

# Alabama Dairy Strategic Plan

## **I. Identify measurable goals for dairy production that will contribute to Alabama's economy and employment.**

1. Review Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) Animal Feeding Operations/Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (AFO/CAFO) Rule to determine if they exceed federal requirements for livestock operations.
2. Improve ability to locate qualified farm labor that will work extended hours at a reasonable wage. This is a major concern.
3. Create an Alabama Revitalization Program that would develop a plan to grow and enhance dairy farming and production in the state.
4. Give farmers options on implementing environmental stewardship programs on their farms.
5. Make agriculture a priority in water planning for the state. Providing irrigation for growing forages and other crops will be the key to maintaining and growing a viable dairy industry.

## **II. Develop and implement a strategy to remove barriers to your success and foster success**

- Perform economic analysis to determine the impact of current regulations on the competitiveness of Alabama dairies with other states.
- Work with other agricultural enterprises to develop a recruitment process for qualified farm labor.
- Conduct a study of the dairy industry, develop a plan to grow the dairy industry, and implement the plan. Have a set team to help relocate and establish new dairies into the state.
- Work through interagency waste management team to give farmers options on nutrient management.

- Continue working with agricultural stakeholders from each commodity on Alabama water plans.

<p><b>III. Identify public policy or regulatory changes needed to achieve your goals.</b></p>
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- Reduce Alabama Department of Environmental Management/National Resources Conservation Service (ADEM/NRCS) buffer distances for AFO/CAFO farmers with liquid waste storage facilities.
- Change regulations that discourage legal documented workers from attaining agricultural employment here.
- Establish a dairy margin insurance premium assistance program for producers that participate in federal margin protection program in the 2014 Farm Bill.
- Bring ADEM, NRCS, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Soil and Water Conservation Society, and all agricultural organizations together to reevaluate how comprehensive nutrient management plans, inspections, and permits are being administered
- Create permanent state and federal funding for all permit fees, inspections, and nutrient management plans for livestock producers.
- Encourage the passage of rules to encourage more irrigation for crop and forage production from our great water resources.

<p><b>IV. Identify the research and Extension issues you need addressed to achieve your goals.</b></p>
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- Conduct a detailed study comparing Alabama's AFO/CAFO regulations with federal guidelines
- Reach out to other states and independent companies that have success in recruiting farm labor and management.
- Educate dairy producers on risk management programs that are available through the state and federal governments.
- Work with state and federal agencies to provide a positive regulatory environment for existing farms and for farms considering locating here.

- Continue research and education programs on different irrigation methods for small fields and large acreages.

**V. Identify the communications needed to achieve your goals.**

- Communicate a clear message that Alabama is open for agricultural expansion by providing services and incentives and by streamlining regulations that make economic sense.
- Support programs that will keep current dairy farms and processors viable and attract new ones.