There’s a lot to learn about dairy sustainability

In 2007, U.S. dairy farmers and companies committed to being leaders in sustainability. The fifth annual U.S. Dairy Sustainability Report describes how we’re making this goal a reality — from caring for cows to collaborative actions.

It starts with healthy cows

- America’s dairy farmers have a long history of providing the highest levels of animal care.
- Dairy cows are housed, fed and milked on approximately 47,000 dairy farms in all 50 states.
- Having a four-chambered stomach means cows can digest types of feed that people can’t eat, converting it to nutritious milk.

Dairy cows make many contributions to our food system beyond the wholesome milk they produce.

- About 80% of what cows eat cannot be eaten by people—we simply can’t digest it.
- More than 50% of cow feed is grass (hay and silage).
- About 35% of feed (such as corn, alfalfa, hay, and soybeans) is grown on the farm by dairy farmers; the rest is purchased from other farmers.

Caring for the land

Our success depends not only on healthy cows, but also on clean air and water, healthy soil, and vibrant ecosystems.

Greenhouse Gases

Producing a gallon of milk in 2007 generated 63% less GHG emissions than in 1944.

15% of the GHG emissions for an average U.S. household comes from the food they buy.

51.5% of the U.S. dairy GHG emissions is from milk production.

At year-end 2014, more than 85% of the nation’s milk supply came from farms that follow the National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Program guidelines, up from approximately 70% at the end of 2013.
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Water Footprint

A gallon of milk in 2007 was produced with 65% less water than in 1944. Total dairy water use is approximately 5.1% of total U.S. water withdrawal. Feed production accounts for 93.5% of dairy water use; 3.6% is used for milk production, 1.5% is used to process, package and distribute, and 1.4% is used by retail and consumers.

Water Recycling

- Dairy farms use water to keep cows cool, hydrated and healthy. It is also used to clean and sanitize equipment and barns.
- On dairy farms, water is typically re-used as many as five or six times.
- Water used to clean milking parlors is re-used to clean production areas and then to irrigate fields.
- Modern dairy farms often have heat exchangers, which save energy by using cold water to partially cool the milk. The water is then collected and used as drinking water for cows.

Nutrient Cycle

Did you know?

In 2014, the number of operating anaerobic digester systems in the U.S. reached a total of 247 on-farm systems with 82% located on dairy farms.
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Delivering dairy goodness to your table

Nutrient-rich milk and dairy foods help foster health and wellness among people of all ages.

Milk, cheese and yogurt contribute just 10% of the calories in the U.S. diet...

Did you know?
Three serving of milk costs less than $1 a day.

Did you know?
Milk is the No. 1 U.S. food source of calcium, potassium and vitamin D.

Supporting strong communities

Dairy farmers, importers and businesses across the country work to make a positive impact in their communities, help those in need and connect their neighbors with the people who provide milk and dairy products.

National Dairy Council (NDC) has championed the health and well-being of children for 100 years.

Fuel Up to Play 60 is the nation’s largest in-school health and wellness program. With its partners, more than 11 million incremental summer meals were served to food-insecure children in 2014.

In 2014, the Great American Milk Drive delivered 283,000 gallons of milk (and its nine essential nutrients) to hungry families.

Looking ahead

Working together, dairy farms and businesses are finding shared solutions to today’s most pressing challenge: increasing food production in a manner that supports healthy people, healthy communities and a healthy environment.

Get the full sustainability report at:
http://www.usdairy.com/sustainability/