

Forward Farmer

The official newsletter of Yahara Pride Farms

Volume 5, Issue 1



Gary Sipiorski, dairy development manager from Vita Plus, served as the keynote speaker at the recent YPF Watershed Conference. Photo by Nicole Hoffman for YPF

Looking back, looking forward: Sipiorski inspires farmers, connects public

By Mary Hookham for Yahara Pride Farms

Imagine starting your workday before the sun rises and working until past sunset every day only to be told the profit from that work will not be enough to cover your expenses. Imagine constantly wondering if you'll be able to put food on the table for your family every day or buy your children warm winter clothes for school. Imagine not being able to have confidence in your long-term business plan because you might have to give up on your dreams to take another job just to make ends meet.

This is reality every day for American farmers.

Gary Sipiorski, dairy development manager at Vita Plus, gave a presentation at the recent Yahara Pride Farms Watershed Conference explaining the current, very dire situation in the dairy community and highlighting the changes that have occurred within agriculture as a whole. His presentation emphasized

the need for farmers to hold on to hope and think about what the ag community will look like in the near future.

"Why do we recognize that change occurs in many industries but fight it in other industries like agriculture?" he said. "Agriculture isn't going to look the way it did in the 1920s or the 1950s. We know a lot more about doing it right, doing it better, doing it more responsibly. Change occurs."

Farmers of all types want to learn more about the land because that's their business, whether they're crop farmers or livestock farmers. That's something that's important to them, he said.

Sipiorski spoke of the importance of water for recreation and scenic purposes and then turned his focus to water usage on farms. Dairy and crop farmers especially understand the importance of water.

"Water is what grows the crops,

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

June 9

Dane County Dairy Breakfast
Hensen Bros. Dairy, Waunakee

June 26-27

Sustainable Agronomy Conf.
Madison

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Sipiorski (continued from page 1)

sustains the livestock and nourishes the family,” Sipiorski said.

He praised farmers and emphasized the importance of understanding the basics of agriculture. He wants consumers to know the production of their food goes beyond the doors of the local grocery store.

“All of our farmers have worked to grow healthier food,” he said. “We really need to appreciate agriculture.”

Sipiorski said that in 1924 there were 177,406 dairy farms in Wisconsin. By 1950, that number had dwindled to 142,977 and by 1971, the number was 59,516. In 1985 there were only 42,076 farms and at the beginning of 2018, Wisconsin had 8,801 dairy farms.

“We expect to lose another 800 dairy farms before the end of 2018,” he said.

The number of lost dairy farms in Wisconsin over the years is a sign of the

mountain of change, or the stages of grief, he said. Denial, anger, realization, depression and acceptance are part of the process of dealing with change.

“You know what the neat thing about acceptance is?” Sipiorski said. “We grow. We actually change. We understand it. We’ve gone through the cycle. Sometimes this takes a short time; sometimes it takes a long time. Some people see this as a mountain; other people see it as a speed bump.”

Farming today is considerably more environmentally friendly. Dairy farmers use 90 percent less land and 65 percent less water per cow annually as a result of better animal nutrition and the use of forage, improved genetics, better veterinary care and more efficient use of crop acreage.

“The changes in dairy farming over the last 100 years are because of technological

improvements and precision farming,” Sipiorski said. “In 1950 one cow produced 700 gallons of milk per year, but now one cow produces 2,700 gallons per year. That’s a big change.”

His hope is for people to drive down the road and look at the livestock, scenery and natural resources, and then be able to make the connection between nature and the human need for it. Sipiorski hopes people understand how critical it is to preserve natural resources and our farms for the survival of future generations.

“Ladies and gentlemen, don’t you ever forget what agriculture has done for us,” he said. “All of the farmers who have produced the food and products that we consume have done so to help us be healthier. And all of agriculture wants to have a positive impact on the environment.”

YPF pilot project: Composting

By Pat Murphy, conservation planner for Yahara Pride Farms



Manure composting is a practice that can be used to safely store manure during periods when field crops do not allow immediate spreading, or there is a high risk for runoff of land applied manure.

Last summer YPF carried out a three-month trial composting bed pack manure to document the management practices for in-field manure composting. All sites used bed pack manure. Initial findings include:

Reduced nitrogen: Composting manure reduces the available nitrogen. This may be negative if you typically rely on your manure nitrogen as your primary nutrient source. The finished compost retained one to three pounds of nitrogen per ton of compost. When manure is surface applied and not incorporated within 3 days, a similar loss of nitrogen can occur.



Natural heating in compost reduces pathogens and weed seed (left). In-field composting was the subject of a YPF pilot study (right) Photos by Pat Murphy

Reduced risk of nitrogen leaching: Temporary in-field stacking of manure can leave behind areas of high nitrogen concentration in the soil under the stacks. nitrogen in the manure is converted to nitrate in a manure stack and is easily



leached from the stack. The turning (aerating) of a manure composting pile releases the nitrogen as a harmless gas protecting groundwater.

Dryer manure: Composted manure has less moisture than raw manure.

YPF Announcements



Farm Signs

To get a Yahara Pride Farms sign after completing the certification program, please contact us at (608) 824-3250 or email info@yaharapridefarms.org.

Thank you YPF partners!

Alliant Energy

Compeer Financial

Clean Lakes Alliance

Dairy Strong Sustainability Alliance

Dairy Business Association

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

Dane County

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative

Endres Insurance Agency, Inc.

Grande Cheese

The Growmark Foundation

Madison Community Foundation

The McKnight Foundation

Monona Bank

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

The Nature Conservancy

SARE

Vita Plus

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,

Trade and Consumer Protection

Yahara WINs

Compost (continued from page 2)

Composted manure is lighter to haul and compost stacks are less likely to weep manure liquids.

Loose and spreadable: Composted manure is more uniform in texture and doesn't pack into a clump when loaded into a spreader. The turning and decomposition of the manure removes the natural stickiness that causes the clumps you typically see in field spread manure.

Concentration of phosphorus and potassium: P and K levels in composted manure typically double (2 x increase) in composted manure. This makes composted manure a more efficient fertilizer source. The dryer and looser nature of composted manure described above makes it easier to haul longer distances and apply more uniformly to cropland.

Odor reduction: After three turns of a pile with a composting machine the smell of manure is significantly decreased. The compost begins to smell mustier,

like humus or soil. If there are non-farm neighbors near fields where manure will be applied, this is a significant benefit.

Pathogen reduction: During the first three turns of a manure pile during composting temperatures routinely exceed 140 degrees F. This natural heating significantly reduces the presence of pathogens and weed seeds in composted manure. The sterilization of the manure by heating will allow dairy farmers to spread composted manure over growing forage crops without risking the spread of livestock diseases. In addition, hay fields that received a topdressing of composted manure immediately after hay cutting showed an immediate growth response to the added nutrients.

YPF is now experimenting with late winter composting of manure. The effect of cold temperatures and thawing soil are challenges that will need to be addressed. If you are interested in learning more about manure composting on your farm contact me at (608) 772-2602 or murphpa58@gmail.com.

Leadership Message

By Jeff Endres, YPF chairman

As I reflect on our March meeting I'm reminded of our first conference in 2012. Chip Bowling, a farmer from the Chesapeake Bay Area, was a special guest. Agriculture is highly regulated in this area and surface water quality is the driving force behind the regulations. Chip had two simple messages to share with our audience: Take this issue seriously in your watershed before the regulations get out of hand. Second, compile data that reflects what's happening on your farms.



YPF'S board took this advice seriously and with the farmers help, put conservation practices on the land and compiled an in-depth Phosphorus report. Dennis Frame, the author of the 2016 P report, did a first-of-its-kind analysis of what is happening on 35,000 acres in the Yahara Watershed. The results are impressive and the farmers participating in YPF programs should be proud of their hard work.

The data shows that farming practices are reducing the amount of phosphorus and soil leaving your farm fields. The YPF program model is gaining support throughout the Wisconsin state government, and the current administration is open to the idea of letting farmers lead water quality efforts that work for them and the public.

Farmers have an opportunity to showcase and document conservation to help agriculture clear itself of the "dirty ag" myth. In order to do this, we need more farmers and acres involved in our programs. If you are taking a "wait and see" approach, it's time to get involved. We will continue to break down the 2016 P report in future publications to help everyone understand how agriculture is making a difference. 🌱

Sincerely, Jeff

YPF Watershed Conference: Building on success

By YPF communications // Photos by Nicole Hoffman for YPF



Ripp's Dairy Valley LLC received YPF certification.



The Arlington Ag Research Station received YPF certification.



Wisconsin's Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch.



Compeer Financial sponsored lunch.

More than 125 farmers, community members and agribusiness professionals came together on March 7 for the YPF Watershed Conference. “Building on success” was the theme of the event.

Speakers covered topics like staying focused in challenging times, cover crops and the future of the organization.

Keith Ripp, assistant deputy secretary at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, shared his thoughts on tools and practices currently impacting the agriculture industry. Conservation is a viable option for many farmers because of cutting-edge technology, he said. Manure management techniques, cover crop usage and crop rotations are all great ways farmers can implement conservation practices.

“This is a program we can hang our hat on,” Ripp said of the conservation opportunities within YPF.

Gary Sipiorski, dairy development manager at Vita Plus, presented a hopeful, realistic look at current and historic agriculture and conservation practices. *(see our cover story for a deeper dive into his presentation).*

Dennis Frame, resource manager for YPF and owner of Timber Ridge Consulting, explained the YPF annual report, which contained results of soil tests and nutrient applications as well as certifications for members. He said phosphorus losses in the Yahara watershed were reduced by 11,167 pounds in 2016.

“We have to control soil loss to control phosphorus loss,” Frame said.

Wisconsin's Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch stopped in for a brief visit. She was enthusiastic about Wisconsin's farmers and the conservation efforts of YPF.

“Our farmers are our first true conservationists and should be leading the way,” Kleefisch said. “You are the front line of your own challenges and we want the choice to farm to bear fruit.”

During lunch, Dave Taylor and Martye Griffin of the Madison Metropolitan

Sewerage District shared information on the Yahara WINs adaptive management program. Dane County Executive Joe Parisi spoke about county-level farmer partnerships and programs.

Pat Murphy, conservation planner for YPF, spoke about the organization's new manure composting partnership. By composting bed pack manure, the density of the manure is reduced between 20 to 50 percent. The composted manure spreads more evenly and has little or no odor. Nitrogen is released as gas, so it does not leach into the soil, making this a safe method of manure storage in unlined storage locations.

“We need to reduce as much phosphorus in this watershed as possible,” Murphy said.

Heidi Johnson shared her knowledge of cover crops and soil health as crop and soils educator with Dane County University of Wisconsin-Extension. She stressed the importance of planting cover crops as early as possible and monitoring fields for slugs. The most crucial time to protect farmland from erosion is during April, May and June, she said.

“This time is called the Nasty 90 because it's 90 days of the worst soil erosion,” Johnson said.

More farmers involved, and more acres enrolled in our conservation programs is the 2018 goal for YPF, said Jeff Endres, YPF chairman. He closed the meeting by emphasizing how important water quality is for all farmers.

During the conference, three new farms were recognized for receiving their Yahara Pride Farms Certification: Henry Farms LLC, Ripp's Dairy Valley LLC and Arlington Agricultural Research Station. The certification program is designed to help farmers identify the strengths and weaknesses of their farming system, facilities and landscapes. The voluntary program helps farmers document how their farm protects soil and water quality while identifying high-risk situations and practices that need to be modified. 🌱

Kiwanis Club of Downtown Madison honors YPF

By YPF communications



Jeff Endres and Scott Maier from YPF accepted the Conservation and Environment Award from the Kiwanis Club of Downtown Madison. Photo from YPF

Yahara Pride Farms was recently honored with the Conservation and Environment Award from the Kiwanis Club of Downtown Madison. Board members Jeff Endres and Scott Maier, both dairy farmers from Waunakee, accepted the award on behalf of YPF.

The Kiwanis Club of Downtown Madison is a service club with a membership of around 80 men and women. The group was founded in 1917 as one of the first Kiwanis Clubs in Wisconsin. They are one of approximately 8,000 Kiwanis Clubs worldwide.

Since 1987, the Agriculture, Conservation and Environment (ACE) committee has coordinated the selection and presentation of the club's Conservation and Environment Award to an individual, organization, governmental body or company that

has made significant contributions to improvement in conservation and/or the environment in the greater Madison area. In the past, the club has recognized recycling programs, beautification programs, developers of natural areas, restoration programs and environmental education.

This year, the club chose to recognize Yahara Pride Farms for its unique efforts to manage and reduce nutrient transport from agricultural lands to the Yahara River watershed through education, demonstrations and land management practices.

At the award luncheon, held April 9 in Madison, Endres and Maier gave a presentation highlighting Yahara Pride Farms' activities, accomplishments and projects.

"The Yahara Watershed is one of the most populated and agriculturally

“
The Yahara is one of the most populated and agriculturally productive watersheds in Wisconsin. That means houses sitting on some of the best farm land in the state.

- Scott Maier, YPF board member



productive watersheds in Wisconsin,” Maier said. “That means there are lots of houses sitting on some of the best farm land in the state.”

One of Yahara Pride Farms' goals is to earn the trust and respect of farmers, private citizens and government by engaging them in projects and educational programs that demonstrate how the agricultural community is committed to doing its fair share in making improvements in the watershed.

“Successful farms and desirable communities can coexist and thrive together,” Endres said. “Everyone who lives in the Yahara Watershed is responsible for the water quality here. As farmers, we know we have a role to play.”

Do cover crops pay for themselves?

By Heidi Johnson, crops and soils agent, Dane County UW-Extension

The number one presentation topic request that I get from farmer groups that want to learn about cover crops is the economics of cover crop adoption. I have struggled with how to approach this request, mostly because in a one-year crop budget, most of the economics of cover crops are going to fall under the expenses side of the sheet.

As with other production practices that improve the health and structure of our soil (like no-till), it takes a few years of implementation before you start to see definable economic benefits. And with the current lack of profit margins in all agricultural enterprises, any practice that will cost farmers more money in the short-term is a tough sell.

There are benefits that farmers report that they are getting from cover crops that are difficult to quantify because they don't show up in a crop budget. Things like fields drying down more quickly in the spring, cover crop residue helping to hold up heavier equipment and cover crops creating a mellow seedbed that is easier to plant into. These things may not be directly related to the crop budget.

Many farmers that have gotten through those first few years of using cover crops do report economic benefits such as reducing the amount of fertilizer, pesticides and other crop inputs that they are using. The scale of these economic benefits will depend on the cover crop species selected and the crop rotation. For example, diverse cover crop mixes grown after winter wheat harvest are going to have a greater overall impact on the structure and health of the soil than rye grown after corn grain and soybean harvest.

Growing cover crops for months versus weeks, gives the cover crops time to 'work' on the soil, increasing the positive impact on the system. It also makes a difference if cover crops are used in combination with other conservation practices like reduced tillage to help restore the soil's structure.



Months versus weeks give cover crops time to work on the soil. Barley in corn silage pictured. Photo from YPF

Potential increases in organic matter often gets used as a selling point for cover crops. It is possible to nudge up your organic matter with practices like cover crops but it is, again, dependent on the system. How long are the cover crops grown? And are they used in combination with other conservation practices? Other factors like the type of soil and how degraded the soil was to begin also influences organic matter accumulations.

Soils that have already lost a lot of organic matter tend to have more potential to gain while higher quality soils don't tend to gain as quickly.

There is also something to be said for not continuing to lose organic matter. Although we don't account for eroded soil and lost organic matter in our cropping budgets, it doesn't mean they don't have value. Maintaining soil so it can maintain maximum crop production is both important if you continue to farm it and to maintain the land's value.

Improved water infiltration is another benefit that doesn't find its way into a crop budget but can have a major impact on crop yield. Research at Arlington Research Station showed that cover

crops significantly increased water infiltration in a corn silage rotation with a rye cover crop.

Water is one of the most limiting factors for yield so putting more water into the ground, rather than running off, is only going to benefit crops. In the drought of 2012, the farmers that responded to the SARE cover crop survey reported higher yields in cover cropped fields than non-cover cropped fields.

So how do we pay for cover crops in the short term while we accumulate the long term benefits? There is quite a bit of cost-share dollars available that farmers can take advantage of to offset costs while they are gaining soil health and structure benefits. USDA provides cost share dollars through the EQIP program and farmer-led watershed groups like Yahara Pride Farms and Farmers for the Upper Sugar River provide cost sharing to farmers in their respective watersheds. It is better for farmers in the long run to continue to improve their soils so using available funding to get through the transition period can help offset the initials costs.

Contact Heidi Johnson at (608) 669-6246, Johnson.heidi@countyofdane.com.

2016 SNAP highlights

31
FARMS

1,907
FIELDS

35,104
ACRES

1.78 tons/acre
AVERAGE SOIL LOSS

98.1%
AT OR BELOW
STATE STANDARD FOR T

FUN FACT: if farmers reduced Phosphorus by only 1 lb on 35,000 acres, we could reduce algae growth in the lakes by 17,500,000 lbs!

2.35 PI/acre

AVERAGE ROTATIONAL
PHOSPHORUS INDEX

THE STATE
STANDARD
FOR PI IS 6

Data highlights from the 2016 SNAP report, assessment of nutrient and sediment loss compiled by Dennis Frame. Full report available at yaharapridefarms.org

YPF offers two new conservation programs

By YPF communications

COMPOSTING

YPF is working to learn more about composting in diverse settings. We are currently recruiting farms to participate in an experimental composting partnership.

Proper handling of compost is crucial. Biological activity in compost maximizes for 7-10 days following turning. In addition, uniform compost heats more consistently and loses moisture and weight easier. Highly managed compost piles can reduce manure leachate and nutrient loss to surrounding area.

The best-practices for composting consist of a minimum of four turns (45 days) in order for noticeable changes. In addition, compost sites closer to the farmstead are more consistently managed when compared to remote sites. It is shown that compost applied after harvest results in increased alfalfa regrowth compared to adjacent areas without compost.

Farmers who participate in the composting partnership will receive \$1,100 to build and haul a minimum 220 cubic yard bedded pack manure

composting pile. YPF will then provide compost turning service at no charge to the farmer. YPF will provide before/after nutrient analysis of the compost and assist with planning land application.

See article on page 2 to learn more about the program and how to get involved.

PAID FOR PERFORMANCE

YPF is working to raise funds to launch a pilot for a paid for performance program this year. A pilot will require new lines of funding and existing cost-share programs will not be used.

This program will be designed to help support farmers who are already operating well below the state standards.

Minimum farmer requirements to participate in the pilot include:

- A current 590 nutrient management plan organized in SNAP Plus, documenting a maximum whole farm phosphorus index of 3.0 or less,
- Completing a YPF conservation assessment and addressing any critical sites or practices that are rated in the assessment as high risk,

- Agreeing to an annual review of enrolled land and reporting and,
- Agreement to participate in a follow-up YPF conservation planning assessment every five years.

Phosphorus reductions can come from three main production areas: farming systems (changes in tillage, crop rotations and cover crops), nutrient application (manure and fertilizer application methods and timing) and nutrient balancing (effectively balancing nutrient applications to lower fields with high phosphorus soil test levels and bring low testing fields up to optimum levels).

Farmers can implement any practice(s) where SNAP Plus can calculate a nutrient loss reduction, so options are numerous.

The phosphorus reduction payment is based on a rotational whole farm phosphorus index estimate and payments will vary depending on the starting and target phosphorus index. For more information on the Paid for Performance program, contact Jeff Endres, YPF chair, at jeff.endres@yaharapridefarms.org or call (608) 279-8991.

Ag innovation inspires broad participation

By Martin Griffin, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District



Inspiring. Dedicated. Forward thinking. If you were lucky enough to attend Yahara Pride Farm's annual conference recently, these are

the sentiments that you would have walked away with. The event provided an incredible look at how far farmers in the Yahara Watershed have come over the last 10 years to help reduce soil and phosphorus loss from their fields.

Yahara WINS is proud to include Yahara Pride Farms as one of its partners in the adaptive management project aimed at reducing phosphorus in the surface waters of the Yahara Watershed. And while the ultimate success of the effort depends on reductions from all sources of phosphorus, it is safe to say that adaptive management will not work

without the cooperation of farmers.

One way the Yahara WINS partnership supports Yahara Pride Farms is by providing money to assist with the Yahara Pride cost share program. Yahara WINS also provides financial support for other activities such as the purchase of low disturbance manure injection equipment, which Yahara Pride Farms is loaning to farmers interested in gaining experience with this type of manure management approach.

As the Yahara WINS partnership with Yahara Pride Farms grows, so too does the need for greater farmer engagement. Success can be fleeting if initial achievements fail to take root and grow. In the weeks, months and years ahead, Yahara WINS leaders intend to explore new ways to engage farmers through Yahara Pride Farms and other avenues to establish an atmosphere that encourages farmers to innovate, adapt and build upon their successes.

Farmers quickly identify which practices work best for them and Yahara WINS wants to continue to remove financial barriers. Yahara WINS' support for a solid manure composting project in 2018 offers one example of an effort to help farmers limit financial risk when trying something new.

The Yahara WINS partnership relies on the hard work that farmers are doing to keep soil and nutrients in the fields and Yahara WINS thanks every farmer who is striving to be a part of the water quality solution. Your voice is important to us and we'd appreciate hearing how we can work together to better assist your efforts. For more information on Yahara WINS, visit madsewer.org/yaharawins.

Martin Griffin is president of the Yahara WINS executive committee and director of ecosystem services for Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District. He can be reached at marting@madsewer.org.

CLA's 2018 efforts to support success in agriculture

By Katie Nicholas, Clean Lakes Alliance

Clean Lakes Alliance is dedicated to improving the water quality of the lakes, streams and wetlands in the Yahara watershed. To help meet that goal, we fund both rural and urban initiatives. This year, we're contributing \$100,000 to Yahara WINS to assist with rural initiatives. We're also contributing \$62,500 to support innovative projects by our community partners in urban and rural areas.

One initiative Clean Lakes Alliance is helping fund is the Partnership for Ag Resources Management. The Ag Partnership is working to create a network of informed, motivated, effective ag retailers who are invested long-term in increasing sales of selected, beneficial products and services to reduce phosphorus runoff and improve soil health. The Ag Partnership has had good luck working with retailers in other

Midwest states. We are also funding projects to address phosphorus that comes from leaves in the City of Madison and the Towns of Dunn and Pleasant Springs.

As part of the State of the Lakes Annual Report, we are including information on how producers are testing innovative approaches to reduce phosphorus runoff. We continue to see progress in the agriculture arena, including major progress and innovation by Yahara Pride Farms. Thank you to all farmers participating in phosphorus reduction efforts!

Clean Lakes Alliance, in partnership with Yahara Pride Farms, will host our fifth



CLA supporters attended a farm tour last summer at Endres Berryridge Farms. Photo from CLA

annual Farm Tour in 2018 with support from Dane County Environmental Council. Hosting a farm tour is one of the many efforts Clean Lakes Alliance implements to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to learn about water quality and sustainable farming practices. Stay tuned for details on this year's event.

Dane County and YPF working together for clean lakes

By Joe Parisi, Dane County Executive

Dane County farms support our economy, families, communities and quality of life. Dane County is in the top 25 agricultural producing counties in the entire country. Our multi-generational family farms and the thousands of jobs they create and support are here to stay.

Yahara Pride Farms leadership and commitment since 2011 finding ground-breaking, state-of-the-art ways to manage phosphorus and other nutrients on your farms has resulted in real progress improving soil and water quality.

Working with YPF to promote new innovative partnerships is our next opportunity we have to facilitate the kind of collaboration that's brought the progress and successes we've seen to date in our ongoing work to clean our lakes.

Utilizing innovative conservation practices such as cover crops, low disturbance manure injection and composting, YPF's efforts are a model for farms throughout the state.

In partnership with YPF, Dane County promoted a cover crop initiative for the Yahara River Watershed using grant dollars the county received from the NRSC's Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Over 1,800 acres of cover crops were planted through a combination of drilling and aerial seeding through the project.

In July, the county partnered with YPF and announced a new program that will allow farmers to more effectively apply manure by injecting it directly into the ground, reducing the amount of nutrients that run off into local waterways. By using this equipment, farmers are able to cut down on soil erosion, reduce odors, and decrease the amount of phosphorus leaving their fields.

Dane County and Yahara WINS each allocated up to \$60,000 to purchase a manure tanker and Low Disturbance Manure Injection toolbar. YPF was the first to bring this minimal soil



Last July, Dane County announced plans to jointly fund low-disturbance manure injection equipment for farmers in the Yahara Watershed working with YPF.

Photo from Dane County

disturbance technology for manure to Wisconsin farmers. To date, the program has covered over 3,600 acres of land and reduced 5,500 pounds of phosphorus in the Yahara Watershed.

In October, I announced at Endres Berryridge Farms a new composting initiative that will help farmers reduce manure runoff and improve farm productivity. As part of my 2018 budget, I allocated \$200,000 to study the potential of creating a large-scale community facility where farmers could bring manure and have it composted. The finished product will be less prone to runoff and could be trucked to areas more in need of the nutrients found in manure.

The county late last year agreed to participate in a YPF composting program by providing a \$50,000 cost share for the purchase of a compost turner. Working with you and utilizing composting technology on a bigger community scale in the Mendota watershed will further our mutual goal of cleaner lakes.

Continual advances in technology offer the opportunity to better manage and treat volumes of manure. The 2018 county budget also funds a study that

will identify where manure digester/treatment systems could be strategically located to treat the highest volumes of manure in the most cost effective means possible.

Both studies will explore ownership and operation models and will also identify how each project can, among other benefits, help transport phosphorus and other nutrients to areas where they are most needed and create flexibility for timing and precision of land application.

A critical component of both projects will be surveys and other communications asking farms for their essential input on how best to design treatment systems that will provide the most benefit for the farms. Stay tuned for more information on how to get involved.

Our farmers are our best partners in our community's lake clean-up efforts. Thank you for your dedication to our economy and our environment. Our partnership with YPF reflects a unified effort to ensure the Yahara Watershed stays clean and healthy, while providing farmers with the innovative tools they need to succeed in an environmentally friendly way. 🌱



YPF has an extensive list of sponsors and supporters. Without their assistance, YPF could not offer the level of programming available to farmers and the public. We sat down with Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin to talk about what drew them to YPF.

Sponsor in the spotlight: Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

By YPF communications // Photo by Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

AS AN ORGANIZATION, WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO YPF?

The 25 dairy farmer directors recognize that for Wisconsin's dairy farmers to have a strong future, they must be environmentally sustainable and that information has to be shared with consumers. In 1992, the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board (WMMB) now doing business as Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, began a partnership with UW Discovery Farms. This initiative conducts on-farm research to help Wisconsin farmers gain greater knowledge of how farming practices, geography and weather events impact different soils and water quality.

UW Discovery Farms research helped farmers develop practices to mitigate impacts of their farming practices on local waters. This has led to a resurgence of producer-led watershed groups around the state. Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin believes that groups such as Yahara Pride Farms have the same desire as what led to the support of UW Discovery Farms more than 15 years ago. Clean, safe water and healthy, fertile soil are shared objectives for all dairy farmers and communities alike.

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU PROVIDE THE AG/DAIRY COMMUNITY?

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin is the local marketing and promotion organization for Wisconsin's dairy farmers. Many dairy farmers don't realize that 90% of Wisconsin's milk is made into cheese and, 90 percent of that cheese is sold outside of Wisconsin. As such, a great portion of the organization's promotion efforts are done outside of Wisconsin. We work closely with retailers like Kroger/Pick n Save, Safeway, Meijer and others to get Wisconsin cheese in their stores, and educate their dairy and deli personnel about Wisconsin cheese, dairy and Wisconsin dairy farms.

We also work with restaurants and food service operations to create partnerships so they can easily source the Wisconsin Cheeses they want on their menus.

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin also supports the Center for Dairy Research. The talented food researchers help Wisconsin cheese makers solve technical issues and develop new and exciting varieties of cheeses.

WHAT IS A SERVICE THAT YOU PROVIDE YOU WISH EVERY FARMER KNEW ABOUT?

Many farmers know something about our programs, whether it be Fuel Up to Play 60, the partnership with Culver's restaurants or the Master Cheesemaker program. They can always go to our website wisconsinmilk.org for more information.

Some of the things we legally can't do are probably the questions we are asked the most. 1. We can't lobby. 2. We can't influence milk prices or supply. 3. We can't commercially purchase or sell dairy products. 4. We can't make false claims about dairy products.

WHAT IS DFW CURRENTLY DOING TO ASSIST FARMERS DURING THE DOWNTURN?

There are numerous resources that are available that are free and the Wisconsin Farm Center is great at connecting farmers to those resources. Wisconsin Farm Center can be reached at 1-800-942-2474 or farmcenter@wisconsin.gov.

We have established a stronger relationship with U.S. Dairy Export Council which can move more



product into additional countries. The relationships they can build will take time, but we believe they will happen. In addition, CEO Chad Vincent met with cheese and dairy companies in January of this year to understand their challenges and how we could help them move more product.

We've also brought new talent into the organization and have restructured our team so much of the promotion work that had been outsourced is being accomplished internally which allows us to do more promotional work. We can promote very effectively and efficiently to consumers through social media. If you haven't already, follow us on facebook @WisconsinCheese to see some of the work we're doing for consumers and @DairyFarmersofWisconsin to learn more about the checkoff.

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF HISTORY OF WMMB, NOW DAIRY FARMERS OF WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board began in 1983 when Wisconsin's dairy farmers voted to organize a mandatory state milk marketing order to:

- Expand and maintain the domestic

sales of milk and dairy products

- Develop new products and new markets
- Improve methods and practices related to marketing or processing of milk and dairy products
- Inform and educate consumers

A board of 25 dairy farmers directs the organization's mission and policies. Approximately one-third of the board is elected every year.

In April, the organization began doing business as Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin. This change better identifies who we represent. It puts the organization in a better position to impact growth and focus on the future by opening more doors and expand opportunities.

WHAT ARE THE MOST POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF DAIRY FARMERS OF WISCONSIN?

Some highly visible and successful outcomes of our partnerships have resulted in Culver's restaurants switching to ensure that all their cheeses come from Wisconsin. We also worked with sandwich shops like Cousins to carry Wisconsin cheese curds and now those

curds make up about 18% of all side orders and move about 700 pounds of cheese curds each day.

Pizza is another area where Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin has played a vital role in expanding demand for Wisconsin dairy. We're working with 8 of the top 10 fastest growing pizza chains in the U.S. You can also find Wisconsin cheese on pizza in the frozen foods section. We've worked with such brand names as Jack's Pizza, Screamin' Sicillian and Lotzza Motzza to create partnerships with Wisconsin cheese companies and feature the cheeses on their labeling and advertising.

HOW CAN FARMERS CONTACT DAIRY FARMERS OF WISCONSIN?

There are a number of ways. Always take the opportunity to get to know your district representative. The list of directors and their contact info can be found here: wisconsinmilk.org/board-of-directors/director-listing. To reach the office call (608) 836-8820 or email hello@EatWisconsinCheese.com.



Yahara Pride Farms
229 Douglas Dr.
Brooklyn, WI 53521

yaharapridefarms.org

Rent the YPF manure tanker!

Manure injection places manure below the surface where it doesn't interact with runoff water during storms. However, what challenges farmers are the steep slopes, where the injection of manure can make the soil more susceptible to erosion.

A solution to decreasing the amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus runoff as well as soil erosion is low-disturbance manure injection (LDMI). LDMI is a farming system that incorporates manure into the soil with minimal soil disturbance. This equipment also works well with no-till farming systems and allows farmers to experiment with new

methods of preserving nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium to save on fertilizer costs.

In addition to providing cost-share incentive of 20 dollars per acre for up to 50 acres to farmers who implement LDMI on their farms, YPF has a 5,300 gallon Houle manure tanker with a Bazooka LDMI toolbar available for rent to farmers in the watershed. The fee to rent this equipment is 250 dollars per day. Contact Joe Conners, YPF resource manager, at (608) 444-4702.

Tanker and toolbar made possible by a grant from Dane County, Yahara WINs and the Clean Lakes Alliance.

Dates to Remember:

- **May 16-17 - Dairy Sustainability Forum & awards, Chicago**
- **June 9 - Dane County Dairy Breakfast, Hensen Bros. Dairy, Waunakee**
Visit the YPF tent!
- **June 26-27 - Sustainable Agronomy Conference, Concourse Hotel, Madison**
- **July 10-12 - Farm Technology Days, Marshfield**

More info at
yaharapridefarms.org