



Dairy sustainability award winners named

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On Wednesday, the [Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy](#) announced the winners of the inaugural [U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards](#), a program to recognize dairy farms, dairy companies and collaborative partnerships for efforts that advance the sustainability of the dairy industry.

"Across the supply chain, the dairy industry continues to demonstrate leadership in meeting consumer demand for great-tasting, wholesome and nutritious dairy products, while finding new ways to preserve our planet's precious resources," said Barbara O'Brien, president of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, which was founded by dairy producers.

An independent panel of judges representing the full spectrum of the dairy supply chain — as well as academia, government, media, business and nongovernmental organizations — selected this year's winners based on the program's or project's results as measured by economic, environmental and social responsibility aspects.

Winners of the Elanco Award for Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability are:

Blue Spruce Farm, Bridport, Vt.

When the three Audet brothers decided to partner with their father in the dairy business, they envisioned a future focused on natural resources and the environment. They pictured a farm that would increase their labor and energy efficiency, provide the best in cow health and comfort and produce the highest-quality milk. Blue Spruce Farm was one of the first farms in the country to install a variable-speed vacuum pump control, reducing energy used during milking by nearly 60 percent. Inspired, they pursued new technologies in lighting, milking, milk cooling, barn construction, ventilation and water heating that reduced energy use from an average of 1,000 kWh per cow per year, to an average of 500 kWh per cow per year. These savings, in turn, reduced greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 500 pounds of CO₂e per cow per year. Blue Spruce Farm is probably best known for being the first dairy to participate in Central Vermont Public Service's ground-breaking Cow Power program, which allows consumers to purchase renewable energy generated on dairy farms.

Holsum Dairies, Hilbert, Wis.

Sustainability is a cornerstone for Holsum Dairies. Long-term sustainability, according to Holsum, must benefit the dairy, its employees, and the community financially and socially; have a positive impact on the environment; maintain the welfare of animals; and produce safe, high-quality milk. These were significant considerations when Holsum selected a location for its two dairies in 2001 and 2006. Over the past 25 years, Calumet County lost animal operations but significantly increased crop production. Spotting this imbalance, Holsum worked with 40 local crop farmers and five custom harvesters to provide all of the dairy's forage needs, fostering trust and delivering benefits for all parties. During their annual meetings, the farmers share information and best practices, resulting in a stronger knowledge base and higher efficiency as well as higher profit and higher quality feed for the animals.

Werkhoven Dairy, Monroe, Wash.

Ten years ago, Werkhoven Dairy assumed a leadership role in developing a collaborative partnership between their farm and the neighboring dairy and beef producers of the Sno/Sky Ag Alliance; the Northwest Chinook Recovery (an organization working to restore salmon habitat); and the 3,500-member Native American Tulalip Tribes. Together, they focused on opportunities for resource conservation and formed Qualco Energy. Qualco, which means “where two rivers come together” in the language of the native peoples, is a nonprofit entity that collects manure from the cows and pre-consumer food waste from nearby companies and uses those materials to generate energy through a digester system. The system produces enough energy each day to power 300 homes while keeping the air and water clean and protecting salmon streams. It also creates, enough Grade A compost for Werkhoven Dairy to naturally fertilize their fields and share with their neighbors.

Other winners include:

- Darigold, Inc., of Seattle, Wash., winner of the U.S. Dairy Export Council Award for Outstanding Dairy Processing & Manufacturing Sustainability.
- Oakhurst Dairy, of Portland, Maine, honorable mention in the U.S. Dairy Export Council Award for Outstanding Dairy Processing & Manufacturing Sustainability.
- Brubaker Farms of Mount Joy, Pa., winner of the Center for Advanced Energy Studies/Idaho National Laboratory Award for Outstanding Achievement in Energy.

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