

Dairy workshops addressing opportunities and risks of carbon markets for dairies

AT A GLANCE

Dairy producers committed to carbon neutrality, reducing GHG emissions by 2050. By lowering GHG emissions, they obtain carbon credits marketable in carbon markets, providing additional income source.

The Situation

Reduction of GHG emissions by dairy producers consider different efforts involving the management of opportunities, challenges and risks. These include potential participation in carbon markets, which may offer an additional income stream. Lowering GHG emissions provides carbon credits that can be sold in carbon markets. Lower emissions can be achieved, for example, by managing feeding rations or by modifying manure management practices, including the use of anaerobic digesters. These latter produce renewable gas or electricity which can be sold in energy markets, enabling another income stream from lowering GHG emissions. Uninformed participation in these operations and markets creates financial, legal, marketing, production and economic risks.

Our Response

Extension faculty from the University of Idaho and Washington State University collaborated to address these matters by providing a total of five educational workshops conducted at locations both Idaho (two) and Washington during the first semester of 2024. These workshops included expert speakers from both academic and private institutions. In addition, the team designed and produced seven different podcasts



Participants at 2024 dairy workshop: Opportunities and Risks of Carbon Markets for Dairies. Photo by Kristina Gibson (WSU).

where each podcast featured an interview with an expert that had presented at the workshops, as well as from additional experts that directly addressed topic related matters. The podcasts were disseminated through websites at both universities.

At University of Idaho, the podcasts are accessible at “Carbon markets and cows” — located under the title “Educational resources” at: <https://www.uidaho.edu/agbiz>.

These podcasts provided additional educational material to producers and stakeholders who had been unable to attend the workshops or wanted to learn more about the subject matters.

The overarching objective was to educate the targeted audience — dairy producers and stakeholders — on

understanding and evaluating different alternatives for lowering their carbon emissions in their dairy production operations, as well as of potential opportunities from benefitting from these endeavors, by selling as carbon credits and participating in carbon and energy markets. Workshops in Idaho were held in Boise and Burley. National experts from academia and businesses from different fields related to matters involving Carbon markets were brought in as speakers.

Topics presented at the workshops broadly covered:

1) Understanding carbon markets and areas involved, including voluntary offsets and insets 2) On farm separation technology and considerations in Carbon market participation 3) Potential financial liability, economics and 4) Potential legal, contracts liability.

Program Outcomes

The attendance at the workshops held in Idaho, considering both Boise and Burley, was 41 participants. The split between attendees consisted of dairy producers (40%), dairy co-ops and private dairy related businesses, including nutritionists (28%), state employees (18%) and educators (14%). Participants were given the opportunity to evaluate the workshop and there were 23 respondents out of the 41 attendees. The evaluation asked whether a participant had gained knowledge in any of the topics presented. Responses fluctuated positively between 96% and 83% depending on the topic. Specifically, participants most gained knowledge about the carbon markets, in 96% of

respondents. Conversely, 83% of respondents increased their knowledge of potential legal liabilities.

The evaluation also asked whether a participant anticipated using the information or knowledge gained for any pertinent decision-making process related to the topic. Here positive responses varied between 70% and 48%, with the highest score of 70% referring both to carbon markets and to potential financial liabilities, while the lowest at 48% referred to potential legal liabilities.

Data obtained for the number of podcast listeners, as of November 2024, were 138 people that had listened to either one or more of the podcasts. Topics that have been most listened to are Voluntary Carbon Markets, and Dairy Digester Crash Courses — Part 1 and Part 2.

The Future

Based on in-person comments and those provided complementary through the workshop evaluations, the organizing faculty has planned to hold workshops with new related information about the topic(s) soon.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The workshops and developed podcasts were made possible thanks to a grant awarded by the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), through the Western Extension Risk Management Education (WERME) center.

Award Number: 2021-70027-34713.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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63-25-htejeda-dairy-workshop • 12/25