



## CLIMATE CHANGE. SUSTAINABILITY. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT. GLOBAL WARMING. CARBON FOOTPRINT.

These are hot topics around water coolers, behind news desks, and on social media. But what do they mean to us on a practical, daily basis beyond the water cooler?

For generations, farmers have done the hard work of learning how to protect the planet as they produce enough food to feed a growing population.

**95% of American farms** are family owned and operated by farmers who work where they live and care about protecting the land, water, and air for their families, surrounding communities, and future generations. Dairy farmers have always been mindful of the planet and are committed to producing better food through responsible practices that are regulated by federal and state agencies.

*“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*

-United Nations' definition of sustainability

The U.S. dairy industry has continuously done more with less by utilizing best practices and innovations that not only reduce environmental impacts but also enhance the economic and social responsibility of dairy farms, businesses, and communities.

### 1 **Animal Care: healthy cows are happy cows, and happy cows make more milk**

Dairy farmers keep their cows happy and healthy by providing clean and comfortable housing, 24/7 access to fresh food and water, and medical attention when necessary.

**Most American dairy farms have fewer than 300 cows**

### 2 **Upcycling: cows are innovative recyclers**

Dairy farms upcycle the components of crops that humans can't digest—like almond hulls, citrus pulp, and cotton seeds—from their farm and other local farms by feeding the ingredients to their cows (who use it to make delicious, nutritious milk) instead of sending the food waste to landfills.

### 3 **Water Conservation: farmers reduce, reuse, and recycle water**

Water recycling is a standard practice on today's dairy farms and is implemented in a variety of ways. For example, the water used to keep milk tanks cool is reused as drinking water for cows, and wastewater is used to flush barns and irrigate fields and crops.



Buffers can use plants that can be harvested and used as cow feed

#### 4 Water Quality: farmers keep waterways clean

Precision farming, cover crops, and buffer strips reduce nutrient runoff from a farm and protect clean waterways. Buffer strips are protective zones of permanent vegetation between a farm field and waterway that slow and filter storm runoff, hold soil in place, and reduce the amount of harmful chemicals and microbes that enter waterways.

The water-holding capacity of soil is increased by 20% when manure is used as a soil treatment, resulting in reduced ground water needed to grow crops

#### 5 Manure Management: manure is an ideal natural fertilizer

Manure contains many nutrients—including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium—that improve soil quality and crop yield. Manure also allows dairy farmers to reduce costs and contamination of clean ground water when used in place of commercial fertilizers.

Some farms generate enough electricity to run their entire operations, with excess energy sold back to local utility companies to help power their communities

#### 6 Renewable Fuel: manure can generate electricity

New methane digester technology heats manure and uses bacteria to break it down into methane, which is pumped into a generator and used as renewable energy.

The commitment of dairy farmers to utilizing sustainable practices on their farms means we can feel confident that the delicious and nutritious dairy foods we enjoy every day are produced with minimal environmental impact.

Milk, cheese, yogurt, and other dairy foods provide high quality protein and essential nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A, phosphorus, riboflavin, vitamin B12, and pantothenic acid. Here are a few easy ways to add more healthy, sustainable dairy to your diet:

- Make a yogurt parfait with layers of fruit and granola
- Create flavored milk by blending low-fat milk with your favorite fruit like sliced bananas or strawberries
- Top broccoli with melted cheddar cheese
- Blend peanut butter, bananas, Greek yogurt, and milk for a delicious smoothie



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