



Kylie Konyn

What does sustainability mean? According to the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Although this serves as a broad definition of the term, the word sustainability can vary in its definition in the minds of members of the California dairy industry.

My name is Kylie Konyn. I'm currently attending St Joseph Academy, as well as my local community college. I am a third-generation dairy farmer from San Diego, CA. San Diego...that doesn't sound like a dairy community. Well, it isn't any more, however at one time San Diego was once home to over 200 dairy farms. Now that number has decreased to only two remaining dairy farms within our county, one of which is my family's farm. When asked how we have survived, I always say that the key to our survival has been embracing sustainability and raw determination.

If you have never visited a dairy farm, let me tell you more about ours. We incorporate sustainable practices into the everyday workings of Frank Konyn Dairy. We have trucks out on the road collecting spent brewery grains from over eighteen breweries throughout San Diego. We also collect pressed fruit and vegetable waste from three juice manufacturers and excess bakery products from over twelve bakeries and bread factories throughout the County. With the assistance of our staff nutritionists, these byproducts, discarded by humans, are mixed with other ingredients and turned into high quality rations for our animals, who in turn produce high protein dairy products for human consumption.

We recycle our manure at our other sister business, San Pasqual Valley Soils. Here, we co-compost the greens waste diverted from local landfills with the cow manure and create a variety of soil building products and moisture retention products. Our OMRI certified "Valley's Best Compost" is used by many local organic farmers. We even use some of it on our alfalfa fields. We try to grow as much of our forages locally as we can.

I started out in dairy farming at the age of four, helping the calf raiser feed the calves. Now, I work alongside my father assisting with everything related to caring for our herd of over 800 milk cows. I assist with veterinary health checks and pasture rotation management of our "dry cows". I also assist with monthly genomic testing of calves. Who would have thought that individual hair follicles would be able to give us a prediction of how a calf would grow and develop and what her likely production and confirmation would be? I have even been able to help assist the vet with embryo transfers on some of my own cows. It's made me very excited about science and what I hope to do in the future.

Along with involvement on the farm, my participation in the California Dairy community was brought about by the amazing educators and those who promote learning and participation. I serve as Vice President for the California Jr. Holstein Association. Through this association, I have traveled the state observing different aspects of the California Dairy Industry. I have also been a two-time champion at the National Dairy Bowl competition. The California Jr. Jersey Association elected me as this year's president, as well as serving as the California Jersey Queen this past year. It is through this title, as well as my everyday life as a dairy farmer, that I serve as an ambassador for the dairy industry and educate others as to sustainability, nutrition, and the future of the dairy industry.

The California dairy industry is an important aspect of a nutritious global food system. Since 1993, California has been the top dairy state with nearly 1 in 5 cows coming from California. California's milk standards exceed federal standards because California processors add nonfat milk solids, which offer improved taste and nutritional benefits. In addition, California milk exceeds the federal guidelines for the amounts of calcium and protein in each serving. When talking about a global impact, California dominates, as nearly 35% of US exports are a result of the California Dairy Industry. In addition, nearly 1.12 billion pounds of US beef consumed comes from California dairy cattle. As mentioned earlier, dairy cattle are unique as they are able to convert human food waste, which is not otherwise usable, into the raw production of milk containing nine essential nutrients.

The future of the California dairy industry, although challenging, looks bright. California dairy farmers face increased challenges, such as state laws and an increased number of animal activist who think they know best. However, I do not envision this as much as a problem, but rather an incentive to do more. Through the use of selective breeding of our animals and education of the public, I see a more sustainable industry incorporating new jobs, renewable resources, reduced food waste, and finally the reduction of emissions such as methane and carbon. By farmers working together and the implementation of new technology, we are already seeing an increase in milk production even with the decrease in dairy population.

Although I may not know exactly where my education will take me, I am excited to be involved with the dairy industry. I am excited for the next generation of dairy enthusiast, as they acknowledge a need for change, a change of making the best, better. I hope to further my education at an institute that is the best fit for me, while also helping me to increase my knowledge in order that I may educate others as to the importance of the dairy industry in all aspects, including sustainability. The future is bright and it is our duty as the next generation to express what sustainability means to us. While that may mean something different to each of us, sustainability to me means leaving things better than I found them, in hopes for a better future.