



Study examines emissions associated with milk

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MADISON, Wis. — Dairy farmers have focused on sustainable practices on their farms for many generations because it makes good economic sense, and now a new fluid milk carbon footprint study shows those efforts have been effective.

The carbon footprint study measured the greenhouse gas emissions associated with a gallon of milk in the U.S. It showed the total U.S. dairy greenhouse gas emissions are 2 percent of the total U.S. emissions.

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy commissioned the Applied Sustainability Center at the University of Arkansas to conduct this study.

“The study included 500 random farms from across the U.S. of all sizes and 50 processing facilities,” said Kimberly Clauss, a partner in Clauss Dairy Farms, Hilmar, Calif.

“The study took everything into account for the fluid milk chain, starting with the crops in the fields, to the dairy operation, transportation to the processing plant and all the way to the retail store.”

Clauss Dairy Farms includes two operations that have a total of 3,000 Jersey cows.

“My dad started the dairy in the ‘50s, and now the next generation is continuing it,” Clauss noted.

Many dairy producers utilize sustainable practices for their operations such as recycling water.

“We take the water we use to cool our milk and then use it to wash cows, flush free-stall barns and irrigate our crop land so we don’t have to buy commercial fertilizer,” Clauss explained.

Clauss Dairy Farms also is going to complete an energy audit.

“It will look at all the energy uses on our farm like pumps and lights in the barns,” the dairy producer said. “So that we can get more ideas and plan to do things that make economic sense as we go forward.”

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy has five focus areas – health and wellness, research and insights, sustainability, consumer confidence and globalization.

“I got involved with the Innovation Center when I was on the National Dairy Board,” Clauss said. “The most exciting part is this group brought the whole industry together to work on projects and key issues for the industry.”

The group includes representatives of all sectors of the dairy industry including; dairy producers, dairy cooperatives, processors and manufacturers.

“The 30 companies on the board represent 80 percent of the U.S. dairy industry,” Clauss said. “It is so neat to see people from all sides of the industry bringing visions forth for where the industry is going.”

The center already has 10 projects in progress that are focused on greenhouse gas reduction. These projects are looking at improvements at the farm, at the processing plant and for transportation.

For example, the Dairy Power project is addressing the barriers to the adoption of methane digesters which capture methane gas from manure and turn it into power.

For the processors, the Next Generation Cleaning Project promotes the adoption of reduced temperature cleaning technologies to reduce costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

“According to the Natural Marketing Institute, 62 percent of frequent milk users are concerned about the environmental impact of milk,” Clauss said. “So we need to work on consumer confidence.”

It is important for consumers to know that dairymen are taking care of their animals, producing healthy products and utilizing sustainable practices on their farms, Clauss stressed.

Dairymen now can participate in the Farmers Assuring Responsible Management program developed by the National Milk Producers Federation and Dairy Management Inc. This nationwide, verifiable program is focused on animal well-being.

“There are lots of things we are doing that we don’t talk about, but the animals are the most important thing to us,” Clauss stressed.

“For the future of our business and the next generation, if we don’t have consumer confidence, we’ll be in big trouble.”

Currently, the carbon footprint study is going through a peer review.

“The feedback we’ve received from farmers and the industry has been positive,” Clauss said. “The review should be completed by the second quarter of 2011.

“We have a great story to tell, and it is wonderful to see the dairy industry step up and focus on sustainability,” Clauss stressed. “Hopefully, more groups will look at where they are at because that will be positive for the ag industry in the long run.”

For more information about the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, visit, www.usdairy.com.