

Dairy Cares News, December 2022

## California's 'Planet-Smart Dairy' Picks Up Momentum

More investments in research and incentives are coming soon to further advance the development of planet-smart dairy farm practices.

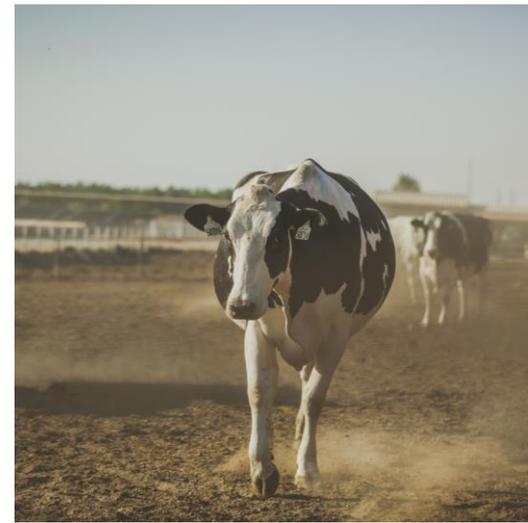
California is advancing planet-smart dairy farming in a big way. Dairy methane reduction projects on 400-plus farms are eliminating or capturing more than 2.5 million tons of methane emissions annually (CO<sub>2</sub>e). In just the past five years, the public and private sectors have made unparalleled investments. As another wave of funding adds momentum, California dairy farmers are on track to meet ambitious climate targets, while enhancing regenerative and water-smart practices.

California's Dairy Digester Research and Development Program (DDRDP) and the Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP) account for the majority of dairy methane reduction projects. These programs are making a large impact and stand out within the state's overall [climate investment portfolio](#). The DDRDP has proven to be the state's most cost-effective climate investment and the most effective program for overall emission reductions. The renewable energy and fuels being created are helping to power the state's low-carbon future while improving air quality.

The collective investment of public and private funds in California's dairy methane reduction effort now exceeds \$2 billion. The state has already allocated funds for dairy methane reduction in 2023. A recent [University of California analysis](#) found that—considering current and pledged investments, economic trends, and anticipated additional solutions—California dairy farms are on track to achieve the state's 40 percent dairy methane reduction goal and will reach “climate neutrality” by 2030.

A significant catalyst in this effort, the California Dairy Research Foundation and its partners including the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) were recently awarded \$85 million by the United States Department of Agriculture under the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program. The funding will leverage additional matching state funds and private capital investments, for a total of more than \$300 million in new investment. The incentive funds—administered by CDFA—will help bring emerging technologies that reduce methane *and* improve groundwater protection to California dairies as full-scale projects. The practices will be studied by UC researchers to quantify emission reductions and improved water quality outcomes.

The five-year project brings together more than 20 partner organizations from throughout the value chain, including California governmental organizations, dairy cooperatives and processors, universities, producer organizations, environmental organizations, and others. The funding will help accelerate efforts to explore opportunities for expanding the use of manure nutrients across California's diverse agricultural landscape. The current use of dairy manure nutrients to grow feed crops already helps reduce reliance on fossil fuels and conventional fertilizer. By using manure to create more valuable and exportable soil amendments, dairy farms could play a larger role in developing more sustainable, regenerative farming models. Potential projects for funding include vermifiltration, advanced manure solid-liquid separation, algae raceways with a moving bed biofilm reactor, subsurface drip fertigation using liquid manure, aerated static compost piles, and others.



*California's "Planet-Smart Dairy" mantra is moving forward with momentum and transforming the latest science into everyday farming practices.*

Progress in California’s “planet-smart dairy” goals is multi-faceted. Dairy farms continue to gain efficiencies—producing more with less, thanks to improved animal health and breeding, and other management practices. Additionally, several feed additives are expected to become commercially available within the next several years, which could be used to reduce enteric methane emissions from California’s dairy cows.

The state and private companies are also investing in the research and demonstration of enteric methane solutions. Five million dollars was appropriated in the last two budget cycles for general research to verify reductions and measure the cost-effectiveness of various strategies. An additional \$10 million was provided to CDFA this year for enteric feed additive research and demonstration projects. This funding will be critical to identifying how enteric emission reduction strategies can help to achieve the state’s ambitious dairy and livestock methane reduction targets.

The investments and partnerships happening in California are unparalleled globally. The Golden State’s collaborative and incentive-based approach continues to demonstrate world-leading progress and a workable model for others to follow. Dairy farmers and their partners are working hard to help meet [growing demand](#) for milk and dairy foods, while quickly reducing climate warming and better protecting the planet as a whole.

**California’s “Planet-Smart Dairy” mantra is moving forward with momentum and transforming the latest science into everyday farming practices.**

*Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Dairy Research Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area, Dairy Institute of California, F & R Ag Services, Hilmar Cheese Company, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Inc, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Valley Milk, LLC, Yosemite Farm Credit, Zenith Insurance Company, and others. For information, visit [DairyCares.com](http://DairyCares.com). To subscribe to the newsletter, contact [news@dairycares.com](mailto:news@dairycares.com).*

