



NORTHEAST

DAIRY BUSINESS
INNOVATION CENTER

Program
Overview

What is the NE-DBIC?

- One of four USDA funded regional centers – Vermont, Wisconsin, Tennessee, and California
- At least 50% of funds go out as grants
- Focus on development, production, marketing, and distribution of regional dairy products
- VAAFMM awarded competitively in 2019 and eligible for non-competitive funds through 2023
 - \$38.7 million awarded to date
 - Funding supports work through 2026





NE-DBIC Team

- **Laura Ginsburg** – Lead, Dairy Development and Innovation
- **Kathryn Donovan** - Center Program Manager
- **Rebecca Brockett** – Grants and Contracts Administrator
- **Ben Eldredge**– Grants Specialist
- **Open position under recruitment** – Grants Specialist
- **Katie Spring** – Outreach and Communications Coordinator
- Julia Scheier and Trevor Audet – program support

A photograph of a white sheep standing in a lush green field. The sheep is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. In the background, there are other sheep grazing in the field, and a line of trees under a bright sky.

Investment Strategy

Investing in farms and processors to promote the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products supported by market research and technical assistance.

1. Connection to Consumers
2. Business Management
3. Support for Rural Communities
4. Leadership in Climate-Forward Strategies



Projects & Investments

2019 – 2023

Education & Events

- Dairy herd management technical assistance
- Dairy farmer technical assistance cohorts
- Production education for cheesemakers
- Missouri Learning Journey
- SIAL Canada tradeshow pavilion



Project Spotlight: Dairy Farmer TA Cohorts

- **Goal:** provide cohort-structured education to dairy farmers to increased grazing quality or quantity, home-grown forage enhancement, develop alternative herd management approaches, innovate staffing and business management, and/or build marketing and education focused on dairy production practices.
- **Funded projects:**
 - University of Vermont, Cheryl Cesario (VT only) – 2020, 2023
 - White River Natural Resource Conservation District (VT/NH) – 2021, 2023
 - Pennsylvania Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) and Cornell (PA/NY) – 2021
 - Organic Valley (PA/NY/VT/ME) – 2022
 - Cornell (NY only) – 2022
 - University of Vermont, Heather Darby (VT/NY) – 2022, 2023
 - Conservation Performance (VT/NH/MA/PA) – 2022
 - University of Maine (ME) – 2022
- 150+ farmers participating
- **Outcomes to date:**
 - The Cleveland Farm (UVM Cesario 2020 cohort) realized feed cost savings of \$34,000 during first year - Scott says, "I'm very pleased with how this went. I should have done this ten years ago."
 - Access to DBIC earmarked grants to help implement project and improvements developed in cohort period





Competitive Grants

- Multi-Business Agritourism
- Dairy Marketing and Branding
- Goat & Sheep Dairy Supply Chain
- Dairy Food Safety and Certification
- Business Viability and Technical Assistance
- Packaging Innovation
- Farm and Processor Innovation
- On Farm Milk Storage and Handling
- Existing Processor Expansion
- Processor Research and Development

Project Spotlight: Marketing & Branding Grants

- **Goal:** provide professional services to value-added business to support marketing and brand development through labeling, e-commerce, social media, imagery, and strategy
- **Funded projects:**
 - 2 rounds, 23 grants totaling ~\$845,000
 - 5 Vermont grantees:
 - Bridgman Hill Farm
 - J&R Family Farm dba Nothin' but Curd
 - lu•lu Artisan Ice Cream (Harmack LLC)
 - Ploughgate Creamery
 - Von Trapp Farmstead
- **Grant impacts:**
 - We exceeded our dreams and goals for this grant! In 2020 we did \$17.6k in online sales. In 2021 with the help of our team through this grant we did \$40k in online sales. We increased our customer visits by 69%.
 - We have seen significant sales increases since the rebrand, \$50,000 more than the prior year and demand up 40%



Project Spotlight: Dairy Packaging Innovation Grant

- **Goal:** to reduce the use of virgin plastic in the dairy supply chain by supporting modernized packaging initiatives that prioritize sustainability, scalability, and marketability
- **Funded projects:**
 - AgriMark/Cabot (VT)
 - Plastic film for 8-ounce blocks
 - Big Picture Farm (VT)
 - Whole packaging line revamp
 - Cellars at Jasper Hill (VT)
 - Plastic film for shelf-ready packages and consumer education
 - Stonyfield (NH)
 - Yo-baby pouch
 - Vermont Creamery (VT)
 - Multi-layer plastic film for chevre logs
- **Details:**
 - \$1.1 million in funds granted
 - 2-year projects
 - Educational/information sharing required



Louisa Conrad and Lucas Farrell of Big Picture Farm,
reacting to notification of their grant

Research and Development

- New England distribution network study
- Goat dairy development needs
- Consumer perception study and marketing toolkit
- Sensory and microbial research of specialty cheese
- Goat and sheep consumer demand
- Dairy Product Innovation Challenge with Cornell University



Project Spotlight: Strengthening the Regional Value-Added Dairy Distribution System

KEY FINDINGS & STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

FINDING

The Northeast's value-added dairy supply chain works well for many buyers and producers, but it shows signs of brittleness.

STRATEGY

BUILD RESILIENCY

- Take a holistic view of distribution as a process that includes producer readiness, marketing and sales strategies, relationships and more.
- Apply a long-term view and broad goal of increasing resiliency and reducing brittleness in distribution networks to all industry investments and efforts.

- **Goal:** understand the current functionality of New England dairy distribution, accessibility to processors, and areas of needed development or support
- **Funded project:**
 - KK&P completed a study and released report with presentation in April 2022
- **Outcomes to date:**
 - Identified strategic directions, developed case studies, and possible interventions, using models in other areas to support how implementation could happen and potential results
 - Integration of findings into the USDA recommendations and future DBIC projects

Funding Totals

- Applications Received – 353
- Total Request - \$19.3 million

- Total Awards – 126
- Total Funds - \$9.2 million
- Average Award - \$73,000

- Vermont Applications
 - Received – 118 / \$6.9 million
 - Awarded – 44
 - Total Funds - \$3.78 million
 - Average Award - \$86,000



Organic Dairy Projects

- Total Investment - \$1.585 million
- Vermont focused:
 - \$200,000 in state funds to support organic producers impacted by Horizon exit
 - NE-DBIC Grants to support farmers impacted by Horizon exit to assist the farmers in purchasing supplies to ensure they are shipment ready for their new buyer:
 - \$124,500 grant to NOFA-VT
 - AAFFM convenes the Organic Dairy Task Force



Organic Dairy Projects

- Regional focus:
 - \$450,000 in organic on-farm milk storage and handling grants - NE-DBIC funds, open for application now, closes on February 9
 - \$200,000 grant to Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Association to study supply, processing, and demand for organic milk in institutional markets
 - Two grants to support farmers impacted by Horizon and Maple Hill exits to assist the farmers in purchasing supplies to ensure they are shipment ready for their new buyer:
 - \$232,500 to NOFA-NY, and
 - \$66,000 to Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners (MOFGA)
 - \$90,000 grant to support the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership's consumer and buyer activation campaign
 - \$33,000 grant to support marketing and branding development for the Maine Organic Milk Company
 - \$41,230 grant to support MOFGA in providing technical assistance to the state's organic dairy sector
 - \$148,320 contract to Organic Valley to provide climate smart training to farmers in the region



Contact

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