supply milk to General Mills' yogurt plan to join global sourcing and sustainability experts from General Mills to share ideas, align toward common goals and ultimately pilot National Milk Producers' FARM Environmental Stewardship (FARM ES) module.

The FARM ES module is a science-based, on-farm assessment tool that provides a comprehensive estimate of a farm's GHG emissions and energy use. The tool allows farmers to learn about their carbon footprint, identify areas for improvement, explore practices that add environmental benefits, track performance and reduce costs. It also helps farmers re-evaluate equipment such as fans, lights, compressors and pumps, as well as operational efficiencies from increased training or improved practices.

The group also invited experts and vendors from Newtrient, EnSave and Consumers Energy to inform them on available innovations and collaborate on financial assistance as well as other incentives to help reduce the costs of implementing these improvements.

In all, the dairy farms that participated in the pilot saw a combined 11 percent reduction in GHG over a three-year period, which outperformed the national and regional benchmark averages. These dairy farmers have been completely transparent in driving sustainability initiatives in collaboration with General Mills and its partners by driving improvements in operations with energy, cow and feed management. This effort was only made possible through the efforts and leadership of these industry-leading producers.

16 dairy farmers saw a combined 11 percent reduction in GHG emissions after using the FARM Environmental Stewardship Program over a three-year period.



OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY IMPACT

Gleaners Community Food Bank

Detroit, Michigan



Food Bank and Dairy Community Partner to Improve Health Outcomes

One thing is certain for food banks across the United States: Milk is in demand, but it can be logistically challenging to procure and distribute.

One Michigan food bank exceeded its own goal of making fresh, nutritious milk available to clients. By partnering with the dairy community and innovating its distribution methods, it created a system that's built to last. That's why Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan is this year's Outstanding Community Impact winner.

Last year Gleaners surpassed its goal of raising \$96,000 for milk donations and its goal of distributing 103,680 gallons of milk. It was able to purchase more than \$132,000 in milk and distribute 229,000 gallons of milk to those served by the emergency food network in Detroit and surrounding areas.

Ultimately, Gleaners' goal is to improve clients' health outcomes—in part by supplying a glass of fresh milk with every meal—and it's inspiring donors to support this vision through an annual fundraising program called M.I.L.K. (Making Investments in the Lives of Kids), a campaign that aims to ensure kids have access to all the essential food groups starting with fresh milk. Gleaners tapped into the power of its relationships with United Dairy Industry of Michigan and Michigan's dairy farmers, who provided milk-purchase match funding. That grew the sort of success that attracted more donations.

Milk is picked up from Michigan Dairy, an arm of the Kroger Company of Michigan, and typically delivered straight to an agency served by Gleaners or immediately sent to the Gleaners warehouses for distribution. The team worked out a process that maximized efficiencies of refrigeration while putting fewer trucks on the road.

Already, the work is paying off with smiles from those who were eager to stock their refrigerators again. Says one client:

"My son is always so happy when I bring milk home, so he can have milk on his cereal. Sometimes he has to eat his cereal without milk because we cannot always afford to buy it."

In 2018, Gleaners committed to distributing more fresh milk to families through their mobile pantry program. Approximately 15,441 families—an average of 87 families per mobile pantry at 67 sites—received fresh milk.

- 229,000 = gallons of milk distributed to those in need in 2018 by Gleaners.



Meet our Expert Judging Panel

An objective judging panel assessed the nominations and selected this year's winners. This panel included experts from government, dairy science organizations, nongovernmental organizations, business and trade media, and environmental and dairy industry leaders.

Judges

DEB ATWOOD, Executive Director, AGrree

SARAH BEAUBIEN, New Award Winner,
Tillamook County Creamery Association

MIKE OPPERMAN, Dairy Editorial Director,
Farm Journal Media

JAMIE THORN, Senior Manager, Ethical
Sourcing, Starbucks

JEROD MATTHEWS, National Account
Manager, Feeding America

SUZY FRIEDMAN, Senior Director,
Agricultural Sustainability, Environmental
Defense Fund

SUE BORRA, Chief Health and Wellness
Officer, Executive Director, Food Marketing
Institution Foundation

RANDY MOONEY, Board Chairman,
National Milk Producers Federation

ROD SNYDER, President, Field to Market

MELINDA CEP, Senior Director for Policy,
Food and Markets, World Wildlife Fund

LARRY CLEMENS, Director, North America
Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy

STEVE MADDOX, Dairy Farmer and Award
Winner, Maddox Dairy, Vice Chair, DMI

AARON LAUSTER, National Sustainable
Agriculture Lead, Natural Resources
Conservation Service

DARCIE RENN, Director of Sustainability,
Albertsons

KEVIN O'DONNELL, Director of
Sustainability, General Mills

AUSTIN ALLRED, Dairy Farmer and
Award Winner, Royal Dairy



Recent Winners

2018

E-Z Acres, Homer, N.Y.

Reinford Farms, Mifflintown, Penn.

Royal Dairy, Royal City, Wash.

The Kroger Company, Cincinnati, Ohio

Magic Dirt, Little Rock, Ark.

Tillamook County Creamery Association,
Portland & Tillamook, Ore.

2017

Kinnard Farms, Casco, Wis.

Rickreall Dairy, Rickreall, Ore.

Kellercrest Registered Holsteins, Inc.,
Mount Horeb, Wis.

SwissLane Farms, Alto, Mich.

Glanbia Nutritionals, Evanston, Ill.

Oakland View Farms & Midshore Riverkeeper
Conservancy, Caroline City, Md.

Honorable Mentions:

Mercer Vu Farms, Mercersburg, Penn.

Michigan Milk Producers Association, Food Bank
of Eastern Michigan, The Kroger Co. of Michigan,
Michigan State University Extension, Michigan

U.S. Dairy Education & Training Consortium Extension,
College Station, Texas

2016

Agri-Mark and Cabot Creamery Cooperative,
Waitsfield, Vt.

Bateman's Mosida Farms, Elberta, Utah

Jer-Lindy Farms LLC, Brooten, Minn.

Noblehurst Farms Inc., Linwood, N.Y.

Siemers Holsteins, Newton, Wis.

Yahara Pride Farms Inc., Brooklyn, Wis.

Honorable Mentions:

Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, Harrisburg, Pa.

Foremost Farms USA and Schreiber Foods Inc.,
Richland Center, Wis.

Homestead Dairy, Plymouth, Ind.

2015

Dorrich Dairy, Glenwood, Minn.

Freund's Farm, East Canaan, Conn.

Hilmar Cheese Company, Hilmar, Calif.

HP Hood LLC and CleanWorld, Sacramento, Calif.

Oregon Dairy Farm, Lititz, Pa.

Nobis Dairy Farms, St. Johns, Mich.

Honorable Mentions:

Alliance Dairies, Trenton, Fla.

T-Bar Dairy and White Gold Dairy, Porterville, Calif.

Northern Illinois Food Bank and Prairie Farms Dairy,
Geneva, Ill.



Share These Stories!

What's the secret to sustainability? According to research conducted on behalf of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, sustainability isn't about the size, age or location of a dairy operation. It's the management practices that make the difference. The most sustainable aspects of the dairy industry come from the way we run our businesses every day. And as more people are interested in learning where their food comes from, telling our stories of good stewardship helps ensure they can continue to feel good about choosing their favorite dairy foods and beverages.

Visit USDairy.com/Awards to learn more about how others are implementing sustainable practices and help spread the word by sharing these successes – and yours – with customers, communities and consumers.

