

OUTSTANDING DAIRY PROCESSING & MANUFACTURING SUSTAINABILITY

Agri-Mark and Cabot Creamery Cooperative Waitsfield, Vermont



Closed-loop approach delivers benefits across value chain, from cow to consumer

Last spring, Cabot Creamery Cooperative's butter boxes proudly proclaimed, "Cows in our cooperative provide cream AND electricity for the butter we churn." The boxes celebrate Real Farm Power™, the latest in a series of projects pioneered by Agri-Mark dairy cooperative and Cabot as part of a broader commitment each has made to sustainability.

Real Farm Power takes a closed-loop approach, recycling cow manure, food scraps and food processing byproducts to produce renewable energy. The program offers a blueprint for scaling anaerobic digester technology to smaller and medium-sized dairy farms.

"With a fluctuating dairy market, we needed a new approach to sustain our family and our farm," said David Barstow of Barstow's Longview Farm. A digester seemed like a promising solution, but on its own, the 450-head farm faced funding and feedstock challenges. The success of Real Farm Power lies in strategic partnerships between the farm, Cabot, Vanguard Renewables and Casella Organics, which coordinates the collection of feedstock from Geissler's Supermarket, along with 13 other food companies.

Estimates show the \$2.8 million project cost will be paid back in just six years.

Cabot has been on the sustainability journey since 1919, when 94 farmers invested \$5 per cow to purchase the village creamery. Today, Cabot is owned by Agri-Mark's 1,200 dairy-farm families throughout upstate New York and New England. Others in the Agri-Mark family who have been recognized nationally for their pioneering efforts include Blue Spruce Farm, Foster Brothers Farm and Freund's Farm.

Jed Davis, director of sustainability, reinforces Cabot's view that dairy can be a solution to societal problems like air pollution and food waste.

"On product packaging and through brand messaging, we are showing the public the creative ways that dairy can advance positive changes in our communities and our world," Davis said.

Real Farm Power reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 5,680 tons annually while:

- 2,200 MWh of renewable energy is generated, offsetting the power needed to make Cabot butter and saving the creamery \$38,000 annually.
- Thermal energy from hot water recaptures heat for the milk parlor and farmhouse, reducing Barstow's annual heating costs by over \$3,000 annually.
- 30,000 tons of nutrient-rich liquid from the digester fertilizes 400 acres of farmland.
- 46 tons of feedstock per day is diverted from community landfills.