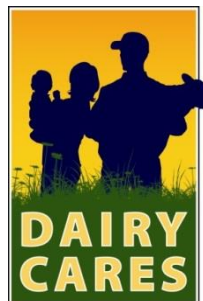


Funding provided by:



Dairy Cares Newsletter

March 2017

DairyCares.com

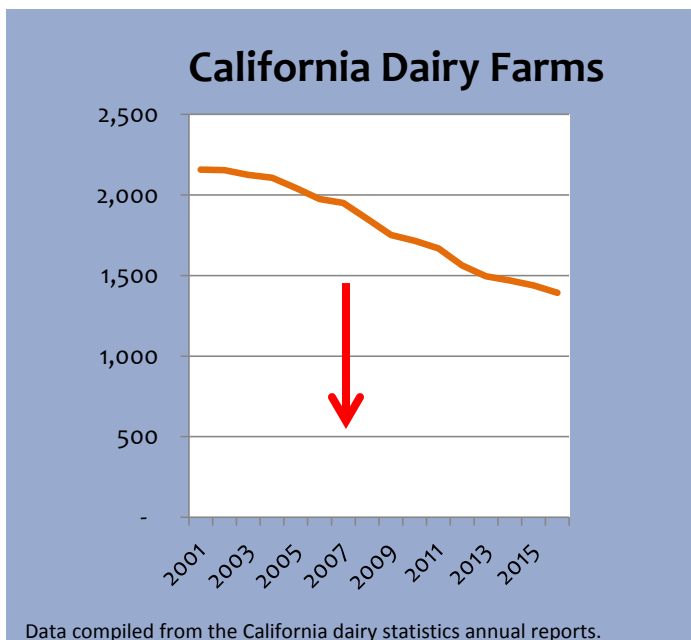
California continues to lose dairies

California dairy farms have a rich legacy beginning with the Spanish missionaries and expanding greatly during the Gold Rush. For generations, these dairy families have made our state their home, caring for their cows, and contributing to our economy and culture. For more than two centuries, producing high-quality, highly-nutritious dairy products has been a way of life for this dedicated, passionate group of families. Unfortunately, this legacy is slipping away.

Over the past 16 years, the number of dairy farms in California has been steadily declining, dropping from over 2,100 to less than 1,400 dairies today. It is a trend that may go unnoticed as the Golden State remains the No. 1 producer of milk. However, the pattern is undeniable. Smaller dairies consolidate into larger operations and some move out of state. There are a number of reasons why it is increasingly challenging to maintain dairy operations in California. It is critical that state leaders understand exactly what we are losing.

For dairy families, the farm provides more than jobs. Dairy farming is a way of life. Families live and work on their farms, as do many employees. These people are a part of their communities, and they work to preserve traditions, passing down the values of honesty, integrity and hard work to the next generation. Children who grow up on dairy farms learn to start their days early, completing their chores before eating breakfast, or even before opening presents on Christmas morning. Dairy families are dedicated to taking care of their cows, their land and their heritage.

Beyond the values dairy families add to their communities, dairy farms play a critical role in our state's economy. Milk and cream are California's most valuable agricultural commodities, generating \$6.29 billion in 2015. More than 190,000 California jobs exist because of dairies. California has been the No. 1 milk-producing state since 1993, but that too will be challenged if current trends continue.



In 2014, 26 California dairy farm families made the decision to either sell their business or leave the state; in 2015, we lost 32. In 2016, another 46 dairies closed. This trend is not part of a normal, economic ebb and flow. California is quickly losing part of its rich farming heritage. Substantially higher labor costs, energy costs and regulatory requirements make it increasingly difficult for producers and processors alike.

California dairy families have worked diligently with regulators and operate under the nation's strictest, most comprehensive environmental regulations for dairies. These families are continually doing more with less, making the most efficient use of water, land and energy. They are exploring options to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but they will need continued cooperation from the state to provide infrastructure and robust markets for renewable energy.

California currently has 1,392 dairy farms. A total of 765 dairies (36 percent) have been lost since 2001. How the American Dream will play out for these remaining families should be a concern for all.

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, 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.