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FEATURE STORY

WISCONSIN DAIRY INDUSTRY IS TAKING A LOOK AT ENERGY

MADISON, Wis. (July 21, 2009) – The dairy industry has long been a staple of Wisconsin’s tradition – after all we are America’s Dairyland. Despite tough economic conditions, Wisconsin’s dairy industry remains a national and international leader.

According to the “Governor Doyle Column: June is Dairy Month,” dairy in Wisconsin is a \$20.6 billion business – with more than 14,000 farms, 200 dairy plants and 1,200 cheese and butter makers. In total, those producers account for 25 percent of the national cheese market, 13 percent of our nation’s milk and almost half of the specialty cheeses.

Of course, all that production uses energy. Thankfully, Focus on Energy, Wisconsin’s energy efficiency and renewable energy initiative, is providing a helping hand to Wisconsin’s dairy farmers to reduce energy use. In 2008 alone, Focus on Energy helped implement 667 energy-saving projects at 552 dairy farms around the state.

How Focus Can Help

Focus on Energy has played a prominent role in making Wisconsin the national leader in terms of farm-based anaerobic biogas digesters producing electricity, heat and pipeline-quality gas. Biogas digester systems enable farmers to produce distributed energy for a reasonable return on investment while controlling dairy manure odors, pathogens and flies. To date, the program has assisted with 26 digester projects; an additional 8 projects are under construction.

And now is a great time for additional agribusinesses to take a look at how they use energy. Installing energy efficient equipment and changing processes can result in increased profits and improved productivity. Focus helps farmers and rural businesses take the necessary steps to achieve these results by providing expert advice, education and technical training and financial incentives.

For starters, Focus provides no-cost energy assessments with trained energy advisors to provide information on potential energy savings and incentives that will help offset the cost of upgrades. According to Focus, changes large and small – from updating barn lighting and fans to milking and pasteurizing equipment to energy efficient alternatives – can have a significant financial impact.

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- PAGE 2 -

“We know farms and rural businesses are important to Wisconsin. Focus on Energy can help the dairy industry stay strong by reducing overhead energy costs at local farms,” said Rich Hackner, sector manager for the Agriculture and Rural Business Program. “Focus recognizes the importance energy savings can have on the overall bottom line and sustainability of many dairy operations.”

The future of dairy in Wisconsin relies on producers and processors to make innovative, smart and efficient energy decisions – the same forward thinking that helped Wisconsin rise to a national dairy leader in the first place.

And nearly 80,000 visitors are helping lead this charge by coming together on July 21-23 at the Wisconsin Farm Technology Days to learn about latest technology in production agriculture. The show, at Crave Brothers Farms in Dodge County, is Wisconsin’s premier agricultural technology exposition and will feature a variety of energy efficient equipment and renewable energy technologies.

For more information or to receive a no-cost energy assessment, contact Focus on Energy at (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control the state’s growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information, call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

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