

Dairy West **April 2026** Farmer Newsletter

In recognition of April as Earth Month, this feature highlights four dairy farmers, one from each state in the region, who are implementing practices that support the long-term sustainability of their operations. Their experiences reflect the ongoing commitment to caring for the land, the cows and the future of dairy.

Meet Paxton Robinson

ACME Dairy of Oakley, Idaho
Idaho Dairy Products Commission Board Member

Question: What's one sustainability-focused investment you've made on your farm, and how has it paid off?

"We partnered in a methane digester for our open-lot dairy to turn a challenge into an opportunity. It allows us to capture methane and create renewable energy, while improving nutrient management and reducing odor. It's also created a cleaner, more consistent environment for our cows and employees. For us, it's about making smart, responsible decisions that strengthen the farm for the next generation and support our long-term sustainability goals."



Meet Brandon Hazenberg

Hazenberg Dairy of Saint Paul, Oregon
Dairy West Board Member & Oregon Dairy Products Commission Board Member

Question: How are you approaching sustainability investments on your farm, and what's driving those decisions?

"If a project helps lower energy or labor costs, we move on it quickly. We've invested in tools like RFID tracking and integrated software to improve efficiency across the farm. Right now, our focus is a new manure separation system that will improve water use, soil health and long-term sustainability while setting us up for future improvements."

Meet Mitch Hancock

Noo Sun Dairy of Corinne, Utah
Utah Dairy Commission Board Member

Question: What's one change you've made to improve efficiency or sustainability on your farm, and what impact has it had?

"We've partnered with Danone and Utah's water optimization efforts to install more than six miles of pipe and riser, with additional expansion underway. This helps reduce evaporation and improve water efficiency, while also saving time and labor through automation. We're also working with Utah State University on nutrient management to improve soil health and overall sustainability."



Meet Jason Vander Kooy

Harmony Dairy of Mount Vernon, Washington
Dairy West Board Member & Washington Dairy Products Commission Board Member

Question: How do your farming practices support both the land and the community around you?

"We work with neighboring farmers to rotate crops and apply nutrients, giving fields time to rebuild and stay productive. Our digester also allows us to take in food waste, turning it into electricity and fertilizer. That process supports our community, reduces waste and helps us grow more feed while lowering our need for commercial fertilizer."

A Message from the CEO

Our recent Dairy West Board Meeting in Utah was a strong reminder of the momentum we're building as a four-state region and the opportunities ahead for dairy across our region.

We spent time focused on how Dairy West can continue delivering value for farmers, from strengthening demand to investing in the long-term success of the industry. One highlight was a visit to the Utah Olympic Oval, where we saw how our partnership with U.S. Speedskating continues to showcase dairy as a trusted part of performance nutrition at the highest level.

We also reviewed a [new milk flow study](#) that reinforces the opportunity in front of us. With a strong supply of milk, continued investment in processing, and growing demand for protein, we are well positioned to expand dairy's role in the marketplace. We will continue to build on this study with a second phase which will assess where milk goes after leaving the farm, including processors, product types, retail and foodservice channels and export markets.

A key part of that future is the work happening through the Pacific Northwest Dairy Research Consortium (PNWDRC). This partnership between Dairy West and the Idaho Dairywomen's Association connects science with industry to deliver practical, on-farm solutions that support efficiency and stewardship. Through the PNWDRC, Dairy West funded a [new research project](#) led by the University of Idaho and Utah State University focused on improving how forage systems, manure management and irrigation practices work together in arid western environments. Field trials in Idaho and Utah are testing practical approaches to reduce nutrient loss, improve water management and maintain strong yields and forage quality.

April also gives us a chance to recognize the work happening every day on your farms. In this issue, we are highlighting sustainability efforts from producers across the region. Dairy farmers

have long been focused on doing more with less: caring for the land, managing resources, and making decisions that support the next generation. That commitment continues to move the industry forward.

Across Dairy West, we're also seeing strong progress through new partnerships and programs that are helping connect with consumers and build demand for dairy. You'll see several examples of that work throughout this newsletter, reflecting how your investment is being put to work.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for the role you play in shaping the future of dairy.

Sincerely,



Steve Seppi
CEO, Dairy West

Farmer Updates

Oregon Emerging Leaders Session | May 27 & 28

Dairy West will host an Oregon-based Emerging Leaders Session in Portland, designed for dairy farmers from across the state who are interested in learning more about Dairy West, the checkoff and how the board operates.

This program is designed to offer a flexible and accessible way for young dairy farmers to get involved. Each state will host its own session, aligned with a Dairy West board meeting, to provide firsthand insight into the organization's work and decision-making process.

Wednesday, May 27

Participants will gather for a day of training and discussion focused on Dairy West priorities, programs and leadership development. Additional details will be shared as the agenda is finalized.

Thursday, May 28

Attendees are invited to observe the Dairy West Board Meeting, offering a firsthand look at how decisions are made and how farmer input shapes the organization's work.

Dairy farmers interested in attending or learning more are encouraged to contact [Lacey Papageorge](#) or [Allison Pratt](#) to get registered.

Dairy West Engages in Export Strategy

As part of Dairy West's expanded investment in export development, farmers John Brubaker and Paxton Robinson of Idaho and David Roberts of Utah along with Julie Nixon, director of business development, exports, traveled to Washington, D.C. for the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) Annual Membership Meeting, held March 23–25.



Overall sentiment was optimistic. USDEC President and CEO Krysta Harden shared strong confidence in the future of U.S. dairy exports, driven by high-quality, sustainably produced products and strengthened industry partnerships. That momentum is already showing, with 2026 building on the second-highest U.S. dairy export year on record in 2025. While challenges remain, the outlook continues to be positive.

Additional highlights from the meeting include:

- **New membership category approved:** USDEC introduced an artisan cheesemaker category for manufacturers with annual sales under \$15 million, helping address the unique needs of smaller processors entering export markets.
- **Regional leadership representation:** Derik Robinson (High Desert Milk) was elected to the USDEC Operating Committee, joining Kevin Quinn (Idaho Milk Products). The region is also represented by David Roberts (UT), and Christine Van Asten (Darigold, WA) serves as vice chair on the Ingredients Advisory Group.
- **Middle East supply chain update:** Ongoing maritime disruptions continue to impact shipping, increasing costs and creating logistical challenges. The industry is adapting through alternative routes and multi-modal solutions, though long-term supply chain complexity remains a key consideration.

Participation in meetings like this helps ensure Dairy West farmers are represented in national conversations and positioned to benefit from continued growth in global dairy demand.

Washington Dairy Scholarships Now Open

Applications are open for the 2026 Washington Dairy Scholarships, continuing a long-standing commitment to support the next generation of dairy leaders in Washington.

Please help share this opportunity with eligible students and families in your community.

Dairy Strong Scholarship

Available to students employed by Washington dairy farms, immediate family members of dairy farmers or employees, or those involved in dairy-focused youth programs. One \$5,000 award and two \$1,500 runner-up awards are granted annually. More details and the application can be found [here](#).

Washington Dairy Ambassador Scholarship

Available to current or former Washington county or state Dairy Ambassadors who demonstrate continued leadership in the dairy industry. One \$5,000 award and two \$1,500 runner-up awards are granted annually. More details and the application can be found [here](#).

Applications are open through June 1.

Oregon Dairy Farmers Convention Brings Community Together

Hosted by farmers, for farmers, the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association Convention brought the state's dairy community together on March 9–10 for a day of learning, networking and connection. Producers, processors and industry partners gathered to share ideas, explore new

innovations and connect with others shaping Oregon's dairy industry.

This year's convention also marked the first time coming together as part of a unified four-state Dairy West region, creating new opportunities for collaboration and shared momentum.

Lisbeth Goddik was honored with the 2026 Oregon Dairy Farmers Association Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions to Oregon's dairy industry. A longtime leader at Oregon State University, she has spent more than 20 years advancing dairy through education, innovation and collaboration, with a lasting impact on farmers, students and the broader dairy community.

Other key highlights included:

- A Dairy West update sharing recent Oregon Dairy Council work and what the regional expansion means for Oregon dairy
- Introduction to the Dairy Protein Institute and its role in supporting innovation and new market opportunities
- Time in the exhibitor hall connecting with industry partners and exploring new tools and resources
- A session from Dairy Management Inc. on how AI is changing farm communication and what it means for producers

Events like this continue to strengthen relationships across the dairy community and create space for shared learning and forward progress. Thank you to all who joined!



Washington Dairy Farmers Connect with Lawmakers

Dairy farmers from across Washington gathered in Olympia on February 18 for Dairy Day at the State Capitol. This annual event brings producers and industry partners together with lawmakers to share the impact of dairy in the state and strengthen relationships with decision-makers.

Throughout the day, legislators had the opportunity to connect directly with farmers while enjoying locally produced dairy products. Thank you to Beechers, Organic Valley, Darigold, Auburn Dairy Products, Safeway/Albertsons and WSU Creamery for providing cheese, milk, ice cream and other dairy favorites.

Events like Dairy Day help ensure the voice of dairy is represented, while showcasing the quality and value of Washington dairy products.



Business Development

Protein Promotion Drives Milk Sales at Retail

From March 25–31, Dairy West partnered with Meadow Gold and Associated Food Stores to drive milk sales through a high-impact, protein-focused promotion across all AFS locations.

Shoppers who purchased Meadow Gold or TruMoo protein milk received a free box of protein bars, reinforcing dairy's natural protein benefits while adding value at the shelf. The promotion supported both white and flavored protein milk varieties.

The campaign delivered strong results, with Meadow Gold seeing a 60% lift in sales of its protein milk products during the promotion.

Designed to boost product movement and connect with today's health-focused consumers, this effort highlights dairy as a convenient, high-quality protein choice.

Beans & Brews Partnership Drives Dairy Demand

Dairy West partnered with Beans & Brews to promote dairy as part of their "Better for You" campaign. From January 1 to February 11, Beans & Brews ran the promotion across more than 80 locations. Dairy West's investment supported a paid media push alongside a buy-one-get-one (BOGO) loyalty offer.



Here are some results:

- More than 35,000 gallons of fluid dairy used in promoted items
- 10 pounds of milk sold for every \$1 of investment
- Nearly 4,000 BOGO 50% offers redeemed
- The Golden Protein Latte performed so well it is now a permanent menu item
- Over 2.2 million impressions

Partnering with foodservice operators like Beans & Brews helps drive demand by showcasing how dairy meets growing consumer interest in high-protein options. These partnerships support restaurant sales while increasing demand for dairy.

Dairy Shines at *Taste Washington*

Dairy had a strong presence at Taste Washington, the state's largest food and wine festival celebrating Washington agriculture.

At the Grand Tasting, more than 250 wineries and 80+ restaurants came together, and dairy was a natural fit. Attendees were drawn to local cheese makers, visiting booths to sample products and collect passport stamps for a chance to win a local cheese board set. The event featured eight cheese makers, one cultured gelato maker and a local cheese shop, highlighting the variety and quality of Washington dairy.

Dairy was also featured throughout the event through culinary partnerships, including dishes featured at restaurant booths and two on-stage cooking demonstrations that incorporated dairy-forward recipes.

Leading up to the Grand Tasting, additional events gave attendees new ways to experience dairy, including a partnership with a Seattle cocktail bar to create milk-washed cocktails.

Together, these activations helped position dairy as a versatile, high-quality ingredient and kept it front and center with consumers celebrating Washington agriculture.



Nutrition Partnerships



Building Trust in Pediatric Care Settings

Dairy West is excited to share the impact of our Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds partnership with Reach Out and Read, a national nonprofit focused on early literacy and pediatric care.

Alongside Midwest Dairy and partners across the region, this effort helps ensure dairy is part of the nutrition conversation during pediatric well-child visits. By reaching families through trusted healthcare providers, the program connects dairy to children's growth, development and

healthy eating habits.

Key highlights include:

- 14,000 well-child visits supported across 37 pediatric clinics
- A co-branded [Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds provider webpage](#) featuring dairy nutrition resources, generating nearly 5,000 unique provider visits since launching in late 2025
- 36,000 nutrition-focused books distributed nationally through the Midwest Dairy and Dairy West partnership across 14 states

This partnership is a strong example of how dairy checkoff investments build trust with healthcare professionals while reinforcing dairy's role in supporting children's health and development.

A Dairy-Filled Day for Washington Elementary Students

Dairy West partnered with Whatcom Family Farmers and Washington Agriculture in the Classroom to bring dairy education to third- and fourth-grade students, reaching more than 100 students in six classrooms.

Students first received lesson plans in the classroom, where they learned about key parts of dairy farming, such as caring for cows and the process from cow to carton.

On March 25, students brought that learning to life during a farm tour with dairy farmer Jon DeJong of Eaglemill Farms in Lynden, experiencing firsthand what they had learned.

This collaboration helped connect classroom learning to real-world agriculture, giving students a clearer understanding of dairy farming and the people behind it.



Marketing & Communications

Telling Dairy's Story in New Ways

Dairy West has launched a new content partnership with KSL, designed to place dairy stories directly in front of consumers while strengthening how we share our message across channels.

As part of this pilot, KSL journalists are publishing one article per week on the [Dairy West Brandview page](#). These stories highlight dairy's role in nutrition, starting with protein-focused content that aligns with current consumer trends and Dairy West's broader marketing efforts. Future stories will continue to build on key topics, including whole milk in schools and farmer stories from across the region.

This partnership also allows Dairy West to reuse and share this content across additional platforms, extending its reach and impact.

Check out our most recent articles by clicking the images below:



Protein made easy: How dairy can help you meet your daily needs



The simple recovery drink that fueled athletes during the Winter Game



Cottage cheese comeback: Why this high-protein food is trending again

Mark Your Calendars

May 27 | Dairy West Emerging Leaders Program | Portland, Oregon

May 27-28 | Promotion Board Meetings | Portland, Oregon

June 1 | Washington Dairy Scholarships Due | Online

June 20 | Whatcom This Whey | Washington

Your Board Members

Your Dairy West Board and state promotion board members are here to represent you. They play an important role in shaping priorities, guiding investments and ensuring your voice is reflected in the work being done on behalf of dairy farmers across the region.

We encourage you to connect with your board members with questions, feedback or ideas. Building strong, direct relationships helps keep our work grounded in what matters most on the farm.

Below is a list of board members. If you would like to connect with any of them, please reach out to your state farmer relations staff.

Dairy West Board

- Chace Fullmer, Chair, Sigurd, Utah
- Siska Reece, Vice Chair, Melba, Idaho
- Daniel Buttars, Secretary, Lewiston, Utah
- Deb Easterday Reeves, Treasurer, Buhl, Idaho
- Adrienne Allen, Tillamook, Oregon
- Dan DeRuyter, Outlook, Washington
- Donnie De Vries, Bliss, Idaho
- Nora Doelman, Elma, Washington
- Don Gaalswyk, Castleford, Idaho
- Brandon Hazenberg, Saint Paul, Oregon
- Tom Kasper, Melba, Idaho
- Kim Korn, Terreton, Idaho
- Todd Leuthold, Tillamook, Oregon
- Jeff Lund, Wendell, Idaho
- David Roberts, Beaver, Utah
- Jason Vander Kooy, Mount Vernon, Washington
- Nikelle Villalobos, American Falls, Idaho
- Jim Werkhoven, Monroe, Washington
- Lynne Wheeler, Acme, Washington
- Kaleb Whitby, Mabton, Washington
- Pete Wiersma, Buhl, Idaho

Idaho Dairy Products Commission Board

- Don Gaalswyk, Chair, Castleford, District II
- Jeff Lund, Vice Chair, Wendell, District II
- Devin Boehme, Geneva, District III
- Pete Doornenbal, Caldwell, District I
- Don Heida, Nampa, District I
- Holly Hull, Preston, District III
- Tom Kasper, Melba, District I
- Kim Korn, Terreton, District III
- Paxton Robinson, Oakley, District II

Oregon Dairy Products Commission Board

- Todd Leuthold, Chair, Tillamook, District I
- Adrienne Allen, Vice Chair, Tillamook, District I
- Alison Rosenblum, Secretary/Treasurer, Portland, Processor Member (Tillamook)
- Lisbeth Goddik, Corvallis, Ex-Officio Member
- Brandon Hazenberg, Saint Paul, District II
- Drew Johnson, Turner, District II
- Pete Meenderinck, Hermiston, District III
- Eric Morris, Salem, Ex-Officio Member
- Deanna Poland, Madras, District III
- Phil Ward, Independence, Public Member

Utah Dairy Products Commission Board

- David Roberts, Chair, Beaver, District III
- Kaleb Bateman, Vice Chair, Genola, District II
- Daniel Buttars, Secretary, Lewiston, District I
- Chace Fullmer, Sigurd, District III
- Mitch Hancock, Corinne, District II
- Chet Hansen, Duchesne, District II
- Sheila Sherwood, Nephi, District III
- Trevor Wayment, Ogden, District II
- Landon Wiser, Lewiston, District I

Washington Dairy Products Commission Board

- Jason Vander Kooy, Chair, Mount Vernon, District I
- Kaleb Whitby, Vice Chair, Mabton, At Large
- Dan DeRuyter, Outlook, District III
- Sharon DeRuyter, Pasco, District IV
- Nora Doelman, Elma, Advisory Member
- Lana Smaciarz, Raymond, District II
- Jim Werkhoven, Monroe, Western WA At Large
- Lynne Wheeler, Acme, Advisory Member
- Liz Whitefield, Tacoma, WSDA Representative

Dairy West Farmer Resources

Farm Tour Materials

Visit the Dairy West website to [request educational materials and swag](#) to give during a farm tour. To guarantee you will receive materials in time, please request at least two weeks prior to the event.

Product Reimbursement

This program supports the community engagement efforts of Dairy West farm families by offering unlimited reimbursement for on-farm tours and a \$400 reimbursement per permit for dairy products purchased for community events. Dairy West reimburses

Farm Tour Materials

dairy farmers in full for dairy products given during on-farm tours.

To be reimbursed, [please submit itemized receipts](#) through the Dairy West website within 30 days of purchase. Be sure to only include reimbursable dairy products on your receipts.

Farmer Portal

Learn more about Dairy West's resources and offerings by visiting the [farmer portal](#) on the Dairy West website.

If you have any questions about Dairy West's product reimbursements, please contact your local farmer relations staff.

Farmer Portal

Product Reimbursement

National Dairy Industry Resources

MAKING EVERY DROP COUNT

your DAIRY CHECKOFF
Dairy Management Inc.

your DAIRY CHECKOFF

NMPF
NATIONAL MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION

DMI Website

Podcast Episodes

NMPF Website

IDFA
International Dairy Foods Association

milk pep

USDEC™ U.S. DAIRY EXPORT COUNCIL

IDFA Website

MilkPEP Website

USDEC Website

This newsletter's primary audience is current Idaho, Oregon, Utah and Washington dairy farmers. Please share with family members and farm employees. Reach out to your local farmer relations staff to receive this directly to your inbox.

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