

California Dairy Organizations Host 900+ in Successful Virtual Summit

California's dairy farmers are leading change and making significant progress in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and advancing planet-smart, sustainable farming practices. Ongoing partnerships remain critical to this progress. On November 5-6, the virtual California Dairy Sustainability Summit welcomed 900+ registrants, with more than 600 tuning in live throughout the two-day online event.

The virtual summit hosted conversations among dairy farmers, industry leaders, government officials, leading researchers, technology providers, and sustainable food, consumer, and nutrition experts. The program recognized true sustainability includes economic and social considerations, in addition to environmental—ultimately aiming to ensure the ongoing availability of affordable, nutrient-rich foods. Given the current economic challenges, this effort is paramount as more than 54 million Americans currently face food insecurity. Through panel discussions and keynotes, speakers recognized accomplishments and opportunities to further improve the sustainability of family dairy farms and the entire supply chain.

World-renowned researchers provided important perspective and scientific basis for discussing strategies and policies to drive change. Dr. Ermias Kebreab of the University of California, Davis shared research demonstrating significant reductions achieved in the water and GHG footprints of California dairy farm production. He noted that global GHG emissions could be reduced by 1.73% if all regions could produce milk as efficiently as California. Dr. Frank Mitloehner of UC Davis explained how methane has a relatively short atmospheric lifetime, and that the state's efforts to reduce dairy methane can lead to global cooling. Dr. Myles Allen of the University of Oxford further highlighted the differences between methane and carbon dioxide and why they should be treated differently in strategies to reduce global warming.

California's state officials also contributed important insights. Richard Corey, Executive Officer of the California Air Resources Board explained how the state's policies are helping to reduce GHGs, noting that incentive-based approaches funded through public-private partnership—such as the state's dairy digester program—are critical to that effort. Carlos Suarez, California State Conservationist highlighted the great history and ongoing conservation efforts taking place through partnership between the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and dairy farmers—helping improve the protection of air quality, water resources, soil health, and wildlife habitat. Jenny Lester Moffitt, Undersecretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture led a discussion among dairy farmers, as they shared their personal experiences with adopting new farming practices to improve soil health and water conservation.



Dairy industry leaders and partners from the local, state, national, and international levels convened online November 5-6.

Leaders of the nation's largest dairy cooperatives and the US Dairy Export Council also shared their visions for sustainability, focusing on employees (both on farms and within processing facilities), animal welfare, the environment, economic viability, and nutrition. The national dairy industry is committed to reducing GHGs, working toward a net zero climate impact by 2050. Leaders noted that strong partnerships and advancements in technology—as well as rural connectivity—will all be critical to achieving this goal.

More than 50 speakers participated throughout the two-day virtual event—sharing unique insights on a wide variety of topics. Sessions highlighted important efforts to improve the protection of environmental resources and further the adoption of renewable energy. Dairy farmers also discussed participating in community efforts to ensure clean drinking water for all, and working in partnership with researchers, technical experts, and government agencies to improve how groundwater resources are protected. Tremendous opportunities are currently being explored, including avenues for maximizing the use of manure nutrients on crops across California's rich and diverse agricultural landscape.

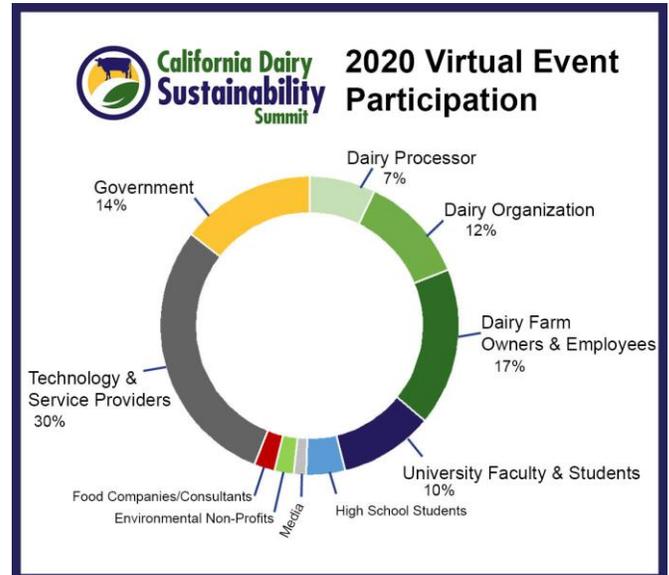
Despite economic challenges and uncertainty, speakers expressed optimism and an ongoing willingness to work together. "I think we're just about to hit our stride," said Lyle Schlyer, President of Calgren Dairy Fuels, a company that partners with dairy farmers to create renewable, carbon-negative transportation fuel. Schlyer participated in a panel discussion about opportunities and strategies to ensure dairy biogas continues to help fuel California's clean energy and climate goals.

Overall, the virtual California Dairy Sustainability Summit took a meaningful look at complex sustainability issues and the bigger picture. Digital consumer expert, Steve Lerch said that while consumers value sustainability, it's difficult to fully understand, measure, and compare what brands and companies are doing to be sustainable. For this reason, it's important to communicate a clear and compelling sustainability story. It was also noted that the ongoing global pandemic has further highlighted the importance of nutrition, as well as our overall health and well-being. Milk and dairy foods play an important role in nourishing people of all ages, to help create healthier communities in California and beyond.

The California Dairy Sustainability Summit is hosted by Dairy Cares, California Dairy Research Foundation, California Milk Advisory Board, California Dairy Quality Assurance Program, and Dairy Council of California. The summit would not be possible without the generous support of its sponsors. Organizers look forward to future opportunities to host ongoing collaborative efforts. All session recordings from the virtual event can now be accessed [here](#) using the password, **CDSSV20**.

2020 has been a year of many challenges, but also of creativity, compassion, and perseverance. The Virtual California Dairy Sustainability Summit is an example of that spirit and a milestone in the ongoing effort to advance planet-smart dairy farm practices.

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, Dairy Institute of California, F & R Ag Services, Hilmar Cheese Company, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O'Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Yosemite Farm Credit, Zenith Insurance Company, and others. For information, visit DairyCares.com or call 916-441-3318. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, contact news@dairycares.com.



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