

# Dairy Cares Report

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## New United Nations report: California, U.S. dairies lead world with lowest carbon footprint

Earlier this month, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a report titled, "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Dairy Sector – A Life Cycle Analysis." The report confirmed that dairy families across the United States – and especially right here in California – are leading the way on an important sustainability issue. **U.S. dairy farms, including California dairies, have the lowest emissions of climate-changing "greenhouse gases" in the world.**

According to the report, American dairy farms emit about 45 percent fewer greenhouse gases per unit of milk produced compared to the global average for dairies.

By now, many have heard the story of the progress of dairy farmers in the U.S. in reducing their carbon footprint. Since 1944, thanks to improvements in breeding, cattle care, housing and nutrition, U.S. dairy farmers have reduced the carbon footprint of milk by 63 percent. In the same period, U.S. milk production actually increased by 59 percent, even as the total dairy cattle herd shrank from 25.6 million to 9.3 million cows.

The new FAO report confirms that this type of progress has vaulted U.S. dairy farmers into the lead on "carbon efficiency." The FAO report also provides some important perspective on the carbon footprint of the global dairy industry:

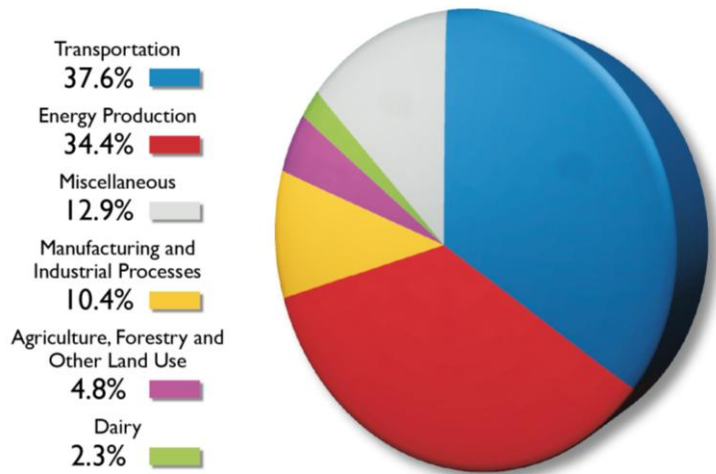
- Dairies in industrialized nations in North America, Europe and Australia/New Zealand have the lowest carbon footprint, **with North America lowest of all.**
- Dairies in Central and South America and parts of Asia produce three to four times the carbon emissions of North American dairies, while dairies in sub-Saharan Africa produce up to 7 times more emissions.

A 2006 FAO report, "Livestock's Long Shadow," estimated that livestock production worldwide – including components such as clearing forests in developing nations for new agricultural land, growing crops for animals, fuel and transportation – is responsible for 18 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Unfortunately, this information has been misinterpreted to represent the role of dairy production rather than all livestock. Advocates of plant-based diets or a vegan lifestyle often cite the “Long Shadow” report to inflate the role of dairy in climate change. Fortunately, the new FAO report adds new context to improve the understanding of where dairies fit in globally when it comes to climate change. This new information is also consistent with estimates previously established in California, which put the contribution of greenhouse gasses by California dairies sixteen and fourteen times *below* the emissions of transportation and energy production respectively. (See graphic)

The good news concerning all this information is that the millions of consumers who depend on the healthy nutrients in milk and love the taste of dairy products now know they are produced in an environmentally sustainable manner. Dairy Cares members remain committed to assuring consumers that they can choose California-produced dairy products with confidence, knowing that they are unsurpassed for quality and environmental sustainability.

## Greenhouse Gases in California



Graphic courtesy of Dairy Cares—Source: California Air Resources Board

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*Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, and others. For information, visit our web site or call 916-441-3318.*