

Innovation Center For US Dairy Seeks Processor, Farm Nominees For New US Dairy Sustainability Awards

Rosemont, IL—The Innovation Center for US Dairy, in affiliation with the Dairy Research Institute, this week announced the US Dairy Sustainability Awards, a new program to recognize dairy farms, businesses and collaborative partnerships for efforts that deliver outstanding economic, environmental and/or social benefit.

Nominations are open to all segments of the US dairy value chain for the following awards:

- US Dairy Export Council Award for Outstanding Dairy Processing & Manufacturing Sustainability. This award will recognize dairy processing and manufacturing businesses for demonstrating outstanding achievement in sustainability.

- Elanco Award for Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability. This award will recognize dairy farm businesses for demonstrating outstanding achievement in sustainability. Three farms will be honored to illustrate that the highest standards of excellence can be regardless of farm size, location or type of operation.

- Center for Advanced Energy Studies/Idaho National Laboratory Award for Outstanding Achievement in Energy. This award will recognize outstanding achievements in energy conservation and/or renewable energy generation.

All nominations will be evaluated based on the program's or project's results as measured by triple bottom-line success: economic, environmental and social. Judges will also assess the potential for adoption of the idea by other dairy farms and businesses; demonstrated learning, innovation and improvement; and scalability.

Judging will be conducted by an independent panel representing the

full spectrum of the dairy supply chain, as well as academia, government, media, business and non-governmental organizations. The judging panel will be announced next month.

Winners of the US Dairy Sustainability Awards will be announced in February 2012.

Also, honorees will share their stories and passion for sustainability on a national scale in forums and venues, and will be featured on US Dairy.com/sustainability.

The awards are part of the US Dairy Sustainability Commitment, an industry-wide effort to measure and improve the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the dairy industry.

"Consumers are increasingly interested in choosing nutritious, responsibly made products," said Larry Jensen, president of Leprino Foods and chair of the Innovation Center for US Dairy. "The US Dairy Sustainability Awards highlight the dairy industry's long-standing commitment to healthy people, healthy products and a healthy planet, while showcasing that sustainability makes good business sense, as well."

"Across the entire US dairy industry, the sustainability commitment is producing model programs and processes for improved efficiency and business value," said Mike McCloskey, owner and general manager of Fair Oaks Farms and chair of the Innovation Center's Sustainability Council.

"These awards provide an opportunity to recognize and share advances in production practices and technology that will help us meet the needs of an ever-growing population," McCloskey added.

The deadline for applications is December 1, 2011.

For more information or to nominate, visit USDairy.com/sustainability/awards. r

Food Product Tracing

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gress to "adequately fund" FDA's essential missions.

More than 60 organizations and companies signed the ad, including the International Dairy Foods Association, Grocery Manufacturers Association, American Frozen Food Institute, Snack Food Association, American Spice Trade Association, National Fisheries Institute, Produce Marketing Association, Consumer Federation of America, Center for Science in the Public Interest, Council for Responsible Nutrition, and Pew Charitable Trusts.

Food Product Tracing Pilot Studies

Meanwhile, FDA on Wednesday announced that two new pilot programs are intended to enhance the agency's and the food industry's ability to trace products responsible for foodborne illness outbreaks.

The Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) will lead the two pilot programs at the direction of FDA, under an existing FDA contract.

The purpose of these pilots will be to identify methods to rapidly and effectively trace food products throughout the supply chain so that, during a food-related outbreak, products can be quickly identified and removed from the marketplace, which will ultimately help minimize the number of consumers affected by a contaminated product.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), signed into law in early January, requires FDA to establish at least two pilot projects, one involving processed foods and the other involving produce. The FSMA also directs FDA to establish record-keeping requirements for high-risk foods to help in tracing products.

IFT will conduct both the processed food and produce pilots required by the FSMA, involving multiple stakeholders throughout the food system. IFT will focus on data use and how data collection processes impact the speed and accuracy of traceback during an outbreak.

This work will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, systems currently in use for identifying, capturing, storing, and sharing data will be "tweaked" to facilitate data analysis.

During the second stage, supply chain data will be used to determine if the interfaces between existing systems are sufficient to trace a product both forward and back along the supply chain.

Also, the costs and benefits to companies and society will be evaluated, and methods and technologies available to trace food products, both domestically and globally, will be examined.

In the design and implementation of the pilot projects, IFT will, among other things, conduct mock tracebacks with a goal of identifying a common source in the supply chain;

and ensure that the pilots reflect the diversity of the food supply, are practical for facilities of varying sizes, include different types of FDA-regulated foods that have been the subject of significant outbreaks between 2006 and 2010, and address the supply chain from farms to restaurants and grocery stores.

The pilots will help to determine what data are most needed to trace a product that has been distributed widely in the marketplace back to a common source. Tracing product forward, such as in the case of an ingredient known to be contaminated, also will be tested.

FSMA also requires FDA to collect additional data to assess the costs and benefits associated with the adoption and use of several product tracing technologies; the feasibility of such technologies for different sectors of the food industry, including small businesses; and whether such technologies are compatible with the product tracing requirements in FSMA. FDA must also ensure that effective procedures exist to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of any confidential information.

After the pilots are completed and additional data are gathered, FDA will initiate rulemaking on record-keeping requirements for high-risk foods to facilitate trading. FDA must define high-risk foods, considering such factors as the known risks of a food based on foodborne illness data, the likelihood that a particular food has a high potential risk for contamination, and the likely severity of an illness attributed to a particular food.

In general, FDA explained, a product tracing system involves documenting the production and distribution chain of products so that in the case of an outbreak or evidence of contaminated food, a product can be traced back to a common source or forward through distribution channels.

Many producers, manufacturers and retailers have product tracing systems in place, but they vary depending on the amount of information the system records, how far forward or backwards in the supply chain the system tracks, technologies used to maintain records and the precision with which a system can pinpoint a product's movement.

The pilot projects will be completed in 2012 and will culminate in an IFT report that will be issued to FDA. IFT previously completed a study of product tracing for FDA back in 2009.

IFT will continue to provide opportunities for stakeholders to learn and exchange ideas about traceability over the next several months.

IFT reports, findings, and recommendations regarding traceability are available at www.ift.org/traceability. Companies interested in participating or learning more about the study can contact Caitlin Hickey, at chickey@ift.org; (202) 330-4985. r

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