

## Leadership Perspective: Together, Let's Turn Challenges into Opportunities

A Letter from Mike Durkin, Chair, Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy Board of Directors and President & CEO, Leprino Foods



Dairy is unlike any other industry I've seen. The way we have come together as dairy processors, farmers, and the whole value chain to advance our category really is unique.

But just like any other industry, we have our challenges – mounting ESG pressures, comparisons to alternative products, and changing market landscapes to name a few. These issues aren't unique to one processor or one farmer, they're collective. We're all in this together.

As an Innovation Center board member for the last 8 years, I've seen how effectively the dairy community works in a precompetitive environment to tackle the challenges presented. I saw this firsthand when I chaired the task force that developed and launched the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment. We were being challenged by our stakeholders to quantitatively demonstrate U.S. dairy's contributions to the environment and to the health and well-being of our animals, people, and communities. At the same time, we knew our industry needed to report in a cohesive and streamlined way.

Together, we took these challenges and turned them into an opportunity. We launched the Stewardship Commitment in 2018 – a framework and pledge to define, measure, and report progress against our collective social responsibility actions. Today the Commitment has 35 adopting companies representing 75 percent of U.S. milk production – and I'd like to see that number continue to grow.

The Commitment bolsters U.S. dairy sustainability leadership as it not only helps adopters track their own progress, but also strengthens our ability to report in aggregate as U.S. dairy. Our 2020 Sustainability Report was the first to include this aggregated data and we'll publish our next Sustainability Report later this year.

We also committed to transparent reporting when we set our industry-wide environmental stewardship 2050 goals with a pledge to report progress towards them every five years. At the [Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Spring Meeting](#) in May, we'll be laying out the national level approach to measure and report that collective industry progress.

This year, I've taken on a new role as Chair of the Innovation Center Board of Directors. I am humbled and proud to be asked by my peers to help lead this organization and industry through the challenges that are to come. My goal as chair is to guide, facilitate and harness the power of all the brilliant minds we have involved in this work as we advance climate-smart technologies and practices, promote dairy's modern health and wellness benefits and seize opportunities both domestically and internationally.

The uniqueness and strength of the Innovation Center is really the involvement of everyone who participates. From your company CEOs on the board, to your peers on the various committees, task forces and working groups, to all of you in the Dairy Sustainability Alliance – your commitment to the industry, to do the right thing and to show up and work together is why we see dairy leading the pack in agriculture when it comes to social responsibility. It's how we'll continue to turn challenges into opportunities along the way.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Durkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "M" and "D".

## Dairy Sustainability Alliance News

### Register Now for 2023 Dairy Sustainability Alliance Spring Meeting

Registration is open for the 2023 Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Spring Meeting in Chicago-Rosemont, IL.

Last spring, the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy introduced its framework of shared priorities, goals, work and metrics that aligns U.S. dairy and puts us on a collective path to providing solutions that advance well-being and regenerate the environment while also caring for our animals and communities.



DAIRY SUSTAINABILITY ALLIANCE®  
Spring Meeting | May 10-11, 2023 | Chicago-Rosemont, IL



Join us **May 10-11 in Chicago-Rosemont, IL** for the **2023 Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Spring Meeting**, as we explore this framework in action. Stay informed with updates on key initiatives, learn from fellow Alliance members how they are putting tools and resources into practice, and inform the development of industry social responsibility efforts by sharing your input.

If you're new to the group, be sure to sign up for our new **First Timers Meet & Greet** when you register and get ready to make the most of your first Dairy Sustainability Alliance meeting.

[Register today](#) and [book your hotel room](#) at the Marriott Chicago O'Hare. Early registration and group hotel rates are available until April 17. Additional details and a draft agenda can be found at <http://AllianceMeeting.USDAiry.com>.

*If you have any questions, please contact [Angela.Hessinger@dairy.org](mailto:Angela.Hessinger@dairy.org).*

### Telling Dairy's Sustainability Story for Earth Month & Beyond

Consumer and thought leader perceptions of dairy's impact on the environment can greatly influence their trust, purchase and consumption of dairy products. Last month, our *Dairy & The Environment: The Thought Leader & Consumer View* webinar highlighted some of the latest thought leader and consumer insights on dairy and environmental sustainability and also shared plans for how you can activate with us this spring to tell dairy's sustainability story, kicking off with Earth month in April.

A [recording of the webinar](#) is now available. Resources to support you in communicating about dairy sustainability, including a new cheat sheet for ongoing responsible production storytelling, are available in the Undeniable Dairy section of the Dairy Community Exchange (DCE). If you don't have access to the DCE, please contact [Heather.Oldani@dairy.org](mailto:Heather.Oldani@dairy.org).

*If you have any questions, please contact [Heather.Oldani@dairy.org](mailto:Heather.Oldani@dairy.org) or [Serena.Schaffner@dairy.org](mailto:Serena.Schaffner@dairy.org).*

## New Webinars Announced for First Half of 2023

Our 2023 Webinar Series continues, with the addition of two new webinars. Register via the links below and stay tuned for more exciting content in the weeks to come.

### Dairy Sustainability Alliance® 101

*Tuesday, April 11, 2023, from 1:00-2:30 p.m. Central*

Are you new to the Dairy Sustainability Alliance and want to know how to maximize your membership? Do you know someone who might be interested in getting involved and would like to learn more about us? Would you like a refresher on sustainability efforts the Innovation Center has underway?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, *Dairy Sustainability Alliance® 101* is for you! We’ll walk through member responsibilities and provide a primer on the Innovation Center and its key social responsibility initiatives, including ways you and your company or organization can get more involved in 2023. [Register here](#) to join us.



### Member Discovery Series Webinar – Generating Carbon Credits within the Dairy Supply Chain

*Tuesday, April 25, from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Central*

Dairy farms across the country are adopting solutions to climate challenges, including creating renewable gas, sequestering carbon and improving water quality. At the same time, global and U.S. food companies are seeking to meet aggressive environmental goals. With roughly 80 percent of the dairy value chain’s greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint traced back to the farm, dairy farmers can reduce emissions given the right revenue streams and markets to undertake risks and investment costs. Carbon credits and marketplaces play an essential role in providing financial incentives and benefits for farmers looking to invest in adopting sustainable practices.

This Member Discovery Series webinar, presented by Newtrient, will help increase understanding of current carbon market opportunities and barriers for dairy farmers, highlight the importance of giving farms the certainty to implement climate-smart practices that provide long-term benefits, and show how streamlined data collection, quantification, and 3rd party verification benefit the entire dairy value chain. [Register here](#) to join us.



### 2023 Cultural Shifts and Global Food & Beverage Trends

*Thursday, June 15, from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Central*

The world around us is always changing and cultural trends affect everything from what consumers buy to how businesses operate. But which trends are just blips on the cultural radar and which are actually shifting and shaping behavior longer-term? Join us for *2023 Cultural Shifts and Global Food & Beverage Trends* to learn about the top shifts that are creating a ‘new normal’ within culture through the lens of sustainability, health and wellness, commerce, and business, and their implications for food & beverage. [Register here](#) to join us.



## Advance Well-Being

### Food & Nutrition Insecurity: Are You Ready to Make a Difference?



March Nutrition Month is a time to celebrate how nutrient-rich eating habits help promote health and well-being. As the calendar flips to April, let's continue to step back and acknowledge that food and nutrition insecurity is still an obstacle for 34 million Americans, including 9 million children, who may have limited availability and access to nutrient-rich foods.

Did you know...milk provides [13 essential nutrients](#) in every 8-ounce serving, and it remains one of the most requested and least donated foods. Helping food banks secure enough nutrient-rich foods (e.g., vegetables, whole grains, dairy, fruits) for clients is crucial, so they too can enjoy these health benefits. Nutrient-rich food options like milk and dairy foods shouldn't be an impossible choice.

You can help make a difference in the lives of people who struggle to put nutrient-rich food on their tables. Join us for the **Dairy Nourishes America: Feeding America's Western Symposium**, June 12-14 in San Diego, CA, where you'll be part of a team of change-makers working together to increase access to dairy products in communities across the western United States. It's a particularly good opportunity for processors to make connections with local food banks and identify solutions that work for both organizations to make dairy distribution easier on a consistent basis. A similar symposium will be held in the eastern U.S. in 2024. [Register here](#) for the Western Symposium and learn more at [DairyNourishesAmerica.org](https://DairyNourishesAmerica.org).

*If you have any questions, please contact [Tab.Forgac@dairy.org](mailto:Tab.Forgac@dairy.org).*

### Proposed Revisions to School Meal Programs and Dairy

Nearly 30 million children rely on school meals every day, providing the richest source of dairy in children's diets. On February 3, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a proposed rule to revise meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

Elements of the proposed rule that may affect dairy consumption in schools include product-specific limits on added sugars (including flavored milk and yogurt), menu-wide added sugars limits, the potential restriction of flavored milk to upper grades and new sodium targets.

USDA is requesting comments on the proposed rule through April 10. The dairy community has an opportunity to raise awareness and educate stakeholders about the proposed rule and potential implications for dairy and school meals. National Dairy Council will be submitting science-based comments to USDA as part of the public process and will continue to serve as a resource for evidence-based educational support.

*Learn more about the [important role of dairy in school meals](#) or contact [Katie.Brown@dairy.org](mailto:Katie.Brown@dairy.org) for additional resources related to this topic*

### The Importance of Protein Quality in Food Systems Transformation

A [recent perspective article](#) by Pikosky et al in the journal *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* reviewed the science behind the importance of considering protein quality from animal and plant food sources as part of the recommendations that aim to achieve food systems transformation.

Given the ongoing dialogue regarding shifts in dietary patterns from animal to plant-based, protein quality is an important consideration in terms of ensuring nutritional adequacy, as well as providing a way to express environmental impact that better captures the tradeoffs that need to be considered when developing sustainable dietary patterns.

*If you have any questions, please contact [Erin.Coffield@dairy.org](mailto:Erin.Coffield@dairy.org).*

## Dairy Production Through a One-Health Lens

Dairy production provides high-quality, affordable, and accessible sources of nutrients to people on a planet soon to be inhabited by more than 9 billion people. In doing so, it is ever more important to ensure the excellent care of dairy animals, health and the environment while maintaining the economic viability of the one billion people worldwide who rely on the dairy sector for their livelihood.

A [recent article](#) in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, co-authored by Kaitlyn Briggs, Director of Environmental Research at DMI, reviews some associations and key markers between dairy consumption and human health along with the many interconnections between people, cows, plants, and our shared environment. Understanding these relationships is an example of one health – the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working together to attain optimal health for people, animals, and our environment – at work.

If you have any questions, please contact [Kaitlyn.Briggs@dairy.org](mailto:Kaitlyn.Briggs@dairy.org).

## Regenerate the Environment

### Understanding Dairy Farmer Views on Changing Weather and Climate-Friendly Practices

Researchers at the University of Vermont are conducting a [nationwide survey of U.S. dairy farmers](#) to understand how they're thinking about climate change, preparing for new weather, and implementing climate-friendly practices on their farms. The survey, which runs through mid-April, is part of a national project in collaboration with Colorado State University and University of California, Davis, who are assessing how milk yield will be impacted by climate change and climate-friendly feeding strategies that received funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and DMI. All U.S. dairy farmers are invited to participate and can access the survey at [www.usdairysurvey.com/cow](http://www.usdairysurvey.com/cow).

If you have any questions, please contact [Stephanie.MasielloSchuette@dairy.org](mailto:Stephanie.MasielloSchuette@dairy.org).



**Hey dairy farmers**  
**How has your farm been impacted by changing weather?**

Share your thoughts alongside other farmers & be entered for a chance to win \$500! Your answers are confidential.

To access the survey, visit [www.usdairysurvey.com/cow](http://www.usdairysurvey.com/cow)

Paper copies may be requested by phone, or by mail:

Rebecca Mitchell  
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802-556-1352



## Cows and Climate Change

It will take all of us working together to achieve the dairy community's 2050 environmental stewardship goals. That includes the cow herself. Here's the latest behind her role:

### Getting Selective

Dairy Management Inc. (DMI) and the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to identify, prioritize and enable research that extends use of natural genetic improvement and selective breeding to positively impact environmental sustainability. The environmental research team is excited to collaboratively pursue common objectives through cooperative research programs and information exchanges with CDCB on animal genetics and environmental sustainability that will also have positive impacts on animal nutrition and health.



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Spring 2023

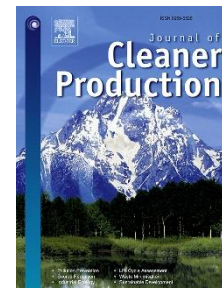
## Tackling Waste + Sustainability with Byproducts

Using byproducts as feeds for dairy cows – citrus pulp from the processing of orange and grapefruit juice, cotton seed hulls from the production of clothing, leftover brewers' grain from making beer – has been a common practice among dairy farmers for generations. In fact, [we now know](#) that U.S. dairy cows consume an estimated 26.5 lbs. of byproducts each day, representing anywhere from 31 to 42 million metric tons nationally each year.

This is based on responses to a survey of dairy nutrition consultants and feed industry representatives and covering 33.5 percent of lactating cows in the country that was conducted through the Innovation Center. Further, [the results](#) show that feeding these byproducts to cows reduced GHG emissions by 49-fold compared to if they were sent to landfills and by five-fold compared to if they were composted.

This new, quantifiable research shows just how environmentally friendly and widespread the practice of feeding byproducts is – and continues to emphasize dairy's role as an environmental solution.

If you have any questions, please contact [Juan.Tricarico@dairy.org](mailto:Juan.Tricarico@dairy.org).



## Care for Our Animals & Communities

### National Dairy FARM Program Year in Review



The National Dairy Farmer Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Program released its 2022 Year in Review report, which includes updates across all program areas—Animal Care, Antibiotic Stewardship, Biosecurity, Workforce Development and Environmental Stewardship—and outlines some of the priorities for 2023. Read about the progress made toward development of the upcoming Animal Care Version 5 and Environmental Stewardship (ES) Version 3, successful FARM Workforce Development (WFD) trainings, program collaboration efforts, and more. A [printable version](#) of the 2022 report and all past FARM reports are available on the [FARM Resource Library](#) webpage.

Be sure to join us at the [Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Spring Meeting](#) in May, where the FARM team will share how updates to the FARM ES tool will aid on-farm data collection for reporting against the industry's environmental goals and also showcase how one supply chain is using the FARM WFD evaluation tool to assess workplace practices on dairy farms in the Northeast.

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

### Innovation Center Announces 2023 Food Safety Trainings

Earlier this year, the Innovation Center held its 50<sup>th</sup> Dairy Plant Food Safety Workshop. When this initiative began, the hope was to run 10 to 15 workshops. Twelve years later, the program is still going strong and is a testament to the dairy industry's commitment to work together and to protect our consumers.

See for yourself what has made these workshops successful. [Learn more](#) and [register](#) to join us at one of our remaining 2023 workshops.

If you have any questions, please contact [Tim.Stubbs@dairy.org](mailto:Tim.Stubbs@dairy.org).

The Innovation Center Food Safety Committee Announces 2023

## Dairy Plant Food Safety Workshop

<b>May 23-24</b>	<b>Twin Falls, ID</b> Hosts: Glanbia Nutritionals & Agropur USA
<b>August 8-9</b>	<b>Elkhart Lake, WI</b> Hosts: Sargento Foods & Foremost Farms USA
<b>Sept. 19-20</b>	<b>Coopersville, MI</b> Hosts: Continental Dairy Facilities, LLC & MMPA

## U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment

### Processor Packaging Metrics Now Part of U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment



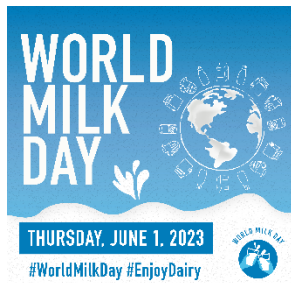
Throughout 2022, the Dairy Sustainability Alliance's Processor Working Group (PWG) [developed and refined](#) a set of processor packaging metrics with significant input from stakeholders, including feedback received during a Discussion & Input Session at last year's Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Spring Meeting.

The metrics are designed to increase baseline understanding of current processor packaging practices that will inform future potential actions. The metrics have been formally integrated into the [U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment](#), and processors are beginning to measure and report on them through the Processor Stewardship Reporting Tool. This first year will serve as a pilot test to ensure companies are able to effectively track and report the requested information and will not be included in any aggregated reporting of 2022 data.

If you have any questions, please contact [Eric.Hassel@dairy.org](mailto:Eric.Hassel@dairy.org).

## Extra Moos

### World Milk Day 2023: Celebrate Dairy



June 1 marks [World Milk Day](#) and a time to celebrate the global dairy sector's contributions to nutrition, livelihoods and the environment. [Global Dairy Platform](#) annually coordinates a global social media campaign that brings supporters together from around the world to raise awareness of dairy's important role in sustainable food systems.

[Last year's celebration](#) was one of the biggest so far, with social media campaigns and in-person events conducted in 113 countries around the world, 1 billion+ social media impressions, and more than 346,000 social media posts.

This year's theme will focus on showcasing how dairy is reducing its environmental footprint, while also providing critical nutritional security and socio-economic benefits, driving an active narrative that integrates the environmental, nutritional and societal impacts of the sector.

The World Milk Day Team is encouraging short videos (like [this one](#)) that showcase sustainability practices in place on your farm or at your company. You can help by developing these short videos and sharing them on social media as together we re-introduce dairy farmers to the world. Videos can be sent directly to [milkday@emergingag.com](mailto:milkday@emergingag.com) or via [WeTransfer](#) along with your name, organization and social media handles. Videos should be 15-30 seconds long, filmed using a camera or mobile device, and in Landscape mode or shot using 1:1 dimensions for easy sharing across all social channels.

A variety of campaign assets, including visuals, sample posts and other assets is now available via the [World Milk 2023 Activation Guide](#).

If you have any questions or for more information, please contact [milkday@emergingag.com](mailto:milkday@emergingag.com).

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## Moo-chas Grass-ias, Joe McMahan

It is with mixed emotions that we bid farewell to Joe McMahan, Senior Vice President of Sustainability Initiatives for the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy.

In his 10 years with the checkoff, Joe has been instrumental in defining and developing the U.S. Dairy Stewardship Commitment, and he's steadfastly represented U.S. dairy farmers and the Innovation Center's collective work in national and international working groups. Joe's knack for anticipating future expectations around sustainability reporting led to the first industry-wide materiality assessment, which became a priority-informing model and how-to guide for dairy companies. He is known for his ability to rally stakeholders for a common cause and significant impact, and to tell a good cow joke.



Joe's last day with the Innovation Center will be April 7, after which he'll be taking take his legen-dairy expertise to the private sector. The work Joe has led will continue to be a priority for the Innovation Center, and you can contact [Karen.Scanlon@dairy.org](mailto:Karen.Scanlon@dairy.org) if you have any questions about these efforts. Please join us in wishing Joe the very best in his next opportunity!

## Upcoming Events

April	Earth Month	
April 11 <i>1-2:30 p.m. Central</i>	Dairy Sustainability Alliance® 101 <a href="#">Click here</a> to register.	Webinar
April 17	<b>DEADLINE:</b> Spring Meeting Early <a href="#">Registration</a> and Discounted <a href="#">Hotel</a> Rates	
April 25 <i>11 a.m.-12 p.m. Central</i>	Member Discovery Series Webinar – Generating Carbon Credits within the Dairy Supply Chain <a href="#">Click here</a> to register.	Webinar
May 10-11	<a href="#">2023 Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Spring Meeting</a>	Chicago-Rosemont, IL
May 23-24	Dairy Plant Food Safety Workshop <i>Hosted by Glanbia Nutritionals and Agropur USA. <a href="#">Click here</a> to register.</i>	Twin Falls, ID
June 1	<a href="#">World Milk Day</a>	
June 12-14	<a href="#">Dairy Nourishes America: Western Symposium</a>	San Diego, CA
Aug. 2-3	Dairy Plant Food Safety Workshop <i>Hosted by Sargento Foods and Foremost Farms. <a href="#">Click here</a> to register.</i>	Elkhart Lake, WI
Sept. 19-20	Dairy Plant Food Safety Workshop <i>Hosted by Continental Dairy Facilities &amp; Michigan Milk Producers Association. <a href="#">Click here</a> to register.</i>	Coopersville, MI
Oct. 1-6	<a href="#">World Dairy Expo</a>	Madison WI
Oct. 12	National Farmers Day	
Oct. 16-19	<a href="#">IDF World Dairy Summit</a>	Chicago, IL



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Dec. 5	<a href="#">2023 Dairy Sustainability Alliance® Fall Meeting</a>	Charlotte, NC
Dec. 6-7	<a href="#">2023 Sustainable Agriculture Summit</a>	Charlotte, NC
Ongoing	<a href="#">Food Safety Basics for Ice Cream Makers Online Training Course</a>	Online Training
Ongoing	<a href="#">Food Safety Basics for Artisan Cheesemakers Online Training Course</a>	Online Training