



Environment on the agenda

New IDF guide and website

The IDF has placed environmental issues at the top of its agenda when a strategic plan was developed in 2008 and the need was identified to take specific actions in this regarding the environment.

As a result, the IDF is now launching a guide entitled *A Common Carbon Footprint Approach for Dairy: The IDF Guide to Standard Lifecycle Assessment Methodology for the Dairy Sector*.

This new methodology, based on the best available science and current international standards, will allow dairy stakeholders worldwide to produce consistent and comparable data on their carbon footprint. This robust measurement will enable effective management and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the sector.

The guide was developed under the leadership of the IDF Standing Committee on Environment (SCENV) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform (SAI Platform). In promoting the guide, the IDF launched a new website on 5 November, www.IDF-LCA-guide.org from

where the new guide can be downloaded. On the website, visitors can see interviews with dairy-sector stakeholders on the importance of the guide to their operations.

Focus on sustainability at WDS 2010

The IDF World Dairy Summit, that took place in Auckland, New Zealand from 8 to 11 November 2010 (WDS2010) focused on environmental sustainability in the international dairy sector. At the IDF press conference on 8 November, the dairy industry's commitment to producing safe and nutritious products sustainably, was highlighted. In addition, a dedicated conference on environmental issues was held on 11 November. At the conference, updates on the latest research, including climate change, carbon footprinting, water footprinting and reuse/recycling were presented.

Sustainability was a key element of all WDS2010 sessions. Dr Hans Jöhr of Nestlé, co-founder, and former and now honorary president of the SAI Platform, discussed sustainability and the dairy supply chain in the 21st century during a two-day conference on Dairy Policies and Economics.

Dr Jöhr focused on sustainability through food security and the high nutritional value of milk, emphasising sustainability at farm level. Ultimately, this is where the highest impacts, such as water footprint, and greenhouse gas emissions, are found. In order to improve, a farm must be assessed in a holistic approach on environmental, social and economical aspects, all of which are equally important to ensure long-term, sustainable production.

Environment

On 11 November, Prof Martin Manning, director of the Climate Change Research Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, gave an update on the current state of climate science from a UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) perspective. He pointed out the growing emphasis on risk management in both climate change science and the private sector and gave details of the greenhouse gas scenario, which was designed to achieve the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) target of limiting global warming to 2°C.

“The global dairy sector is steadily improving its efficiency and is expected to be a major factor in the world’s future economical development. However, to be sustainable, this sector needs to become adapted in ways that are consistent with the increasing pressures on our environment and threats to its stability,” Prof Manning explained. “Two key factors for this are the need for better approaches to water management and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.”

Manning pointed out that the greenhouse gas emitted by agriculture and the manufacturing industry are quite different when considering future climate stabilisation. CO₂ produced from fossil fuels remains in the atmosphere for thousands of years, whereas methane from livestock is almost completely removed by natural processes within a few decades.

Water

Following up on the water issue, Dr Sven Lundie, of PE International, provided delegates an in-depth understanding of the water-accounting approaches, which are based on life cycle assessment methodology, and outlined the key concepts for calculating water footprints. “The dairy sector needs to improve in respect of water usage,” Dr Lundie said.

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“A first step is to measure and monitor water usage, which allows us to assess water consumption based on robust methodology and to develop improvement strategies. Like the carbon footprint methodology, there is a need for a consistent global approach in line with international standards. In many ways, water usage is potentially more important than carbon emissions, as water – or lack of it – can have a direct and immediate impact on peoples’ lives.” The IDF, and the global dairy sector, clearly recognises the seriousness of the environmental challenges it faces. However, through initiatives such as the Global Agenda for Action on Climate Change, it is moving forward with concrete programmes that are providing tangible results.

During the week of WDS2010, the dairy industry’s progress on sustainability worldwide was also demonstrated in a dedicated sustainability area displaying a selection of the 314 examples of sustainability initiatives across the sector collected in the green paper.

For enquiries on any of these items or any other IDF related item, please contact Edu Roux during office hours at 012 843 5701 or 082 338 7820 or send an e-mail to edu.roux@agriconnect.co.za. **M&J**