

# Sustainable Nutrition

## Our Commitment

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and the broader dairy community are committed to contributing to sustainable food systems. Sustainable nutrition is an emerging field within the broader discipline of sustainability that focuses on economic, environmental and social factors. In short, sustainable nutrition is the intersection of agriculture, food production and nutrition—it is how foods contribute to social (e.g., nourishment, health and well-being), economic (e.g., affordable food, job creation) and environmental (e.g., using resources effectively to minimize water, land, air impacts) sustainability.

By definition, sustainable nutrition is protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, economically fair, nutritionally adequate, affordable, accessible, safe and healthy—while optimizing natural and human resources. Ensuring dairy's leadership in sustainable nutrition is a key priority. America's dairy farmers and the dairy community understand that sustainable food systems are complex and about more than carbon footprint alone. They are about nourishing people and making positive contributions to improve health and well-being, foster community vitality, conserve natural resources and protect the planet. We are committed to producing U.S. dairy products that are beneficial to human health, aligned with the United Nations (U.N.) sustainable development goals and compatible with sustainable food systems.

In 2015, the 193 member states of the U.N. developed a new sustainable development agenda. They declared that nutrient deficiency was causing economic collapse and worldwide strife, and that the ability to produce affordable and accessible food is under threat due to population and climate changes and natural resource decline. The U.N. launched 17 sustainable development goals, many of which are a priority for the dairy community, particularly goal No. 2, which is “zero hunger” and aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Goal No. 3 is “good health and well-being,” which also is a priority for the dairy community.

Dairy offers solutions. On average, dairy foods (milk, cheese and yogurt) provide over 50 percent of the calcium and vitamin D; over 25 percent of the vitamin A, vitamin B12 and phosphorus; about 24 percent of the riboflavin; about 18 percent of the protein and zinc; 14 percent of the potassium; 27 percent



of the saturated fat; and about 15 percent of the total fat per day in the diets of Americans ages 2 and older, while contributing approximately 230 calories daily.<sup>i</sup> Dairy foods also provide nine essential nutrients and are associated with bone health and reduced type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease risk in adults.<sup>ii,iii</sup>

The uniqueness of the dairy cow is a key component in dairy's nutrition and sustainability narrative. Cows eat a balanced diet, recommended by a nutritionist and veterinarian team. They are able to unlock nutrients from parts of plants people can't eat, like almond and soybean hulls, orange peels, grasses and corn silage. The cows then convert these nutrients into higher-quality, nutrient-rich foods for people.

Connecting people with the history and legacy of farmers can help them understand and trust where their food comes from and how dairy farmers are continually improving their practices in the best interest of the land, cows, people and our planet. The dairy community measures its use of natural resources as part of its commitment to environmental stewardship when it comes to its water, land and carbon footprint. Dairy production in the U.S. is responsible for only about 2 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, while providing a food group that helps nourish Americans.<sup>iv,v</sup>



### Sustainable Food Systems

Part of food systems that are economically viable, environmentally sound

Cows are integral to life and community



### Enhances Life

Reduces risk of food insecurity and hunger; socially responsible

Affordable; provides economic vitality to rural communities



### Nutritionally Secure

Reduces the risk of NCDs (obesity, diabetes, heart disease)

Provides key source of under-consumed nutrients



### Is Essential

Is a whole, real food that provides optimal health

Helps us to live well and is difficult to replace

## Focus Areas

To date, the U.S. dairy community has made progress toward its sustainable nutrition goals by helping underserved markets gain greater access to dairy products, accelerating the nutrition research on dairy products and advancing the study of dairy's role within sustainable food systems. In the future, the U.S. dairy community plans to invest in more science and collaborate with others on three major strategic priorities:

- 1. Nourish with dairy**—the first priority is to continue investing in research and partnerships to expand the availability of U.S. dairy to the food insecure. It includes nourishing people, especially the food and nutrition insecure, by helping provide nutrient-rich, accessible and affordable options, while minimizing food loss and food waste across the supply chain to lessen the burden on the environment.
- 2. Dairy drives food systems**—the second priority is to conduct ongoing research to understand the dairy cow's contribution to food systems, human health and the environment. To ensure that dairy is not only helping nourish people but also contributing to the well-being of the planet, the Innovation Center has made significant efforts to help measure and continuously improve the dairy community's impact on the environment.
- 3. Dairy is essential across all lifestyles**—the third priority is spearheading research to identify U.S. dairy's sustainable nutrition profile and create awareness around U.S. dairy's contributions to health and sustainability. It focuses on growing the body of evidence for why dairy foods are hard to replace when it comes to nutrition, relevance and well-being.

## Looking Ahead

America's dairy community believes being sustainable is about more than just lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable food systems ask what is needed to provide food to sustain life amid changes to our climate and an increasing global population. They're about broadly understanding how the availability, affordability and accessibility of nutrient-rich foods from all food groups can help reduce hunger, reduce risk of non-communicable diseases and benefit health and well-being.

The dairy community will demonstrate how dairy foods contribute to food and nutrition security and well-being for present and future generations, while maintaining a low environmental impact. Sustainability, including sustainable nutrition, is a journey, not a destination. Science and insights will continue to drive the improvement and evolution of dairy's role in sustainable food systems.

For more information, please contact [Michelle.Slimko@dairy.org](mailto:Michelle.Slimko@dairy.org).

i. National Dairy Council, NHANES 2011-2014. National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Data. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website. 2017. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm>. Accessed May 9, 2017.

ii. National Center for Health Statistics. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Data, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website. 2017. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm>. Accessed May 9, 2017.

iii. National Dairy Council, Science Summary: Dairy & Cardiovascular Disease. National Dairy Council Website. 2017. <https://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/content/2015/science-summary-dairy-and-cardiovascular-disease>. Accessed May 9, 2017.

iv. National Dairy Council, Science Summary: Dairy & Peak Bone Mass. National Dairy Council Website. 2017. <https://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/content/2015/science-summary-dairy-and-peak-bone-mass>. Accessed May 9, 2017.

v. Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, U.S. Dairy's Environmental Footprint: A summary of findings, 2008-2012. Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy Website. [http://www.usdairy.com/~media/usd/public/dairyenvironmentalfootprint4\\_2013.pdf](http://www.usdairy.com/~media/usd/public/dairyenvironmentalfootprint4_2013.pdf). Accessed May 9, 2017