

Our Sustainability Story



Dairy Farmers of Canada's sustainability initiative, called proAction®, is built on the strengths that have long existed in our industry, in addition to new standards that are based on research and practiced by farmer innovators. This initiative enables farmers to see how their farm compares to their peers on a national basis, as comparisons help foster continuous improvement. Those in the food industry and interested Canadians can also check on overall progress and adherence to the standards, which are reported online.

Through proAction, Canadian dairy farmers will demonstrate that they adhere to set national standards for **milk quality, food safety, animal care, livestock traceability, biosecurity and the environment**. The modules are as follows:

- 1. Milk Quality:** Canadian dairy farmers strictly adhere to regulated milk quality criteria every day to assess farm milk quality. To maintain our good reputation, it is important for Canadian milk quality standards to continue to remain high.
- 2. Food Safety:** The Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) program helps prevent, monitor and reduce food safety risks on farms such as avoiding milk contamination. Under CQM, over 99% of farmers have provided proof to on-farm validators and are currently certified to meet program requirements.
- 3. Animal Care:** Treating our animals well, and providing excellent care is one of the highest priorities of the Canadian dairy sector. On-farm training has now begun and farmers will be expected to adhere to a leading animal welfare assessment program, based on the requirements outlined in the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle*. Its soundness was tested on farms in 2013, and again in 2014.
- 4. Livestock Traceability:** Currently, milk is traceable from farm to plate across Canada. All cattle have been tagged since federal regulations came into force in 2001. The ability to trace our animals and their whereabouts to mitigate problems if needed is key to maintaining consumer confidence in our sector.

5. Biosecurity: Dairy Farmers of Canada worked with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to develop the *Biosecurity for Canadian Dairy Farms – National Standard*, published in 2013. The key to biosecurity is prevention, but if an animal disease is found on farm, farmers will work closely with veterinarians to control it and mitigate risks so it does not leave the farm. The validation criteria are currently the object of a pilot project on over 120 farms.

6. Environment: Canadian dairy farmers are environmental stewards and are continuously unlocking the potential of agriculture's resources. By continuing on this path, dairy farmers are doing their part to ensure that agriculture remains a renewable resource which gets better over time. Dairy farmers do this by embracing innovation and new technologies, as well as by making investments to reduce energy use, improve the use of nutrient, land, and water, adapt to climate variability, enhance biodiversity, increase resilience, and reduce waste.

Provincial Environmental Farm Plans and nutrient management plans, which have been around for about 20 years, form the basis of the environment module. In 2012, the dairy sector completed a full environmental and socio-economic life cycle analysis to continue on the fast evolving path towards improving the farmers' overall footprint. Additionally, a tool for farmers to use to benchmark their own farms' footprint, called ***Dairy Farms +***, will be available in the summer of 2016.



Guiding principles of proAction

Various aspects of dairy farm practices are brought under the umbrella of the proAction Initiative. The objective is to show our customers that dairy farmers are proactive in providing high-quality, safe and sustainable food. A single national implementation strategy aims to simplify administration and infrastructure, and keep costs reasonable for farmers.

proAction will:

- Be designed by farmers for farmers.
- Provide reasonable time periods to allow farmers to meet the programs' targets.
- Be mandatory for all dairy farms in Canada.
- Be transparent, and recognized by regulators, stakeholders and society.
- Improve the sustainability of Canadian dairy farms.
- Be cost-efficient, user-friendly, and valuable to farmers.
- Use existing expertise to minimize the number of required on-farm visits.
- Have the same timelines for all dairy farms in Canada.
- Have the same obligations, and consequences for all dairy farms in Canada.
- Use the existing Canadian Quality Milk program framework and infrastructure to facilitate consistent administration.
- Use credible, and independent audits.
- Partner with governments in the implementation of the programs.
- Include the necessary resources to implement the programs, provided by Dairy Farmers of Canada, and member organizations.

