Governor Cuomo announces an additional $850,000 for the Dairy Acceleration Program

Announcement brings Dairy Acceleration Program funding to $1.85 million

Funding for the Dairy Acceleration Program (DAP) will be increased by $850,000, which is in addition to the $1 million announced by the Governor this past August. DAP is jointly funded by the Department of Agriculture and Markets and the Department of Environmental Conservation. Response to the initial DAP announcement has been excellent. Applications have been received from across the State, demonstrating broad need for and interest in strategic business planning for production growth, as well as environmental planning for the farm.

Combined with funding still available under the current program, this new funding will serve at least 100 more dairy farms across New York.

Funding under DAP continues to include:

- up to $5,000 per farm to write a business plan or develop a combination of a business and facility growth plan.
- up to $4,500 to update an existing Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) or $6,000 to

On-farm anaerobic digester funding

Starting on January 17, $20 million will be available through NYSERDA to farmers and others for use in constructing anaerobic digesters when the renewable gas, “biogas”, is used as a fuel source for on-site engine-generator sets that produce electricity and heat from organic wastes. Farms, food processing manufacturers and municipal wastewater sites are eligible for up to $2 million per project.

Biogas-to-power technology has several steps. Dairy manure and other organic wastes are conveyed into heated digestion tanks where naturally occurring bacteria break down a portion of the waste, creating the methane-rich biogas. The liquid outflow (effluent) from digesters, about the same volume as the inflow, contains all the nutrients that came into it, thus the effluent that can be applied to crops as fertilizer. Biogas can be used to fuel engines that in turn produce electricity and heat. Through this process, farmers can often eliminate a significant portion of the electricity they would otherwise
New funds will be available to design farm practices described in CNMPs. CNMPs are a conservation system for animal feeding operations designed to address soil erosion and water quality concerns. The CNMP encompasses the storage and handling of manure as well as using and applying manure nutrients on farmland. Through DAP, the state already awarded dozens of projects to farms with an average herd size of about 140 cows.

Business planning may include financial analysis, farmstead development planning, facility planning and capital investment planning for increased milk production per cow. Environmental planning includes CNMP development and updates. Farms without an existing CNMP may hire a certified Nutrient Management planner to develop a new CNMP.

To be eligible for DAP a dairy cattle farm must have complete financial records and be shipping milk. Preference will be given to farms with under 300 mature cows. DAP funding will cover up to 80 percent of a project’s cost.

Through DAP, farmers will be able to tap into the expertise of the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) network, Cornell PRO-DAIRY, certified Agricultural Environmental Management planners, farm business planning consultants and other agricultural programs to facilitate and grow their business, and in turn, increase production on their farms.

Tom Overton, Professor of Dairy Management at Cornell University and Director of PRO-DAIRY, said, “These new funds will be directed entirely toward funding additional projects under this program. We thank Governor Cuomo and New York State for their vision in recognizing that success at the farm-level is imperative for long-term support of our growing dairy manufacturing industry.”

Gary and Connie Menard, Owners of Happy Haven Dairy, a 60-cow dairy farm in Clinton County, said, “Our dairy farm has begun our very first generational transfer. This brings us to a crossroads that offers many options and purchase from the utility grid, and periodically export surplus electricity onto the electrical grid in exchange for credits.

The Governor’s office reports that “over the past 10 years, NYSERDA and the New York Power Authority have awarded nearly $30 million toward anaerobic digestion projects and related technology, resulting in significant energy savings to New York-based businesses while reducing the use of fossil fuel.” Currently, this funding supports 20 operational digester projects. The digester technology funding will be available on a first-come, first-served basis for eligible projects. Further details on this program will be passed along once the details made available through the release of the Program Opportunity Notice by NYSERDA on Friday.

The Governor’s announcement:

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possibilities. The Dairy Acceleration Program has allowed us to hire independent consultants to crunch our numbers and evaluate our business with the goal of offering profitable suggestions as we move forward. These types of professional people are always impractical to hire at our farm size because the cost was always prohibitive with the cash flow that smaller farms work with. Our farm has a very exciting future and the Dairy Acceleration Program came at a perfect time for us. We strongly suggest any progressive farm willing to make changes for a better future to look into this program.”

Details for the additional funds (including funding for engineering designs) are being worked out now and will be widely circulated when available. In the meantime, we continue to accept applications for funds that can be used for facility and business planning as well as CNMPs.

Agri-business professionals in business planning, facility planning and AEM Certified Planners who are interested in providing services to dairy farms under DAP may contact Caroline Potter, DAP coordinator.

To apply for DAP, visit http://ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/dairy_acceleration/