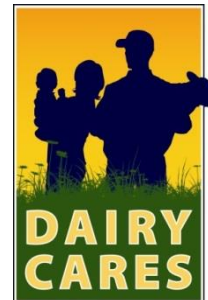


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Dairy Cares Newsletter

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Dry year doesn't deter dairy families' progress; Sustainability work to continue in the New Year

It was one for the history books: 2014 marked the third straight season of extraordinary low rainfall and extreme drought, the worst in 1,200 years according to a recent [study](#). In October, the [Los Angeles Times](#) even took note of California dairy farmers' struggle to survive the drought, reporting that about 500,000 acres of cropland, normally planted with feed for cows, went fallow. Many dairies adjusted their cropping patterns to conserve water while still providing necessary feed for their cattle.

Despite the prolonged drought, dairy families also continued their daily work of caring for cows and protecting the environment, while making progress on a number of important sustainability issues. They went the extra mile to make sure cows had their basic daily needs met, such as having access to fresh water, [healthy food](#) and quality veterinary care.

Lack of water didn't deter dairy families' ongoing efforts to protect and improve surface and groundwater quality. May 2014 marked the seven-year anniversary of the adoption of the nation's most [comprehensive and stringent water quality protection regulations](#) for dairies in the Central Valley. Designed to protect both surface and groundwater sources from contamination, these measures continue to be successfully implemented through the hard work of the dairy community. California dairies remain leaders in developing the art and science of utilizing natural fertilizer to grow crops, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and synthetic fertilizers.

The Central Valley also saw cleaner air in 2014, thanks in part to dairy families. For the first time since the adoption of the federal Clean Air Act, the San Joaquin Valley recorded zero annual violations of the 1-hour ozone standard in 2013 and 2014. By comparison, the eight-county region experienced 281 and 321 violations of the 1-hour standard in 1996 and 1998, respectively. In 2004, the Environmental Protection Agency classified the region as being in "extreme" non-attainment of the standard, meaning that attainment was deemed impossible with existing technology. San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District board members were quick to share credit for improved air quality with those who made it happen, including dairy families.

“We achieved this great milestone because valley farmers and dairy families have consistently proven to be great stewards of the environment and have done a lot more than their competitors throughout the nation and the rest of the world to improve air quality,” said Tony Barba, board member and Kings County Supervisor.

2014 also brought national recognition to two California dairy farms. [Maddox Dairy Farms](#) of Riverdale and [Joseph Gallo Farms](#) of Atwater were awarded with distinguished U.S. Dairy Sustainability Awards by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. The awards, sponsored in part by the World Wildlife Fund and the U.S. EPA, recognize exceptional commitment to sustainable dairy farming practices.

More progress expected in 2015

There is plenty to look forward to 2015 – besides some much-needed rain – as California dairy families continue their work on important sustainability issues. The state has earmarked nearly \$12 million this year for a new California Department of Food and Agriculture-administered program to research and build dairy manure digesters. These funds, combined with investment from dairy families and the private sector, along with the right economic conditions, could lead to several new biogas digesters being built in the state, further reducing the carbon footprint of dairies while providing a clean and renewable source of energy for thousands of Californians.

Also in 2015, Dairy Cares will continue its work with Audubon California, Sustainable Conservation, Western United Dairymen and others to step up efforts to protect and conserve the state’s population of Tricolored Blackbirds. Blackbird colonies have become dependent on dairies as a source of feed following loss of their natural habitat and due in part to recent drought. Dairy families will continue to work cooperatively with conservationists to assist in the recovery of the species and identification of ways to improve off-dairy habitat.

These are just a few examples of how California families work, year in and year out, to protect and enhance the environment while continuing to produce jobs and economic benefit, not to mention delicious, nutritious and affordable food products, for millions of families. Here’s wishing everyone a happy, healthy and safe New Year!

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Cattlemen’s Association, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Dairy Research Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, GHD, Inc., Hilmar Cheese Co., Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Merck Animal Health, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit DairyCares.com or call 916-441-3318.