

We're engaging with lawmakers to advance the success of Minnesota's dairy producers!



2023–24 Policy Priorities

Farmer-Led Environmental Initiatives – We support a package of initiatives meant to assist farmers in their continuous efforts toward environmental stewardship through enhanced soil, air and water quality management.

- **Farmer-led Water and Soil Health Councils** – Creation and funding to create these local councils is the framework for local solutions to local issues. Investment in water and soil health from the Clean Water Fund are essential for Minnesota's farmer to continue to find locally driven, progressive opportunities for improvement and success.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions** – In order to ensure accurate collection of data regarding greenhouse gas emissions, all state estimates should use the COMET formula. Farmers continue to find efficiencies in conservation, on-farm practices and production styles. For farmers to most accurately estimate carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions, Minnesota must adopt the USDA COMET-Farm tool. This formula is being used by USDA Climate Smart projects and Minnesota Milk is party to the \$50 million project held by the Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative and U.S. sugar beet industry.
- **Nutrient Management** – The key to successful creation and submission of nutrient management plans is robust investment in accurate and reliable resources and tools. For farmers to most accurately plan and create nutrient management plans, the University of Minnesota must receive adequate resources for research and extension.

Infrastructure Improvements – A robust and well-maintained infrastructure throughout Minnesota creates an economically vibrant, safe and secure state that attracts labor, businesses and tourism. There are several opportunities to continue to invest and improve upon Minnesota's infrastructure.

- **Continue Livestock Investment Grants** – These grants from the AGRI Fund allow dairy farmers to invest in upgrades to their livestock facilities such as robotic milking equipment, activity monitoring and improvements to animal welfare. Minnesota Milk believes that due to inflation the grants should return to their \$50,000 maximum with a 90% dairy farmer investment.
- **Investment in Dairy Infrastructure** – Minnesota's dairy processing facilities provide jobs, pride and economic activity both within and far beyond the communities in which we work. The City of Perham needs to expand its wastewater infrastructure through state bonding to environmentally grow with Bongards' Cooperative located within the city.
- **Enhancement of Road and Bridge Construction Standards** – Efficiency is the key to profitability in the current economy. For milk to efficiently move from farm to processor, milk trucks must be free to travel all roads and bridges. In order to responsibly invest and maintain the state's infrastructure, roads and bridges should be built to a 10-ton standard. An increase in road standards will result in the allowance of increased in weight limits while keeping our infrastructure viable in the future.
- **Investment in Broadband Infrastructure** – Rural broadband is essential to rural communities, modern agriculture, farmers and farm businesses who grow our food supply. Continuous investment in expansion of broadband to rural areas to provide coverage for unserved or underserved locations is essential. Investment in rural broadband infrastructure strengthens farm businesses that in turn strengthen their communities through local investment. Ensuring investments in broadband infrastructure are targeted to rural users, efficiently installed, effective service and costs and timely installation are priorities for rural residents.

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- **Electricity** – Stray voltage/current continues to be a hindrance to both farmers and utilities. We support new standards for stray voltage utilizing peer-reviewed science. The current Minnesota Stray Voltage Guide created by utilities needs significant revision. In addition, creation of a three-phase power subsidy for all dairy farmers in Minnesota would increase the transition of dairy farmers toward a safer electrical standard and reduce the occurrence of stray voltage on dairy farms.
- **Road Safety and Licensing** - Minnesota Milk continues to support safer roads and a pathway for all residents to obtain a driver's permit. All motorists should be properly trained and insured and be given the opportunity to legally operate on the roadways, regardless of their immigration status. Public safety and economic development are imperative when operating on our roadways. Many other states have already recognized the need to provide a legal mechanism for driving permits that encompasses non-citizens.

Support the Science – Ensuring rules and regulations follow best science and methodologies provides agriculture with certainty and transparency. Several opportunities to support science-based best practices include:

- Eliminate NPDES permit requirement to apply manure Oct. 1-15 on cover-crops.
- Support direct-injected manure as a best-management practice based on UMN Soil Scientists.
- DNR creates a standard procedure for Water Pump Tests within an Environmental Assessment Worksheet.
- Establish a standard that allows farmers with a sufficient animal unit to land ratio to bypass the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for manure management.

Agricultural Research – Ensuring rules and regulations follow best science and methodologies provides agriculture with certainty and transparency. Several opportunities to support science-based best practices include:

2023-24 Other Policy Issues

- Maintain Future of Advanced Agricultural Research in Minnesota (FAARM) project funding at UM
- Return Minnesota Dairy Initiative Program funding to \$1 million for farm business coaches, dairy business grants and more

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