



3 steps to save energy and money

Megan Pierce, Associate Editor | Updated: October 6, 2011

The SaveEnergy tool is now available to help dairy farmers save energy and improve their bottom line.

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy launched the SaveEnergy online resource this week at World Dairy Expo. The SaveEnergy resource connects dairy producers with financial assistance programs and educational materials to reduce on-farm energy use and related cost. The tool at [USDairy.com/Save Energy](http://USDairy.com/Save_Energy) is part of the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Commitment, an effort established by dairy producers to reduce environmental impact and create business value across the supply chain.

“Farmers are the original conservationists. Historically, we have raised the bar by reducing, reusing and recycling, using new technology and improving management practices on our dairies,” says Steve Graybeal, dairy producer from Lancaster County, Penn., and member of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy’s Sustainability Council. “Still, many dairy producers aren’t aware of how easy or affordable it could be to adopt energy efficient best practices. We want to change that with tools like SaveEnergy.”

Through an agreement with the Innovation Center, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) supported the development of the SaveEnergy tool to accelerate energy conservation and build awareness of the importance of on-farm energy audits, also known as Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMPs). SaveEnergy is part of the Farm Energy Efficiency project, one of 10 projects of the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Commitment.

Dairy producers can achieve greater energy efficiency by taking an important first step — conducting an energy audit on their farming operation. An on-farm energy audit inventories a dairy’s current systems and equipment, identifies the cost of energy used and provides a detailed recommendation about actions, upgrades and potential savings that could most benefit the farm. It typically takes less than four hours of the producer’s time and can identify opportunities to reduce energy use by 10 percent to 35 percent.

The SaveEnergy tool follows an easy three-step process:

1. Learn how to cut costs of on-farm energy use.
2. Decide if an energy audit is right for the dairy operation.
3. Find financial assistance for on-farm energy audits and equipment updates.

“We are delighted to team up with the dairy industry to provide the SaveEnergy Web tool to farmers,” says NRCS Chief Dave White. “NRCS is committed to helping farmers remain economically viable by increasing their access to conservation measures that conserve natural resources and result in minimal impacts to the environment.”

Dairy producers can use the SaveEnergy Finder to identify financial assistance for on-farm energy audits and the implementation of audit recommendations. The Finder tool uses an interactive map that instantly connects users to state and local financial assistance programs for energy audits, incentives or rebates for equipment retrofits and a customized listing of local equipment suppliers and installers.

“Quite simply, our goal is to connect more dairy producers to energy savings,” says Erin Fitzgerald, senior vice president of sustainability for the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. “Financial assistance, programs and application requirements vary from state to state and can come from multiple sources including utility companies. By aggregating all of the different offerings in one place, we hope to reduce time, frustration and confusion for producers who want to evaluate all options.”

White said NRCS will use its Environmental Quality Incentives Program to provide technical and financial assistance for the on-farm energy audits and energy efficiency equipment upgrades this fall. While funding levels may differ from state to state, eligibility criteria will remain the same nationwide, making the SaveEnergy Finder resource especially timely for dairy producers.

To access the SaveEnergy tool, go to: USDairy.com/SaveEnergy.