

2023

REPORT



**Farmers for
Sustainable
Food**



UNITE.
INSPIRE.
EMPOWER.



TM



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Todd Doornink

President

Jon-De Farm

Western Wisconsin
Conservation Council

“

*FSF offers help and support
for so many of us in this
great community, and our
impact continues to grow.*

If you surround yourself with great people, great things can happen. This has certainly been something I have noticed during my time as Farmers for Sustainable Food board president.

As you will find throughout the pages of this Progress Report, FSF has had another year of tremendous growth, including a big addition to our achievements: our Climate-Smart Program in partnership with Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative. This new program is funded by the USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities award, and through this grant, we've already started accelerating our farmer-led sustainability project work. It truly is an exciting time for FSF!

As I think back on our very first FSF meeting and see just how far we have come, I could not be more proud. Never would I have dreamed FSF would grow and progress so quickly. FSF offers help and support for so many of us in this great community, and our impact continues to grow.

I am honored to be part of an organization assisting farmers on their own sustainability paths. I appreciate working with so many remarkable people in FSF and affiliate organizations, Edge and the Dairy Business Association.

Thank you to our members and board members who actively contribute to and advocate for this wonderful organization. Your contributions continue to be one of the biggest drivers of our growth, and your efforts are sincerely appreciated.

As my time as president concludes, I look forward to continuing to support the organization as a board member representing my local farmer-led watershed conservation group, Western Wisconsin Conservation Council. And, I look forward to all of the amazing things FSF has yet to accomplish. The sky is the limit as we pave the way to a more sustainable future!

Todd Doornink



Our **Mission**

Empower farmers to develop and implement practical, innovative solutions collaboratively for environmental, economic and social good.



Our **Vision**

A sustainable food system in which farmers, their communities and the environment thrive.

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



357,893

acres managed by farmer-led group participants



59

total members, **nine** new members in 2023



254

farmers participated in 2023 conservation practice survey



\$492k+

raised

Every day, our goal is to provide the strongest possible support to farmers. We help our farmers gather, analyze and understand their farm data so they are empowered to make the best management decisions for their business and their priorities.



Lauren Brey
Managing Director

This past year has provided exciting opportunities for Farmers for Sustainable Food to grow and expand on its mission of empowering farmers to develop and implement practical, innovative solutions collaboratively for environmental, economic and social good. Our continual work with members and the farmer-led watershed conservation groups we support has allowed FSF to expand and mature to become one of the leaders in on-farm sustainability initiatives.

The successes of the past year would not be possible without our generous supporters, partners and collaborators who truly believe in our mission to co-create long-term sustainable solutions.

Pivotal 2023 moments:

Climate-Smart: After considerable time establishing, testing and implementing the right procedures, we, in partnership with Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, launched our USDA Climate-Smart Commodities Program. This program enables us to expand our Framework for Farm-Level Sustainability Projects, a nationally recognized, proven farmer-led sustainability project

model. Read more about it on pages 7 and 8.

Through our Climate-Smart Program, we continue to grow our team. We have added several talented people to provide the bandwidth to execute on the important aspects of the program on behalf of Edge, FSF and our partners.

Every day, our goal is to provide the strongest possible support to farmers. We help our farmers gather, analyze and understand their farm data so they are empowered to make the best management decisions for their business and their priorities. Ultimately, these data-driven decisions lead to positive environmental and financial outcomes, as well as rewards for their work within the supply chain.

Our team works diligently toward this goal each and every day. Together, we will achieve a sustainable food system in which farmers, their communities and the environment thrive.

Lauren Brey



FARMER-LED GROUP MEMBERS BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH MEDIA TRAINING



Answering questions from a reporter can be uncomfortable. But engaging with the media is important to the mission of farmer-led watershed conservation groups, whose members have a great story to share with their neighbors and others interested in how they are using conservation practices to protect and improve land and water resources.

Sixteen members of eight such groups stepped out of their comfort zones in November for a message and media training workshop led by Farmers for Sustainable Food. During the day-long event, the farmers learned the key points to convey when describing their conservation efforts and they became familiar with how the news media operates so they can engage positively

in interviews. The goal for the training was for participants to feel confident and capable of sharing their story with media or others interested in their farming practices.

Exploring different messaging helped the workshop participants understand how their stories can resonate most with the audience — particularly people who are unfamiliar with farming practices and the work of their groups. Insights on how journalists do their jobs gave participants context. And, practice interviews put them to the test.

"Once you understand and get the messaging down, it is much easier to answer the questions. That's what I think the training did," said Cody Carpenter, a dairy farmer in Darlington, Wis., who is a member of Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance and participated in the workshop. "I felt challenged every step of the way, but that was good because I became more confident as we went along."

This workshop was made possible by Compeer Financial Fund for Rural America, Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and Farmers for Sustainable Food.

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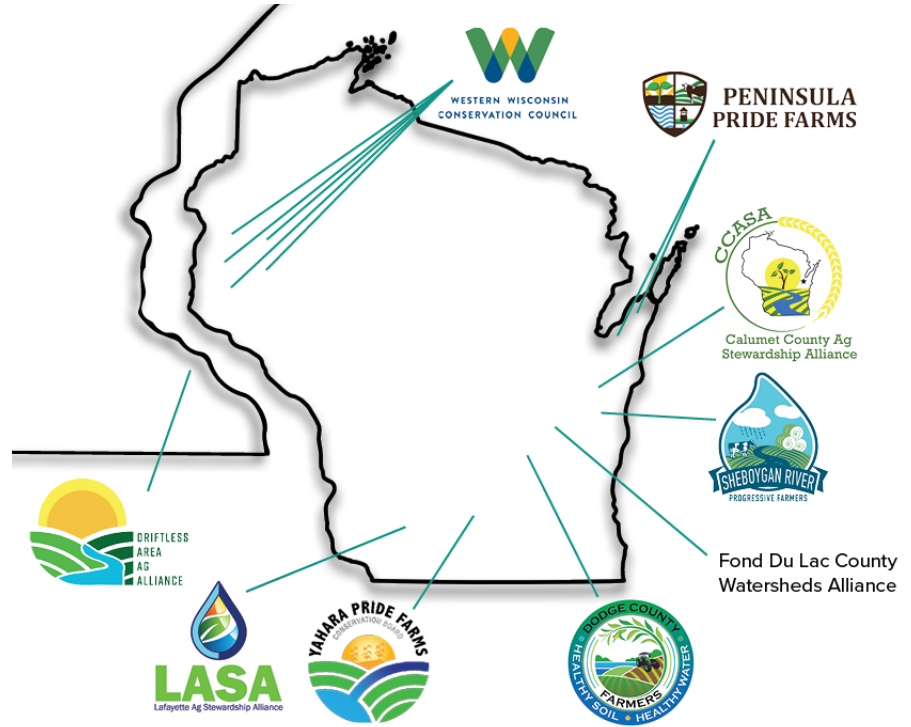
"Once you understand and get the messaging down, it is much easier to answer the questions. That's what I think the training did."

Cody Carpenter
Workshop participant

FARMER-LED GROUP SUPPORT

Farmers for Sustainable Food supports a growing network of farmer-led watershed conservation groups. In 2023, FSF partnered with eight groups in Wisconsin and one in Minnesota. These groups are expanding innovative farming practices that are proving, through science and data, to be reducing environmental impacts.

FSF offers a variety of services to the groups, including administration, event planning and execution, communications and marketing support, project management, technical assistance and more. This includes support for an annual conservation practice survey that captures farmers' conservation efforts, demonstrating continuous improvement and environmental benefits.



COMMUNITY

Each group hosts events throughout the year including field days, farm tours, workshops and an annual meeting or conference. These opportunities allow farmers to learn about conservation practices from each other and their neighbors, along with the chance for the public to engage and learn during the event.

MEDIA

News media amplifies the message farmers are sharing about their commitment to environmentally sound farming practices. Through press releases and media interviews, the nine groups were featured in 380 stories, potentially reaching over 30 million people.

37
EVENTS

1,500
ATTENDEES



380
MEDIA
HITS

2023 SURVEY RESULTS

Wisconsin farmers are making progress in sustainable farming practices, according to the results of the annual conservation practice survey supported by Farmers for Sustainable Food. The report captures farmers' conservation efforts statewide, demonstrating continued progress and environmental benefits.

This report marks the sixth consecutive year of documenting conservation practices with farmer-led watershed conservation groups, signifying the farmers' commitment to continuous improvement and enhancing soil and water quality.

In 2023, 254 farmers from six different farmer-led groups supported by Farmers for Sustainable Food participated in the annual survey, encompassing 249,628 acres and 353,037 head of livestock.

Reductions are estimated using models. Actual reductions may be higher or lower. For more information about the farmer-led watershed conservation groups supported by FSF, visit farmersforsustainablefood.com.



Climate

Reduced CO2 equivalents (greenhouse gas emissions) by **33,617 metric tons**. This equals the greenhouse gas emissions from **8,001 cars driven for a year**.



Soil health

Farm fields have reduced sediment loss by **338,391 tons**, equivalent to **33,389 dump trucks'** worth of soil.



Water quality

Phosphorus runoff was reduced by **423,958 pounds** of phosphorus, potentially preventing **211.9 million pounds** of algae growth in local water bodies.

CONSERVATION LEADER HONORED AT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE SUMMIT

Jim Winn of Cottonwood Dairy receives 2023 Farmer of the Year award



Jim Winn, a member of Farmers for Sustainable Food and president of Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance, was selected as the Field to Market 2023 Farmer of the Year. Field to Market: The Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture® is a diverse group of grower organizations; agribusinesses; food, feed, beverage, restaurant and retail companies; conservation groups; universities and public sector partners that focus on defining, measuring and advancing the sustainability of food; feed, fiber and fuel production. This award recognizes outstanding leadership and continuous improvement in sustainability of U.S. commodity crop production.

Winn is the co-owner and operator of Cottonwood Dairy in South Wayne, Wis., farming approximately 2,500 acres of corn and alfalfa with approximately 2,900 dairy cattle. Winn and his partners have a whole-farm approach to sustainability involving numerous conservation practices such as no-till, contour strips, cover crops, and a comprehensive nutrient management plan.

Among his exceptional work in sustainability leadership, Winn has been actively involved in the partnership formed between FSF and LASA to complete a four-year pilot sustainability project.

See more information about this project on page 7.

SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS EXPAND

FSF supports farmers and supply chain partners in convening and collaborating to find practical, innovative solutions to deliver environmental, economic and social good. FSF's Framework for Farm-Level Sustainability Projects is the basis of all projects managed by FSF and is available as a downloadable resource at farmersforsustainablefood.com.

Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance

35%

less acreage used to produce 1 ton of corn silage compared to state benchmark

4-year average crop yields/acre have **increased** for all project farms compared to average Wisconsin farms

54%

lower soil erosion than state average for corn grain

74%

of acreage reported less risk of nitrogen loss to subsurface (nutrients not leaving the soil)

Fifteen farms, representing approximately 29,000 acres, participated in the fourth year of the Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance sustainability project. Participating farms provided cropping information to be analyzed. Four of the participating farms also completed the fourth year of a financial assessment of their conservation practices.

Participating farms receive a detailed analysis of their land use efficiency, soil conservation, soil carbon, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water quality and biodiversity. The aggregated and anonymized data was presented at a farmer-to-farmer workshop in July 2023. At the workshop, farmers compared their individual scores to the overall project, state and national scores. Conservation practices being implemented and the potential impact on improving scores was discussed with participants. The project is continuing into the future under FSF's Sustainability Program through the Climate-Smart award.

This ongoing project illustrates that implementing environmentally friendly practices into crop systems results in yield advantage, profitable net return per acre and positive on-farm sustainability metrics without increasing input costs.

Project farms show stronger current ratios and term debt coverage ratios than average farms in Wisconsin, and are all above the industry benchmarks.

Valley Queen Cheese

The Valley Queen project was unique compared to other FSF projects because the majority of the dairies that ship milk to them do not grow their own feed. With this in mind, the project focused on two farms and was designed to collect and analyze data only for the 2022 crop year. The project was similar to other FSF sustainability projects in that it analyzed the sustainability of the crop enterprise but also milk production by looking primarily at animal housing, feedlots and manure management. This allowed Valley Queen and the two farms to see a whole-farm picture of the environmental footprint of both crops and milk. The sustainability metrics analyzed included land use efficiency, soil conservation, soil carbon, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water quality and biodiversity. Tools utilized in the project included Field to Market's Fieldprint Platform® (FPP), and Manure-DNDC (a process-based biogeochemical tool for estimating GHG emissions and soil carbon sequestration from dairies). The assessment work was completed in 2023 and was presented and discussed with the farms in early 2024.

Peninsula Pride Farms

In 2023, Peninsula Pride Farms, based in Door and Kewaunee Counties, Wis., collected, entered, and analyzed crop data in Field to Market's Fieldprint Platform® (FPP). Eleven farms participated in this project.

One key finding discovered through analysis of environmental information was that farms had an average energy use of 166,432 btu per ton of corn silage, which is 47% lower (better) than the national indicator. Results showed impacts on soil erosion, estimating 1.0 tons/acre/year, which is much lower than the Wisconsin state benchmark of 3.5 tons/acre/year for corn grain production.

FPP provides each farm with a detailed analysis and scores for land use efficiency, soil conservation, soil carbon, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water quality and biodiversity. Aggregated and anonymized data was presented to participants in July 2023. At the workshop, farmers compared their individual scores to overall project, state and national scores.

This is the third year PPF farmers have participated in the project. The farms will continue collecting and analyzing crop data through the FPP for two more years, when the project can then validate claims on farm crop enterprise sustainability.

The second part of the project analyzed impacts of existing and planned conservation practices on local water resources. The project focus was on surface water and groundwater quality—specifically, nitrogen in groundwater and excess nutrients in

surface water. The analysis was completed using a watershed modeling tool called the Prioritize, Target, Measure Application. One advantage of the model is it's ability to identify and prioritize areas in a watershed likely to contribute higher levels of ag nutrients and estimate the benefit if new or enhanced conservation practices were implemented. This information was presented at a workshop along with the PPF board discussion regarding how information could be used to develop sub-area targeted conservation practice implementation plans.

Best management practices in the watershed are reducing field-edge losses by 148,000 tons of sediment, 21,500 lbs of phosphorus and 373,000 lbs of nitrogen on 154,000 acres.

**BMPs used in the calculation include cover crops, no-tillage, reduced tillage and nutrient management.*

47%

lower energy use
per ton of corn
silage compared
to the national
average

Reduced
sediment loss by
148,000
tons

154,000

acres included the
environmental
project

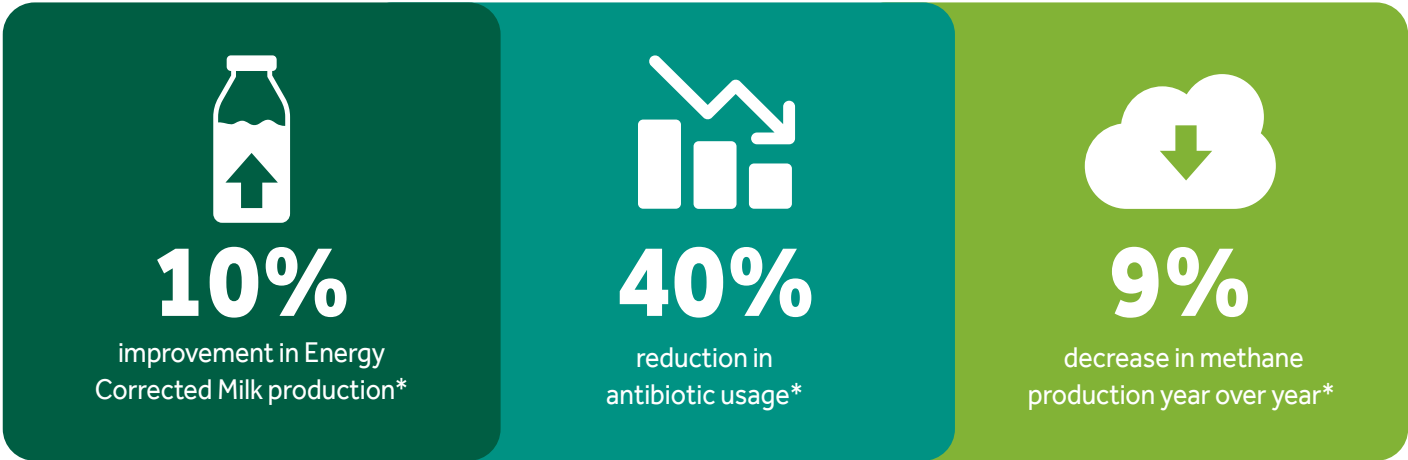


PROFITABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

go hand-in-hand

Farmer-led solutions are crucial to solving today’s environmental challenges while helping to maintain a healthy, productive herd. A collaborative genomic study between Farmers for Sustainable Food and Zoetis assessed around 8,000 animals born in 2015 and 2016, utilizing Zoetis’ genomic predictions from CLARIFIDE® Plus as heifers. This Genomic Testing Study aimed to evaluate lifetime profit, health benchmarks, and sustainability metrics. It underscores the pivotal role farmers play in advancing agricultural sustainability through state-of-the-art technologies.

The Results



**As measured by Dairy Wellness Profit Index® (DWP\$®)¹*

The Equivalent Impact

of 17.2 estimated metric tons of methane reduced per 1,000 cow herd*



**According to the EPA Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator*

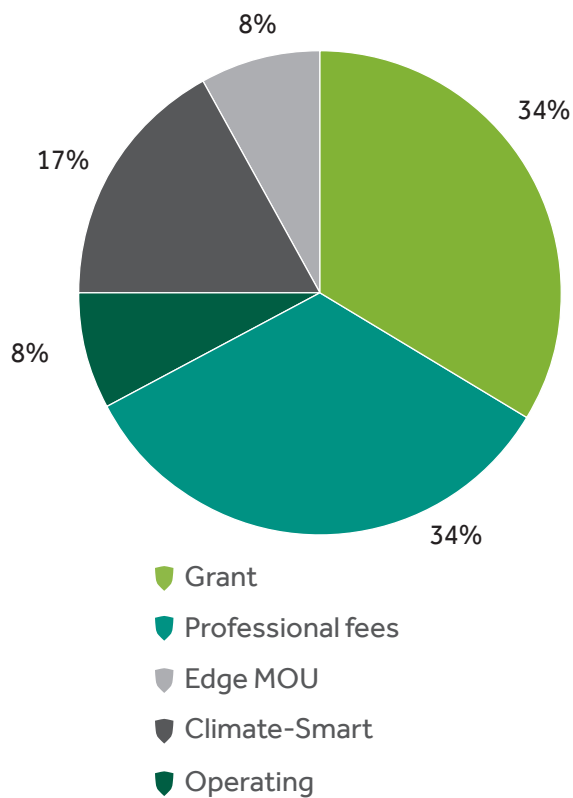


1. Zoetis Data on file; 22CORGEN-02-01, 23CORGEN-02-01.

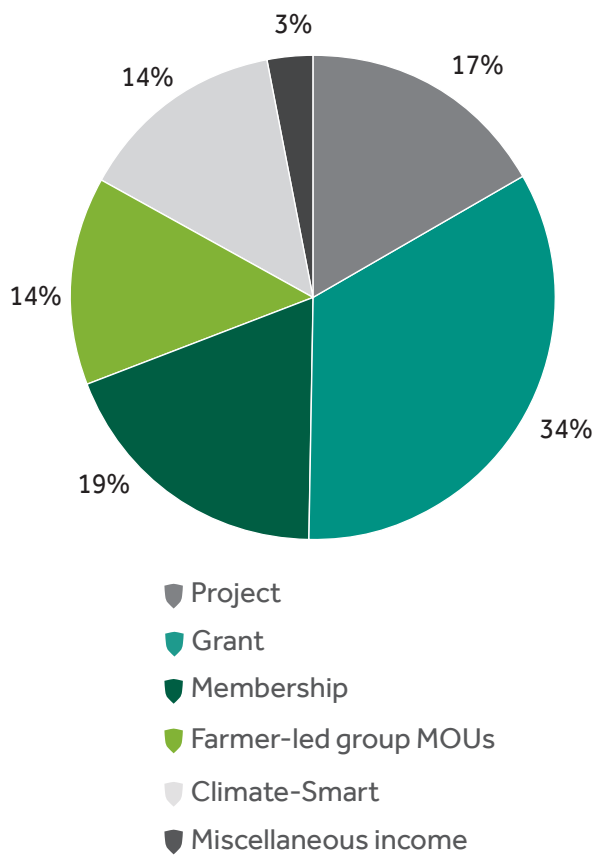
a quick look at
FINANCIALS

In 2023, FSF performed better than we had anticipated in the budget. Total revenue for 2023 was \$492,541 and total expenses were \$398,792.

2023
Expense by category



2023
Revenue by category



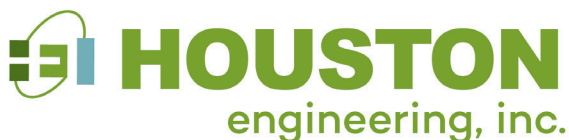
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“We are committed to supporting farmers in their exceptional work. With the launch of our FSF Climate-Smart Program, we have expanded our impact and continue to empower many more farmers on their sustainability journeys.”

Tim Trotter
Chief Executive Officer



MEMBER PROFILE



Houston Engineering, Inc. is a civil engineering firm with offices in the Upper Midwest with over 50 years of history serving the agricultural industry. Our work with agriculture takes us across the nation where we support efforts to communicate and improve the sustainability of farms as they work to feed, clothe,

and fuel our nation. We bring our wealth of experience in measuring, monitoring and verifying environmental outcomes associated with the positive steps agriculture is taking to improve production, production efficiency, and outcomes for the environment.

How did you get connected to FSF?

Our connection with FSF came a bit by happenstance. Our team members met FSF at a sustainability meeting in Chicago during networking time. FSF was very open to having follow-up discussions to explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration. It was during these follow-up meetings where we had a chance to learn more about FSF's mission.

Why did you join?

FSF's mission is very much aligned with the way our company approaches work with agriculture. In so many areas of sustainability, it seems farmers are being sold different types of programs or conservation, in a top-down manner. We are very much aligned with FSF's model that focuses on supporting farmers with information so the farmers can lead on sustainability and climate-smart decisions as opposed to selling farmers programs.

What value do you get from being an FSF member?

Our membership in FSF has created multiple bridges for our company to connect with other organizations working on agricultural sustainability and climate issues. It has also provided us with multiple opportunities to partner directly with FSF and other FSF corporate members to support farmers in making progress toward communicating the great work farms and their supply chain partners are already doing to improve the sustainability of our food systems.

How is FSF unique to other organizations you might work with?

Their focus on supporting farmers so that the farmers get to lead discussions and outcomes around sustainability and climate is truly unique. In addition, they've always been very welcoming of new ideas and opportunities to grow partnerships that support farmers and the sustainability of our food systems.

THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

GENERAL MEMBERS

AGI Digital/Farmobile
Agropur
AgSource*
Arm & Hammer Animal and Food Production
Arva Intelligence*
BMO Bank, N.A.
C.O.nxt
Cargill
Clean Wisconsin
Compeer Financial
Dairy Business Association
Dairy Farmers of America
Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
DVO, Inc.
Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative
Elanco
Emmi Roth
GLC Minerals

General Mills*
Grande Cheese Company
GreenStone Farm Credit Services
Houston Engineering, Inc.
Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy
Insight FS
Midwest Dairy
Pivot Bio*
Riesterer & Schnell
Schreiber Foods, Inc.
Sound Agriculture*
Syngenta
The Nature Conservancy
Tilth Agronomy
Valley Queen Cheese
Wisconsin Biomass Energy Coalition
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation*
Zoetis

FARMER MEMBERS

Brey Cycle Farm
Cottonwood Dairy
Crave Brothers Farm
Creamery Creek Holsteins
Dairy Dreams
Darlington Ridge Farms
Deer Run Dairy

Double Dutch Dairy
Dutch Dairy
Jon-De Farm
Kinnard Farms
Larson Acres*
Pagel's Ponderosa Dairy
Rosy-Lane Holsteins

**New members in 2023*

special thanks TO THE FARMER-LED GROUPS



*

Fond Du Lac County
Watersheds Alliance*



PENINSULA
PRIDE FARMERS



2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Todd Doornink

President

Jon-De Farm
Western Wis. Conservation Council



Paul Cornette

Vice President

Cornette Dairy
Peninsula Pride Farms



Holly Bellmund

Secretary

GLC Minerals



Greg Steele

Treasurer

Compeer Financial



Lee Kinnard

Kinnard Farms



Mike Berget

Berget Family Farms
Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance



Holly Jones

Agropur



Lynn Thornton

Grande Cheese Company



Jeff Endres

Endres Berryridge Farms
Yahara Pride Farms

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

By joining Farmers for Sustainable Food, you help grow resources to make meaningful change. Being on the forefront of change will help create a future that benefits the food system and communities to ensure long-term prosperity.



Reach out to info@farmersforsustainablefood.com to join this effort.

Ready to donate today? Donate online at FarmersForSustainableFood.com/donate
FSF is a 501(c)(3) and donations may be tax deductible as allowed by law.



MEET OUR TEAM



Lauren Brey
Managing Director



Jamie Fisher
Sr. Project Manager



Emma Jorgenson
*Assistant Project
Manager*



Tim Trotter
Chief Executive Officer



Thank you to the staff of Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative for their continued support of FSF.





**To learn more,
visit FarmersForSustainableFood.com**





FarmersForSustainableFood.com

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