



Farmers for
Sustainable
Food

PROGRESSES

2025

report

UNITE.
INSPIRE.
EMPOWER.



TM

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A new way forward: Empowering every step of the value chain

2025 was a year filled with progress and challenges, but most importantly, we were reminded time and time again of how important our work is in fulfilling our mission to build a more sustainable food system.

In early January 2025, we released the results from the inaugural year of the FSF Climate-Smart program. The results consisted of 53 farms in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota, encompassing over 100,000 acres of cropland and over 71,000 head of cattle. We were encouraged by the level of farmer engagement and interest we received, and even more so by the results showing how farms are reducing CO₂ emissions through the implementation of best management practices. You can read more details about the results on page 9.

As farmers, we know how to quickly adapt and adjust, and that's exactly what we did when funding for our Climate-Smart program was terminated early in the year. We had the opportunity to transition our program into a privatized model, building on the farmer-led sustainability projects we've been doing since 2019 and aligning value chain stakeholders. EmPower+ was officially launched in November and includes trusted data collection services, farm report review and support to help individual farms understand their sustainability metrics.

We're eager to work with farmers and processors to connect farmer-led innovation directly to the environmental goals of the dairy value chain, and several projects are currently underway. We're focused on creating new opportunities for farmers to be recognized and rewarded for measurable environmental performance. Find out more about the EmPower+ program on page 7.

Looking ahead, we're ready for more progress and growth. We're focused on creating a collaborative effort that supports farmer-led solutions to environmental challenges and engaging in new partnerships with farmers and processors. Our objective is to give farmers the tools and metrics they need to deliver verified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for the industry. We will keep driving sustainable efforts and supporting farmers.

Paul Cornette



Paul Cornette

Farmers for Sustainable Food

President

Cornette Dairy

Peninsula Pride Farms

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Our **Mission**

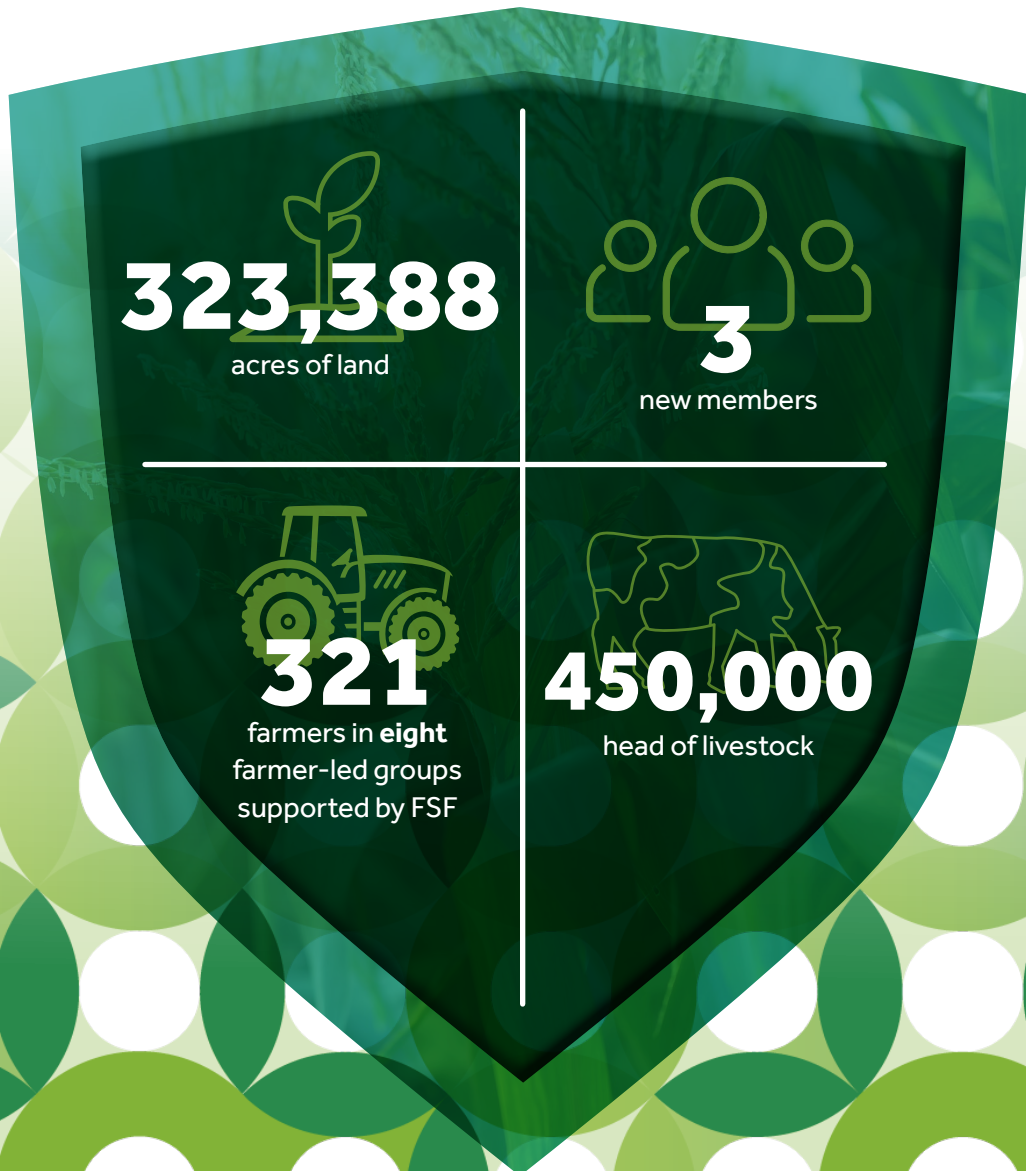
Empower farmers to develop and implement practical, innovative solutions collaboratively for environmental, economic and social good.



Our **Vision**

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

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW





Our vision is to create new opportunities to recognize and reward measurable environmental performance across the dairy value chain.

Hello members and partners,

I'm excited to introduce myself as the new managing director of Farmers for Sustainable Food, a position I stepped into during the summer of 2025. After 6 years with the organization, where I led support for farmer-led watershed groups across Wisconsin and Minnesota, I am eager to take on this new opportunity.

With my background in dairy farming and the strong relationships I've built with forward-thinking farmers across the Midwest, I have a genuine understanding of today's farmers and their commitment to continuous improvement.

Throughout my time with FSF, I have played a key role in executing various sustainability projects, including assisting farmers in documenting and understanding their environmental outcomes on their farms. As managing director, I am committed to expanding my leadership and oversight of the organization's vision and sustainability initiatives. I will continue to foster collaboration with farmers, members and other partners in sustainable agriculture.

Looking ahead, we will continue to support farmer-led innovation throughout the dairy value chain with the launch of our new EmPower+ program.

EmPower+ is a multi-stage program that offers trusted data support services and a portfolio of production efficiency solutions designed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improve water quality.

Our vision is to create new opportunities to recognize and reward measurable environmental performance across the dairy value chain. We aim to equip dairy farmers with the tools to thrive in a constantly evolving marketplace, and we remain dedicated to advancing and achieving these goals.

I look forward to supporting our vision and mission and expanding on our success!

With sincere appreciation,

Jamie Fisher



Jamie Fisher
Managing Director

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE ACROSS THE UPPER MIDWEST

Farmers for Sustainable Food supports sustainable farming practices across the Upper Midwest, benefiting farms, local communities and the environment. FSF empowers farmers with tools, resources and a supportive network, encouraging data-driven decision-making for conservation and progress tracking. By collaborating with farmers and processors, FSF aims to develop long-term solutions to environmental challenges, taking steps to establish a more sustainable food system.

Your contribution fuels projects that enable farmers to understand their data and develop sustainable solutions. Join us in building a brighter future for generations to come, promoting practices that prioritize environmental, economic and social prosperity.

Please note: FSF is a 501(c)(3) and donations to it may be tax deductible as allowed by law.

Be a part of building a more sustainable food system – donate today!

Scan the QR code for more information or to donate!



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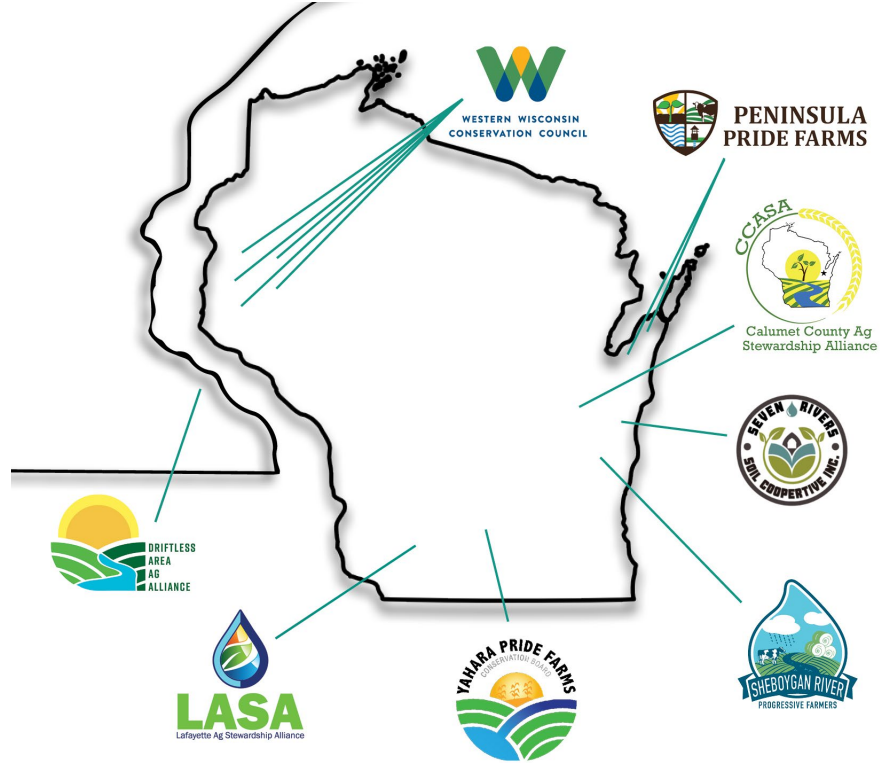
Ripp's Dairy Valley

Tim and Rosella Trotter

FARMER-LED GROUP SUPPORT

Farmers for Sustainable Food supports an expanding network of farmer-led watershed conservation groups. In 2025, FSF collaborated with seven groups in Wisconsin and one in Minnesota. These groups are using scientific research and data to demonstrate how sustainable farming practices are helping to reduce environmental impacts.

FSF provides customized services to each group based on their needs and goals, which can include administration, event planning and execution, communications and marketing support, project management, technical assistance and more. Additionally, FSF supports 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 from each other, their neighbors and industry experts. They provide the chance for the local community to engage and learn about innovative farming practices.

MEDIA

News media amplifies the message farmers are sharing about their commitment to environmentally sound farming practices. Through press releases and media interviews, the groups were mentioned in over 180 stories, with a cumulative potential audience reach of more than 300 million people.



2025 SURVEY RESULTS

Farmers in the Upper Midwest are advancing their sustainable farming efforts, as highlighted in the latest annual conservation survey supported by Farmers for Sustainable Food. The survey results showcase the conservation practices utilized by farmers across Wisconsin and Minnesota, revealing ongoing progress and positive environmental impacts.

This is the seventh consecutive year of documenting conservation practices with farmer-led groups, showing the farmers' dedication to continuous improvement and bettering soil and water quality.

In 2025, 211 farmers from six different farmer-led groups supported by Farmers for Sustainable Food participated in the annual survey, encompassing 255,670 acres and 378,313 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 **28,918 metric tons**. This equals the greenhouse gas emissions from **6,885 cars driven for a year**.



Soil health

Farm fields have reduced sediment loss by **255,444 tons**, equivalent to **25,544 dump trucks'** worth of soil.



Water quality

Phosphorus runoff was reduced by **349,328 pounds** of phosphorus, potentially preventing **174.7 million pounds** of algae growth in local water bodies.

INTRODUCING FSF'S FARMER-LED GROUP COLLABORATORS

As Farmers for Sustainable Food continues to grow and expand its farmer-led group network, it is essential to ensure that the unique needs of each group are met. To achieve this, the FSF team has welcomed Strategic Account Managers (SAMs) to support farmer-led groups as collaborators. Each collaborator serves as the main contact for their designated group(s). They're responsible for providing services including administration, event planning and execution, fundraising support and technical support.

MEET THE FLG COLLABORATORS



Kaitlin Heusel is the collaborator for the Western Wisconsin Conservation Council and the Driftless Area Ag Alliance. She brings 10+ years of dairy cooperative experience. She and her family live in eastern Minnesota.



Marti Viste is the collaborator for Peninsula Pride Farms. She is the fifth generation on her family farm, Vistren Farms, in Door County, Wis., and prior to her collaborator role, spent several years as an active member of PPF.

FSF AND EDGE LAUNCH FARMER-LED, WHOLE FARM APPROACH TO LOWERING GHG EMISSIONS ON DAIRY FARMS

At the end of 2025, Farmers for Sustainable Food and Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative launched EmPower+, a farmer-led program designed to bridge on-farm innovation with the environmental goals of the dairy value chain. Through data-driven insights and a portfolio of production efficiency solutions, EmPower+ supports measurable improvements in water quality and reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.



This farmer-led initiative creates a practical, transparent path for verified emission reductions to be embedded directly into milk procurement, creating new opportunities to recognize and reward environmental performance across the dairy value chain.

"Dairy farmers have a long history of innovation and environmental stewardship and are ready to lead the next generation of solutions," said Tim Trotter, CEO of Edge and its affiliate Farmers for Sustainable Food, which administers the program.

"Through EmPower+ we are building a collaborative, industry-aligned effort to promote and support farmer-led solutions to meet today's environmental challenges," Trotter said. "For too long, sustainability programs have taken a one-size-fits-all approach. But dairy farms are complex ecosystems — lasting progress requires looking at the whole picture, from cow care and nutrition to crop production and manure management. Our goal is to give farmers the tools and metrics they need to deliver verified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for the industry."

The development of this transparent, whole-farm, outcomes-based model positions dairy farmers as leaders in sustainable agriculture by aligning the interests of farmers, processors and food companies. The program establishes a foundation for shared value across the entire value chain.

Agropur, a leading cheese manufacturer, collaborates with FSF in establishing shared connections between dairy farms and processors.

"Agropur is committed to working closely with dairy farms to better understand on farm conditions across our milksheds and to support farm resiliency. Through our collaboration with Farmers for Sustainable Food, we are

“**Dairy farmers have a long history of innovation and environmental stewardship and are ready to lead the next generation of solutions.**”

helping farmers use existing information to understand the footprint of their operation,” said Trevor Fleege, senior director of Commodity Management and Milk Procurement for Agropur

This work supports the broader dairy industry by helping tell a credible, farmer led story about how dairy is evolving—one that resonates with consumers and helps build confidence and demand for dairy products. Fleege said. “At the same time, it can help identify opportunities for collaboration across the supply chain, including ways partners can work together to support and fund on farm projects that align with farmer priorities.”

EmPower+ is a multi-stage program grounded in trusted information gathering. Working with their processors, farms are supported in creating a comprehensive data stream that reflects how their farms operate day to day—from feed and herd management to energy and manure practices—turning that information into practical insights they can use.

Farms can choose to participate independently. In both cases farmers and processors can use the program to meet their business goals:

- Farmers are empowered to understand how their management practices impact their footprint to make informed decisions that improve efficiency across the entire farm.
- Processors use the information to meet value chain reporting requirements.

“Edge’s vision is to provide the programs farmers need to be the most successful and engaged in the market,” Trotter said. “The EmPower+ program is one more way we are stepping up to bring our members, and all dairy farmers, the tools they need to compete in an ever-changing marketplace.”

To learn more about EmPower+, visit www.edgedairy.com/empower.

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MEET OUR NEW EMPOWER+ TEAM MEMBERS

Jennifer Block and Jim Eckberg joined the team in 2025 to advance the EmPower+ program. They both bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to help our farmers and processors achieve their sustainability goals and create value across the entire dairy value chain.



Jennifer Block

Director of value chain partnerships

Jennifer Block leads collaborative initiatives to advance farmer-led sustainability, innovation and market opportunities. Within the EmPower+ program, she leverages her experience in the dairy value chain to merge relationships and further grow existing partnerships between allied industries. She brings more than 20 years of experience in corporate social responsibility, communications and global policy development across the energy and agriculture sectors.



Jim Eckberg

Director of science and innovation

Jim focuses on developing the science to link farmer-led innovation to supply chain sustainability initiatives. He leads the technical development of the EmPower+ program. Prior to joining the FSF team, Jim was a senior scientist with General Mills. There, he collaborated with Logiag Inc. and the value chain to develop a whole-farm program that today supports 125 Quebec dairies in delivering greenhouse gas emission reductions to the value chain based on improvements in herd and nutrient management. Jim holds a PhD in agroecology from the University of Minnesota and a Master’s in ecology from the University of Nebraska.

FARMERS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD UNVEILS RESULTS FROM CLIMATE-SMART PROGRAM

Data-driven sustainability program empowers farmers across the Upper Midwest

Farmers in the Upper Midwest are using actionable data to inform decisions about the conservation practices implemented on their farms. Results from the inaugural year of the Farmers for Sustainable Food Climate-Smart program were unveiled at the Dairy Business Association's Dairy Strong conference in January 2025, showing that these sustainable farming practices achieved positive environmental outcomes.

The first year of the FSF Climate-Smart program demonstrated promising results to empower farmers and add value throughout the supply chain. The initiative built upon a nationally recognized model, FSF's Framework for Farm-Level Sustainability Projects, which helps farmers determine what conservation practices are most effective for their individual farms and provides tools to document the environmental and financial effects. Funding for the program was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities award.

The program consisted of five projects with 53 farms in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota that participated in data collection and analysis regarding their 2023 crop-year information. In total, the program encompassed 100,193 acres of cropland and 71,686 head of cattle.

"We are encouraged by the amount of farmer engagement we received. These farms are making a difference, and when we aggregate the results, we show the important impact they are making," Jamie Fisher, FSF managing director, said. "In the first year, we had increased engagement and, more importantly, piqued the interest of others wanting to capture meaningful data on their farming practices."

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Having the ability to see the impact my farming practices are making on a yearly basis helps me make better decisions.



Farmers enrolled in the FSF Climate-Smart program received individual reports showing key metrics for their farms. Aggregated results from the first year of the program demonstrate the broad, positive environmental impact of sustainable farming practices.

The data captured from those enrolled in the first year of the project showed that the farms reduced 49,161 tonnes of CO₂e per year from implementation of cropland best management practices, or on average, 0.49 tonnes of CO₂e per acre per year. This is equivalent to powering 6,602 U.S. homes for one year or removing 11,467 U.S. passenger vehicles from the road. By comparison, the emissions reduction achieved on the farms is comparable to the CO₂e impact of removing nearly 49,311 acres of forestland annually.

Data was analyzed by Houston Engineering, Inc. using COMET-Planner.

“Having the ability to see the impact my farming practices are making on a yearly basis helps me make better decisions,” Paul Cornette, dairy farmer and FSF board president, said. “Through the FSF Climate-Smart program, I have been able to track my individual metrics as well as compare them to the group to see where I can improve or may be ahead of the curve.”

Celebrating a decade of growth, collaboration and learning

Yahara Pride Farms in Dane County and Peninsula Pride Farms in Door and Kewaunee Counties were recognized at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection annual producer-led workshop in February 2025.

The groups were recognized for reaching 10 years as farmer-led watershed conservation groups, marking a significant milestone. This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of everyone involved. What began as a few farmers interested in connecting and collaborating on sustainability has evolved into a network of farmers united in a mission, making a substantial impact across communities. FSF is proud to support these groups and looks forward to their continued growth and success.



FARMER FEATURE

Chuck Ripp

Ripp's Dairy Valley, Dane, Wis.

Chuck Ripp farms in Dane, Wis. along with his two older brothers, Gary and Troy. Farming has been a lifelong commitment for all three brothers, instilling in them a deep connection to the land and animals. The family milks around 1,000 cows, although Chuck remembers a time when they only had 300 cows. Over the years, they have focused on growing and improving the productivity and sustainability of their farm.

"Sustainability has always been important to us and our farm," Chuck said. "We've been open and willing to make changes to improve productivity and be better stewards of the environment. We've found that both things really go hand in hand."

On the farm, the Ripp family has gradually implemented a variety of sustainable farming practices, and they have consistently noticed the benefits of these changes. The Ripp family focuses on improving soil health by growing cover crops on nearly all their fields, applying manure using a low-disturbance injection method, following nutrient management plans and using minimal tillage practices. These methods help minimize soil compaction and reduce runoff and erosion.

"Every year we've tried to make a little bit more progress, and we've been able to see the benefits," he said. "Our soil structures have improved tremendously to the point where we hardly see standing water in our fields."

Ripp's Dairy Valley is also a part of a community digester. They contribute manure along with two other farms to a nearby facility where methane from the manure is processed into renewable energy.

Chuck's passion for sustainability has grown over the years, partly because of his involvement with Yahara Pride Farms (YPF), a local farmer-led watershed conservation group. He has been actively involved with the organization since its founding more than 10 years ago. The group is focused on reducing phosphorus in their watershed and improving water quality.

"We see the results and are pleased with them, but we continuously strive for improvement," he said. "We're working on trying to recruit more farmer members of YPF to encourage other farmers to adopt sustainable practices and to create a larger impact in our community."

Additionally, Chuck's farm is a member of Farmers for Sustainable Food, and Chuck believes that by doing so, they can keep their farm at the forefront of sustainability and better showcase their sustainable practices to processors and consumers.

"Being a member of FSF has allowed our farm to demonstrate to processors and consumers what sustainability means to us and how we're continuing to improve," he said. "It's also been a great way to connect and hear from other watershed groups throughout the state."

To any farmer considering joining their local farmer-led watershed conservation group and trying new practices, Chuck encourages them to do so.

"I urge other farmers to try a little bit each year," he said. "I understand it can be costly at times, but it's a gradual process. If you continue to make small changes, you'll see the benefits over time."



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 Larson Acres
 Pagel's Ponderosa Dairy
 Ripp's Dairy Valley
 Rosy-Lane Holsteins

**New members in 2025*

special thanks TO THE FARMER-LED WATERSHED GROUPS





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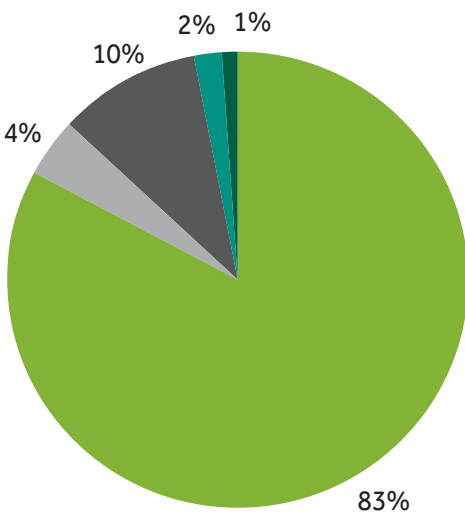
Holsum Dairies
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a quick look at FINANCIALS

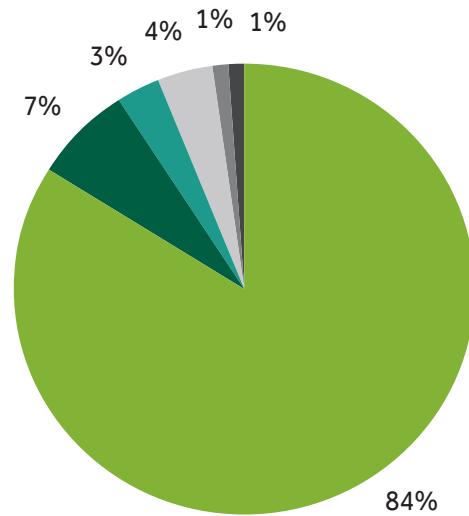
The beginning of 2025 brought unexpected challenges with the ending of our USDA Climate-Smart funding. Throughout the year we worked to build out the EmPower+ program to continue our work without the federal support. The transition in our funding impacted our overall financial situation noted below. Total revenue for 2025 was \$1,548,603 and total expenses were \$1,572,022.

Expense by category



- Empower+
- Professional fees
- Edge MOU
- Climate-Smart
- Operating

Revenue by category



- Project
- Empower+
- Membership
- Farmer-led group MOUs
- Climate-Smart
- Miscellaneous

The numbers presented are from the 2025 unaudited financials.





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





**To learn more
visit FarmersForSustainableFood.com**





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