

Dairy Feed in Focus

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

Program Overview

To support the US dairy industry's [Net Zero Initiative \(NZI\)](#), this program aims to develop a replicable program and toolset to scale the adoption of best management practices in feed/forage production and feed efficiency. These practices are expected to result in significant benefits for climate mitigation, soil health, and water quality on dairy farms of all sizes. This program will provide low-effort data tracking and decision support tools, technical support regarding best management practices (BMPs) implementation, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV), and avenues for farmers to receive payment for ecosystem services/ conservation practice adoption.

NZI: Four Key Areas of Focus

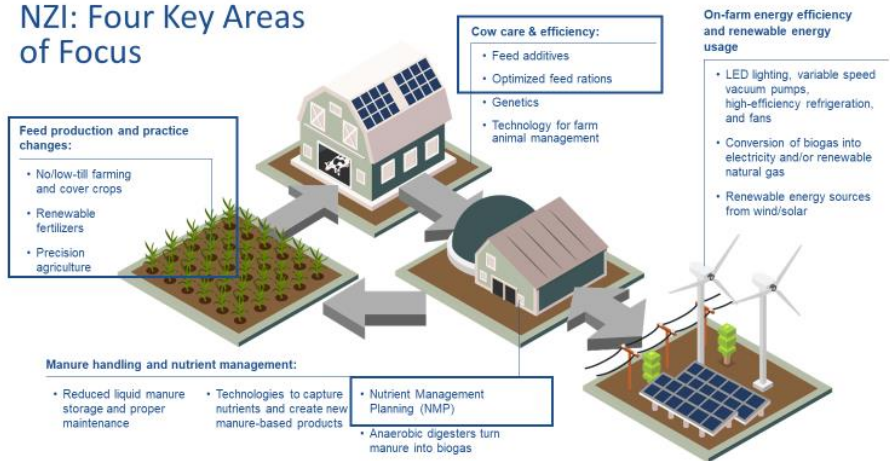


Figure 1. NZI Focus Areas: In-Scope Practices Highlighted with Boxes

Participation & Practices

The basic pathway for participation is described in Figure 2. Farmers will complete a simple self-assessment to start and then work with program partners to decide what BMPs are best for their farm. Farmers will receive support through practice implementation and data collection to quantify impacts. In scope practices include:

- Soil Health practices: cover crops, reduced till/no till, crop rotation, improved crop genetics
- Nutrient/Manure Management (4Rs principles)
- Edge of Field practices (e.g., riparian buffers, grassed waterways, pollinator strips)
- Alternative feed rations and/or feed additives
- Conservation of marginal lands/nonproductive acres



Figure 2. Participation Pathway

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 or credits 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, including through ecosystem services markets.

Cross-Sector Collaboration



Pictured: The Lee family, neighbors to TNC Wisconsin Chapter property in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

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: Carrie Vollmer-Sanders, csanders@tnc.org**

Syngenta uses ground-breaking innovation and science to protect crops and improve seeds. They support farmers with technologies, knowledge, and services so they can sustainably provide the world with better food and feed. The Enogen team includes feed ruminant nutritionists, agronomic experts, scientists and access to university animal scientists with expertise in feed efficiency, and is supported by Syngenta Digital capabilities. **Contact: Chris Davison, chris.davison@syngenta.com**

The **Net Zero Initiative (NZI)** is an industry-wide effort led by six national dairy organizations to accelerate voluntary action on farm to reduce environmental impacts by making sustainable practices and technologies more accessible and affordable to all U.S. dairy farms. 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: Karen Scanlon, karen.scanlon@dairy.org**