



# U.S. Dairy Industry and Farmer Leaders Endorse

Environmental Goals Including GHG Neutrality  
and Cleaner Water with Maximized Recycling by 2050



## Vision: Dairy is an Environmental Solution

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy – a forum that convenes industry stakeholders across the value chain to align on shared social responsibility priorities – set aggressive environmental stewardship goals to advance dairy’s role in building a sustainable future, including its ambitions to achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) neutrality, optimize water usage and improve water quality by 2050. These goals will help dairy build upon and quantify industry progress towards its vision to be an environmental solution.

“As U.S. dairy, we are committed to supporting healthy people, a healthy planet and healthy communities,” said Karen Scanlon, executive vice president of environmental stewardship for Dairy Management, Inc. and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. “The dairy community has embraced its role in providing nutrient-rich dairy products that are produced responsibly, demonstrating progressive leadership in agriculture. The 2050 goals set U.S. dairy’s intention to continuously improve and bring added environmental benefit to communities through innovation, collaboration and leveraging the strength of a diverse industry.”

The 2050 environmental stewardship goals build on a decades-long commitment to producing nutritious dairy foods that can sustainably feed a growing global population. According to a life cycle assessment for fluid milk commissioned in 2007, U.S. dairy contributes only 2% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Thanks to modern and innovative dairy farming practices, producing a gallon of milk in 2017 required 30% less water and 21% less land and had a 19% smaller carbon footprint than it did in 2007.



These voluntary goals were built out of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, comprised of representative leadership across the dairy value chain, including farmers, cooperatives, processors, retailers and other stakeholders, and included an extensive stakeholder and public comment period. For the past decade the Innovation Center has led efforts to help the dairy community understand and manage its most significant social, environmental and economic impacts. Informed by a rigorous and third-party reviewed materiality assessment, the industry prioritized the most pressing areas of environmental sustainability as the foundation for the 2050 goals.

## 2050 Environmental Stewardship Goals

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

1. Achieve GHG neutrality<sup>1</sup>
2. Optimize water use while maximizing recycling
3. Improve water quality by optimizing utilization of manure and nutrients

The U.S. dairy community is leveraging advances in technologies and practices and working to make these innovations accessible and affordable for farmers and companies. Dairy companies and farms across the country are already contributing to the goals individually, and the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment, introduced by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy in 2018, helps the industry document and demonstrate social responsibility efforts. Additional metrics will be developed through the Stewardship Commitment as needed to track progress.

To progress toward the goals, the U.S. dairy supply chain is working together to identify multiple economically viable pathways for reaching these goals collectively, leveraging the strength of U.S. dairy's diversity in size, region and practice. Initially, these strategies include:

- Attracting investment and partners to ignite new technology and innovation
- Creating new revenue sources such as manure-based product development and ecosystem services markets
- Expanding science-based research and data collection that closes knowledge gaps, improves analysis and advances practices and technologies that reduce environmental impact in dairy production
- Increasing the utilization and expansion of best practices, resources and tools for farmers, cooperatives and processors



While all answers on how the dairy community will reach these ambitious goals are not known today, now is the time to take this next step in dairy's social responsibility journey.

Progress against each of the 2050 environmental stewardship goals will be reported out every five years, beginning in 2025. This reporting will not only document progress but also identify technological and other advancements that can accelerate improvements, enabling nimble adaptation and focus on what can be scaled for maximum impact. The industry's comprehensive GHG accounting and reporting guidance was thoroughly reviewed and recently endorsed by the renowned World Resources Institute (WRI).

For more information on the advancements within the dairy industry, sustainable actions farmers are taking every day and the 2050 environmental stewardship goals, visit [www.USDairy.com](http://www.USDairy.com).



Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy® is a leadership forum that brings together the dairy community and third parties to address the changing needs and expectations of consumers and customers. Initiated in 2008 by dairy farmers through the dairy check-off, Innovation Center leaders and members collaborate on important areas like the environment, nutrition and health, animal care, food safety, and community contributions. Through the Innovation Center, the U.S. dairy community demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement from farm to table, striving to ensure a socially responsible and economically viable dairy community. For more information, visit [www.usdairy.com/about-us/innovation-center](http://www.usdairy.com/about-us/innovation-center).

<sup>1</sup> In October 2021, the wording of the goal was clarified to reflect the intent of the work and U.S. dairy's commitment to reduce greenhouse gases, including methane, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide.