

# Dairy Feed in Focus

ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS FOR U.S. DAIRY FARMS OF ALL SIZES



The Dairy Feed in Focus program is designed to help dairy farmers and the supply chain meet the growing demand for food while protecting our environment. © Bridget Besaw/TNC

## Program Overview

To support the U.S. Dairy Net Zero Initiative (NZI), the Dairy Feed in Focus Program (FiF) is developing a replicable program and toolset to scale the adoption of best management practices in feed/forage production and feed efficiency for feed and forage grown on the dairy farm. These practices are expected to result in significant benefits for climate change mitigation, soil health, and water quality on dairy farms of all sizes. This program provides data tracking; technical support regarding best management practices (BMPs) implementation; monitoring, reporting and verification; and incentive payments for participating farmers who adopt conservation practices.

## NZI Key Areas of Focus

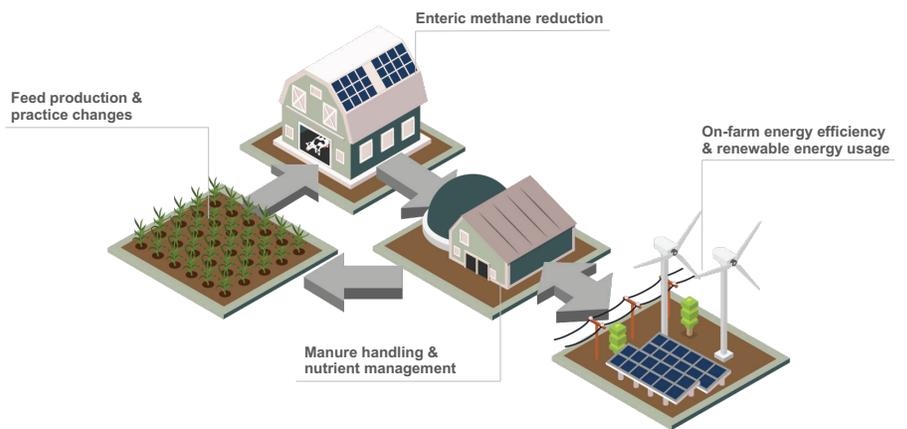


Figure 1. NZI Focus Areas: In-Scope Practices Highlighted with Boxes © DMI



## Participation & Practices

The basic pathway for participation is described in Figure 2. Farmers complete a simple self-assessment to start and then work with program partners to decide what BMPs are best for their farm. Farmers receive technical support during practice implementation and data collection to quantify impacts. They also receive incentive payments (up to \$26k over 3 years) for practice implementation. Minimum commitment from farmers to implement BMPs on their farms is 3 years. Program practices include:

- Soil health practices: cover crops, reduced till/no till, and crop rotation
- Use of improved/superior crop genetics
- Nutrient/manure management (4Rs principles)
- Edge of field practices (e.g., riparian buffers, harvestable buffer strips, pollinator strips, etc.)
- Alternative feed rations and/or feed additives
- Habitat restoration/conservation of marginal lands



Figure 2. Participation Pathway © TNC

## Theory of Change & Objectives

Our Theory of Change focuses on driving positive environmental outcomes, while assuring the value of participating is greater than the cost of participating for farmers. Although other similar initiatives exist, our program has some key differentiators, including:

- **Focused specifically on dairy feed grown by the dairy farmer**, including varieties grown, crop rotation, cover crops, use of manure, etc.
- Less prescription, more choice: a **tiered “menu” approach** that allows for multiple entry points to meet farmers where they are
- **Targeted agronomic advice** and incentives for farmers
- A bottom-up approach to meeting value chain goals and **industry commitments**
- **Less complexity in data collection** and reporting requirements; simple data collection that yields meaningful agronomic and environmental management information
- **Incentives** for data access through cost-share and for adoption of conservation practices
- **Access** to knowledge and technical support to inform decisions



## OBJECTIVES

- Develop a suite of management strategies and quantify impacts on environmental and economic outcomes.
- Co-create standardized methods/systems for data collection and communication, making transparency easier and increasing value-chain connectivity.
- Incentivize and reward producers for adoption of practices and monitoring of outcomes.

## Cross-Sector Collaboration

**The Nature Conservancy** is a leading global conservation organization with a mission to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. With boots on the ground in all 50 states, we work with and support farmers to adopt and test cutting-edge, science-based management practices that contribute to land and water stewardship. *Contact: Alisha Staggs, [alisha.staggs@tnc.org](mailto:alisha.staggs@tnc.org).*

**Syngenta** uses ground-breaking innovation and science to protect crops and improve seeds, including bringing industry-leading technologies like Enogen to improve feed efficiency in dairy production, so farmers can sustainably provide the world with better food and feed. Our team includes feed ruminant nutritionists, agronomic experts, and plant and animal scientists with expertise in feed efficiency, supported by Syngenta Digital capabilities. *Contact: Liz Hunt, [liz.hunt@syngenta.com](mailto:liz.hunt@syngenta.com).*

**The Net Zero Initiative (NZI)** is a five-year collaboration of dairy organizations working to make sustainability practices more accessible and affordable to farms of all sizes. Through research, on-farm pilots and new market development, NZI looks to accelerate progress in the areas of feed, enteric methane, energy and manure. NZI was formed in direct response to 2050 environmental stewardship goals set by the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy as a pathway on farm to reaching them. *Contact: Michelle Rossman, [michelle.rossman@DairyResearch.org](mailto:michelle.rossman@DairyResearch.org)*