

Wednesday, Sep. 29, 2010

## **U.S. dairies are producing more milk, less carbon**

I was flabbergasted by the incomplete reporting about the impact of the U.S. dairy industry on global warming ("Milk's effect on climate tallied," Sept. 24, Page A-1). My response will cite a 2010 presentation by Dr. Jude Capper from Washington State University.

While it is true that over the last 65 years an individual cow's carbon footprint has doubled, the number of U.S. dairy cows has decreased 67 percent and the annual production per cow has increased 250 percent. Thus, the total carbon footprint per gallon of milk produced has decreased 41 percent. It takes 95,000 dairy cows to produce 1 billion pounds of milk in the U.S. but 220,000 cows in New Zealand. Low input systems yield low outputs. Increasing production per cow decreases the carbon footprint per gallon of milk produced.

In assessing the relative impact of other industries all inputs to the total system must also be measured. In examining the auto industry, the environmental impact of mining iron and making steel, batteries, tires and gasoline must also be included to make fair comparisons.

As the world population grows to 9 billion by 2050, there will be many more mouths to feed. Efficiency is the best environmental and economic solution.

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