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## Holsum Dairies garners national sustainability award

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By Danielle Endvick | Regional Editor

A Wisconsin dairy partnership has been recognized nationally for its efforts in sustainable farming.

Holsum Dairies was among three farms recognized for Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability during the inaugural U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards March 7 in Washington, D.C.

The operation's two farms, Irish Dairy and Elm Dairy, are located near Hilbert, midway between Lake Michigan and Winnebago in northeastern Wisconsin.

Each of the dairies houses about a 3,600-cow milking herd, but Holsum has striven to disprove the environmental stigmas often associated with large dairies.

The farm has been a frontrunner in green technology, installing a manure digester in 2002 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2004, Holsum became Wisconsin's first Green Tier farm. Green Tier is a voluntary program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. It contracts with companies, including agricultural enterprises, that want to be held accountable for their environmental performances.

"We want to demonstrate to other farms and our neighbors that environmental performance is linked to economic performance," Holsum Dairies Manager Kenn Buelow said in a 2005 interview with The Country Today.

Buelow was not available for comment at press time.

Sustainability of the community and natural environment were chief concerns as the dairy was designed.

Holsum works closely with nearly 40 local crop farmers and custom harvesters to provide all of the farm's forage needs. The partnership brings 11,000 acres under a single nutrient management plan.

### Other awards

Also earning awards for Outstanding Dairy Farm Sustainability were Blue Spruce Farm, operated by the Audet family of Bridgeport, Vt., and Werkhoven Dairy of Monroe, Wash.

Blue Spruce Farm has made dramatic efforts to cut energy use. It 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.

Werkhoven Dairy was recognized for its leadership role in developing a collaborative partnership between neighboring cattlemen and other stakeholders to form a nonprofit organization that operates an aerobic digester system.

The U.S. Dairy Export Council award for Outstanding Dairy Processing and Manufacturing Sustainability went to Darigold, a Seattle-based farmer-owned dairy. Oakhurst Dairy of Portland, Maine earned honorable mention.

Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Energy went to Brubaker Farms of Mount Joy, Pa. and DF-AP of Good, Idaho, in recognition of innovative digester projects.

An independent panel of judges selected the winners from a pool of more than 40 nominees.

The awards were a part of the U.S. Dairy Sustainability Commitment, launched in 2008 to improve the economic, environmental and social 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," Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy President Barbara O'Brien said in a news release.

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