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Oakhurst Dairy recognized for sustainability program

Portland-based Oakhurst Dairy was recently recognized for its sustainable business practices at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The company received an honorable mention for Outstanding Dairy Processing and Manufacturing in the first U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards, doled out by the Innovation Center for U. S. Dairy, according to a press release. Bill Bennett, president of Oakhurst Dairy, was in D.C. on March 7 to receive the award.

Oakhurst was recognized for its formal sustainability program, which has set 20% reduction goals across many aspects of the operation by 2014. The company has also established an internal process to monitor, evaluate and benchmark improvements, and Oakhurst has already made progress: from 2008-2010, the company reduced its plant energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water use and transportation fuel use by roughly 10% each, almost halfway to its 2014 goals.

The inaugural awards program is designed to recognize farms, companies and collaborative partnerships for efforts that advance the sustainability of the dairy industry. Launched in 2008, the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy is made up of milk producers, processors and manufacturers.

More than 40 nominations were submitted from across the country in three different award categories. A panel of experts from academic institutions, government organizations, dairy science organizations, and industry associations evaluated the nominations and selected the winners.

Oakhurst has other sustainable business practices, including using locally produced biodiesel fuel for 14% of the company's overall fuel needs; investing in a hybrid delivery truck and other hybrid vehicles; and building a thermal solar panel on the roof of its Portland headquarters.

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