



Dairy's Carbon Footprint = Two Percent

Dairy farmers are using innovative management practices to sustain our natural resources and reduce dairy's carbon footprint.

Scientists and food enthusiasts at the 2010 International Food LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) Conference in Italy learned that greenhouse gas emissions of all dairy products equal about 2 percent of total U.S. emissions.

Researchers followed the journey of a gallon of milk from the beginning of the life cycle when crops are grown to feed cows; milk is produced and delivered to processors; through processing, packaging and distribution; all the way to the purchase and disposal of the gallon of milk by the consumer.

The two percent mark is far less than earlier figures reported about the global livestock industry that were incorrectly attributed to U.S. dairy.

"Calculating, managing and reducing the emissions of everyday products is a growing quest for companies across the business spectrum," writes Joel Makower, Executive Editor of GreenBiz.com. "But most products are multi-company affairs. It's one thing for a company to do this. It's altogether another thing to address climate change across an entire industry."

Despite the logistical challenges, tracking the carbon footprint of a process or a product is becoming more and more common as more consumers are considering environmental impact when making food choices.

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~ Joel Makower, Greenbiz.com

"The entire dairy industry—dairy producers, processors, manufacturers and brands—is working together to build on its long history of sustainability. We are committed to providing the nutritious dairy products consumers want in a way that makes the industry, people and the earth economically, environmentally, and socially better, now and for future generations," said Thomas P. Gallagher, CEO of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy and Dairy Management Inc.TM, speaking on behalf of the nation's farmers.

One of the key findings of the study, according to the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, is that "management practices are an important driver of the carbon footprint," for farms, plants and transportation within the industry. In fact, the findings indicate that good management practices are more important than geographic region, business model or the size of the dairy farm.

As a result, dairy businesses across the country are making changes that are environmentally and economically beneficial. A variety of case studies and best practices is available from the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, which has coordinated an industry-wide roadmap to reduce carbon emissions.

Since the 2010 study results were released, the Center also has published a progress report which summarizes the efforts currently under way to increase the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the dairy industry.

Find more details on the research and examples of dairy businesses that have implemented sustainable practices at www.usdairy.com/Sustainability.