People & Community

Our Commitment
Dairy farmers and dairy businesses have a longstanding heritage of contributing to a positive economic and societal impact on communities across the country. Today, the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy furthers this deep-rooted commitment through programs that rally constituents across the dairy value chain to support the people and communities where we live and work. Encompassing dairy’s societal contributions (such as youth wellness and hunger), economic impact and future workforce development, Innovation Center programs strive to foster healthy, balanced lives in our communities today and for the future.

Focus Areas
Societal Contributions
Addressing child nutrition and food insecurity are top priorities for the dairy community. Understanding dairy’s role in a healthy diet is crucial, but the dairy community recognizes that it can do even more to promote healthy living among young people, beyond delivering high-quality foods. Working with and through community partners, National Dairy Council (NDC) and the Innovation Center, Fuel Up to Play 60 (FUTP 60) is one such program. At its core, FUTP 60 empowers student-led nutrition and physical activity solutions and delivers crucial resources to schools. Fuel Up to Play 60, a unique partnership between NDC and the National Football League (NFL), has been committed to youth wellness since its launch in 2009. Enlisting students, educators, parents and community members to make a difference, the program is now in 73,000 schools and has gotten 16 million students to be more active, 13 million students to eat healthier and 130,000 adults to enroll and empower youth. GENYOUth, a foundation created by NDC, is a convener of youth wellness programs and the conduit for the dairy community to participate in programs like FUTP 60 at both the local and national level.

Providing solutions to overcome hunger is another core community program of the Innovation Center. In the United States, 46 million people are food insecure, including one in five children. While dairy foods, like milk, cheese and yogurt, have nutritional benefits and great taste, they are some of the least donated foods to local food banks due to their perishability. Developing creative solutions for donating milk is a major priority for the dairy community. For example, Feeding America, National Dairy Council and MilkPEP launched the Great American Milk Drive in 2014. In less than two years, more than one million servings of milk have been provided to food bank clients through a program that allows retail customers to donate a gallon of milk to a food bank when they’re making a purchase.
Economic Impact
The dairy community is a significant contributor of economic output, earnings and jobs. According to estimates by the National Milk Producers Federation based on U.S. government data, the dairy farm economy accounts for $37 billion in production value, $112 billion in total impact on U.S. economic output and more than 750,000 jobs at the production level. In addition to this impact at the farm and processing level, the dairy community also generates jobs and output throughout supplier companies, distributors, retailers, local service providers and many others.

Workforce Development
Sustainable dairy production depends on a qualified, motivated and talented workforce. Personnel needs span a variety of skill and education levels and include farm production workers, food technologists, marketers, veterinarians and many others. Because many workers operate sophisticated crop equipment and milking machines and need to know the fundamentals of animal and farm management, dairy producers work extremely hard to attract and retain qualified employees. The dairy community invests in its workers by offering skills and safety training, competitive wages and employee benefits, such as health and retirement plans, paid vacation and performance-based bonuses. The importance of focusing on the workforce is increasingly illustrated by consumers’ growing interest in where their food comes from, which includes interest in working conditions and compensation; the humane treatment of animals; compliance with all environmental, food safety and other regulators; and continuous productivity improvement to further reduce the sector’s per-unit carbon footprint.

Looking Ahead
Through individual actions, partnerships and industrywide collaboration, the U.S. dairy community is making a positive impact on communities across the nation. Moving forward, the National Dairy Council and the Innovation Center will lead initiatives including the Hunger Task Force, the School Meals Summit and a workforce development analysis with a focus on attracting skilled workers to the agriculture sector.

For more information on these plans or to get involved, please contact Scott Dissinger at scott.dissinger@dairy.org.