



## **USDA-NRCS Cost Share Programs Related to Dairy Manure Nutrient Management**

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**Dairy producers in California may be eligible for technical and financial assistance** from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) when making improvements to both manure handling infrastructure (such as irrigation pipeline, flow meters, pumps, storage lagoon construction, etc.) and agronomic manure management. Producers must be aware that the program varies from year to year, and between counties. Those interested should contact the USDA office in their county for current information.

Producers who participate in EQIP for large projects, such as a waste storage facility, must prepare and implement a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). The CNMP addresses many major goals of the dairy waste discharge requirements (WDR) adopted in 2007 by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, such as applying manure at agronomic rates and protecting water quality from runoff containing manure or nitrate leaching to groundwater. However, the CNMP does not address all of the elements of the WDR..

The first step in getting assistance for a dairy is to contact the local (county) NRCS office. A producer operating a dairy that straddles two counties should contact the county office that they have worked with on USDA programs in the past. Producers who have not previously worked with the USDA should start with the office that services the county where the farm headquarters are located.

### **Practices Eligible for EQIP Cost Share Assistance**

Under the EQIP program, practices such as waste storage facilities, composting facilities, waste treatment lagoons, pond sealing or lining, manure transfer, roof rainfall diversion, waste treatment, solid liquid waste separation facilities, irrigation systems, or tailwater recovery may be eligible for financial assistance. Cost share may also be available for “Management Practices”. Support for Management Practices is intended to provide a financial incentive to use new management techniques that protect water quality and improve or maintain crop production when applying manure to land.

Contracts extend one year beyond the last scheduled practice, may be up to ten years in length, and may apply to all or part of the dairy’s land. Applications for assistance are screened and ranked by the NRCS according to environmental benefits to surface and groundwater. The dairy’s local NRCS office can provide assistance in the eligibility and application process.

### **Manure Nutrient Management Cost Share Practice**

Producers in the Central Valley needing WDRs may benefit from a cost share practice for manure nutrient management. As described above, it is an incentive payment to encourage desirable management practices while using manure to meet crop nutrient requirements. To qualify, a producer develops a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) that: 1) meets NRCS standards for dairy physical infrastructure for manure collection, treatment, and

distribution and, 2) includes a manure application plan. The producer may then be eligible for cost share for up to three years (for eligible land) to implement the land application portion of the CNMP utilizing the upgraded physical infrastructure. This practice requires soil, manure, tissue, and irrigation water testing, complete recordkeeping, and manure application consistent with NRCS standards. It is important to note that although the NRCS EQIP Manure Nutrient Management practice option requires liquid manure sampling, a “quick test” is acceptable for use: a laboratory test is required only once a quarter.

### **Summary**

Confined animal facility operators, including dairy producers subject to the recently adopted Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Waste Discharge Requirements, may be eligible for financial and technical assistance through the California USDA-NRCS EQIP program. Currently, the California NRCS website pages

<http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2010/index.html>

<http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cnmp/index.html>

provide more information on CNMP and EQIP. But the best way to determine which practices are eligible for cost sharing is to contact the local NRCS office in the dairy’s county.

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**USDA-NRCS Cost Share Programs Related to Dairy Manure Nutrient Management.** 2009. University of California Manure Technical Guide Series. <http://manuremanagement.ucdavis.edu>

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January 2010



University of California Manure Technical Guide Series  
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Financial support for the Manure Technical Guide Series was provided by the California Department of Food & Agriculture and the California Dairy Research Foundation. Contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the sponsoring organizations or the University of California.

