

# DAIRYBUSINESS

## **IDA leads effort to help dairy producers cut farm energy costs, use**

*Idaho dairymen's Association partners with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy®'s on Farm Energy Efficiency project*

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In today's economic climate dairy producers are focused on maximizing operational budgets. While Idaho's energy costs are lower than the national average, dairy producers could gain substantial savings and efficiencies by knowing exactly how energy (electricity, propane, diesel and natural gas) is being used in their operations, how it affects the utility bills, and what steps can be taken to cut costs and save energy.

The Industry Relations Committee of the Idaho Dairymen's Association (IDA) board of directors is leading an awareness effort in partnership with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy®, USDA-Natural Resources and Conservation Services, EnSave, and others in the state to help dairy producers to increase energy efficiency, cut costs and save energy.

"These are tough, economic times and producers are struggling to cash flow their farms. So, looking at every opportunity for helping them to find savings makes good business sense. We want our Farm Energy Efficiency effort to connect Idaho producers with information that will benefit their farms," says Tony VanderHulst, IDA's new dairy producer president. "The first step will be to encourage producers to get an energy audit that breaks down their energy bill and identifies areas for improvement. The second is to connect them to funds and services which allow them to make changes."

The campaign kicked off at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the United Dairywomen of Idaho. Don Schriver, representing Dairy Management, Inc. and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, spoke about the Innovation Center's efforts and the economic benefits of doing more with less (energy).

"The Farm Energy Efficiency project is one of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy's projects that is focused on promoting the value of an energy audit in helping producers identify best practices and equipment upgrades that can save them money and make their operations more efficient. The goal is 7,200 energy audits conducted on farms by 2020," said Schriver. "We can save a lot of energy by just rolling up our sleeves and going after the 'low hanging fruit' -- energy conservation and energy efficiency."

An energy audit is a farm specific analysis of energy use and recommendations to reduce energy usage or ways to increase production using the same amount of fuel or electricity. It generally identifies savings opportunities between 10% to 35%, which can lead to thousands of dollars in annual savings.

Dairy producers can use an energy audit to identify specific opportunities to save, and then implement the recommendations to achieve those savings. While every dairy operation is

different, research shows that the best way for producers to identify the greatest opportunity for savings on their energy bills is to get a farm audit.

According to EnSave, agricultural energy leader and partner on the Innovation Center's national awareness effort for farm energy efficiency, a qualified farm energy audit is an important step towards better energy efficiency and adds value to dairy operations, regardless of size, type or age.

"An energy audit breaks down the utility bill and pinpoints the location and amount of energy being used on the dairy and provides recommendations for the best improvements," said Schriver.

### **Available now: Farm energy audit funds**

The Idaho Farm Energy Efficiency Steering Committee wants producers to know about an immediate energy-saving opportunity. Idaho producers, who are interested in energy savings, are urged to apply for funds at their local Natural Resources and Conservation Service office that will pay for an energy audit through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

"The process is easy. It's important that dairy producers apply now while money is available," said Rebecca MacLeod, USDA-NRCS' national energy liaison for the Innovation Center. "Last year, NRCS awarded nearly \$15 million to agriculture to help finance on-farm energy initiatives."

EQIP funding covers most of the cost of an Agriculture Energy Management Plan, commonly called an energy audit. And, an NRCS-accepted farm energy audit gives producers more opportunities to qualify for additional EQIP funding for energy improvements. Watch for more on Farm Energy Efficiency. Additional resources are available at the Innovation Center's SaveEnergy website at [USDairy.com/SaveEnergy](http://USDairy.com/SaveEnergy).

Idaho is the third largest milk producing state in the United States. Its nearly 500 dairy operations – many of which are multigenerational – produce more than 12 billion pounds of milk annually and represent a regional dairy industry that exceeds \$1.4 billion and employees thousands of state residents in the areas of milk production, processing, transportation, and distribution.

***The Idaho Dairymen's Association (IDA)***, based in Twin Falls, ID, was established to continue to develop and sustain an economically viable Idaho dairy industry that works together to achieve success in the domestic and global marketplace in meeting the needs of the Idaho dairy farm families. Founded in 1944, IDA represents all dairy producers within the state of Idaho. For more information, contact Bob Naerebout, IDA executive director, 208-736-1953 / x102, [bob@wdb.us](mailto:bob@wdb.us), <http://idahodairymens.org>.

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