



# FARM Workforce Development

## Summary of Pilot Program and Public Comment Period

FARM Workforce Development (WFD) has created an on-farm evaluation tool that cooperatives and processors may voluntarily choose to implement with their members. The WFD evaluation tool is not a set of standards – it is a best practice assessment guide. The goals of the evaluation tool are to help farms: learn about HR and safety management best practices; identify which practices might be useful for their farm; and, track improvement over time. By performing on-farm evaluations, the industry can also provide important assurances to supply chain customers: our dairy buyers and retailers.

## Outcomes from Pilot and Public Comment

Feedback from the Pilot and Public Comment period were shared with the [FARM WFD Task Force](#). The following outcomes were decided based upon FARM WFD Task Force review of the feedback and upon FARM staff recommendations. The next step is to present the FARM WFD program area and evaluation tool for NMPF Executive Committee review, with the goal of a recommendation for approval by the NMPF Board of Directors.

### Revisions Made

- Wording adjustments – simplified language, condensing where appropriate
- Consistency in language to refer to employees as family / nonfamily
- Removed duplication
- Adjusted the legal / regulatory question to focus on sharing the legal fact sheets, confirming that the farm has reviewed them, and asking how the farm stays up-to-date on legal requirements

### Commitment for 2020 / 2021

- Create a 'Version 1.1' of the evaluation tool that offers additional guidance tailored for smaller operations (few or no nonfamily employees), to be released in the 2020 / 2021 timeframe.

### Future Consideration

Look for future opportunities to refine the tool based on feedback:

- Consider options for questions where it may apply differently for part-time employees
- Benchmark the tool against international efforts, such as U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil standard.

### Resources

Based on recommendations from the pilot and public comment, FARM staff will add the following to the list of considerations for additional producer resources:

- More tools to guide next steps from the evaluation
- More templates, specifically those for small farms
- Resources on tracking turnover / OSHA reportable injury rates
- Resources on hearing safety, eye protection, safety signage, and managing older equipment
- Safety training – support for how to make it more in-depth and job-specific, bilingual videos
- Cell phone policy template

## Pilot Program

The pilot program launched in the fall of 2019 and ran through early 2020. The goal was to test out the FARM WFD evaluation tool with dairies across the country.

### Participation

The following 10 organizations participated in the pilot:

- Agri-Mark, Inc.
- Dairy Farmers of America
- Foremost Farms USA
- Land O'Lakes, Inc.
- Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative
- Michigan Milk Producers Federation
- Northwest Dairy Association
- Select Milk Producers
- Upstate Niagara
- United Dairywomen of Arizona

They implemented the evaluation tool with a total of 45 dairy farms. Of those, 28 dairy farms from across 15 states completed feedback forms. Those 28 dairies ranged in lactating herd size from 120 cows to 18,000 cows. The number of non-family employees ranged from 0 to 240.

### Producer Feedback Trends

This section describes the feedback received through the producer feedback forms. No trends were observed that correlated with farm size or geography.

Avg. Ease of Gathering the Info <i>(1= Very Difficult; 5= Very Easy)</i>	Avg. Helpfulness of HR Section <i>(1= Very Unhelpful; 5 = Very Helpful)</i>	Avg. Helpfulness of Safety Section <i>(1= Very Unhelpful; 5 = Very Helpful)</i>
3.9	4.1	4.2

#### The Positive

**"This is a great tool to keep dairies up to date"**

**"Appreciate the very informative and thorough discussion"**

**"The best resource that has come from the FARM program"**

**"Wish we had this sooner"**

**"This program will be a benefit to all that embrace it"**

#### The Constructive

**"Will be difficult [...] to balance customer concerns with farm privacy"**

**"The evaluation was helpful but some of the wording was not wording we use as farmers."**

**"Why is this important for a family farm consisting of 2 people?"**

- **Generally Positive Feedback:** Producers indicated that the evaluation brought up some new topics and ideas for consideration, including the need for better documentation and training
- **Documentation:** It was noted that many producers already implement best practices; just needs to be documented. There was a request for additional forms / templates to assist with documentation

- **Size of Dairy:** Some producers expressed concern that the evaluation tool was not well-suited for smaller dairies with few or no nonfamily employees.
- **Privacy:** A couple of producers noted the need to balance farm privacy with the needs of external customer assurances. Another noted that transparency is important.
- **Wording:** Wording should be adjusted to better suit farmers
- **Content:** Consider adding questions in the future to encompass additional HR and safety BMPs.

### Participant Feedback Trends

FARM Participants implemented the pilot with producers. Conference calls were held on January 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to discuss the Participants’ feedback and recommendations.

- **Producer Feedback:** Participants indicated that the producer feedback forms were good summaries of the feedback they heard directly from producers
- **Smaller Dairies:** Participants noted that the size of operation is not an indicator for risks; neither is family versus nonfamily labor on the farm. All agreed it would be worth exploring how best to configure the resources and the evaluation tool so that they function for smaller operations.
- **Layout / Guidance Text:** General agreement that the guidance text is helpful for evaluators [Note – this text was not available in the version released for Public Comment].
- **Resources:** Request for more tools to help guide producers on next steps; since the evaluation can feel overwhelming
- **Content:** Suggestion to add options or more guidance for some of the questions if it would apply differently for part-time or family employees.
- **Length:** General agreement that evaluation length is reasonable, with a note that implementing the evaluation in earnest (outside of the pilot period) is likely to take 2 to 3 hours.
- **Recommendation:** The FARM Participants that partook in the pilot recommended moving forward with the governance process and presenting the evaluation for Task Force review.

### Public Comment Period

The FARM Program held a 45-day public comment period from December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 through January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Efforts to publicize the public comment period included:

- Publicizing in NMPF newsletter and IC Sustainability Alliance newsletter
- Announcing in NMPF press release
- Posting in Facebook FARM Evaluator hub
- Emailing FARM Managers
- Directly emailing dairy buyers and other organizations interested in this topic

A total of 7 individuals participated in the public comment period:

Affiliation	Count
Dairy Producer	1
FARM Participant (Cooperative/Processor)	3
NGO	2
Retailer, Food and Beverage Company, or similar	1

## Feedback Trends

The following topic captures the themes from the public comment period. It does not reflect the content of each individual comment.

Category	Feedback theme	How the feedback was addressed
Wording	Consistency in terminology when referencing employees.	FARM Program will review and ensure terminology matches FARM Animal Care (family vs. nonfamily).
Content: Legal / Regulatory	Concern about the questions that relate to legal compliance: responsibility of legal authorities; does it put FARM at risk; who has liability if farm reports noncompliance; how will updates be shared; how will evaluators know the laws; etc.	<p>The FARM Program fully agrees that legal and regulatory compliance is managed by the proper government agencies.</p> <p>With approval from the FARM WFD Task Force, FARM staff has restructured this question to focus on sharing the FARM legal fact sheets, confirming that they have been reviewed by the appropriate staff, and asking about how the farm stays up-to-date on legal and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>As a note, the legal fact sheets will be reviewed and updated annually starting in 2020.</p>
Content: Legal / Regulatory	Ask about management systems to ensure legal compliance and the effectiveness of the systems.	<p>Legal compliance is not the focus of the FARM WFD evaluation tool. Verifying legal compliance is the duty of the proper legal and regulatory agencies in the U.S.</p> <p>With approval from the FARM WFD Task Force, FARM staff has restructured this question to focus on sharing the FARM legal fact sheets, confirming that they have been reviewed by the appropriate staff, and asking about how the farm stays up-to-date on legal and regulatory requirements.</p>
Content: Legal / Regulatory	Suggestion to add items relating to guestworker visas, forced labor, discrimination, child labor, written contracts, and wages/ hours.	The FARM WFD evaluation tool is focused on best management practices. Legal and regulatory compliance is managed by the proper government agencies. FARM supports producers in compliance through the legal factsheets, which are to be updated annually starting in 2020: <a href="https://nationaldairyfarm.com/producer-resources/worker-safety-human-resources/">https://nationaldairyfarm.com/producer-resources/worker-safety-human-resources/</a>
Content: Orientation	Suggestion to add items to the list of covered topics in new employee orientation: freedom of association, recruitment and hiring, forced and child labor, discrimination and sexual harassment, and wages and hours.	The Employee Handbook is listed as a recommended topic to cover in orientation. It often contains information on issues such as work hours, pay and the operation's stance on discrimination and sexual harassment. FARM will review the list with HR subject matter experts to identify if modifications are warranted given the suggestion.
Content: Grievance System	Suggestion for a follow-up question about whether the grievance system allows for anonymous complaints to	Grievance systems should be tailored to the individual farm operation. There are many possible variations that all result in positive outcomes, as described in the FARM HR Reference Manual. While anonymous systems may work for some operations, they may

	individuals other than the supervisor.	not be appropriate for others. For example, with only one employee, anonymity would be impossible to ensure. Additionally, some operations may have a more informal system to match their culture, rather than a formal system.
Content: General	Suggestion to focus on which systems are / are not in place and how effective they are.	Questions about processes and policies are intended to address systems in place to manage various issues. A future consideration may be to understand how to capture effectiveness.
Program Implementation	Concern that evaluation may be inappropriate for smaller dairies.	FARM is facility and size neutral – but recognizes that HR and safety best management practices may look different for individual farms. The FARM WFD Task Force has recommended that FARM create a Version 1.1 of the evaluation tool with more guidance for smaller dairies. Pending NMPF Board approval, this will occur in the 2020/2021 time frame.
Program Implementation	Concern about additional training, staff time, and expertise required to implement FARM WFD.	The FARM WFD will be an optional tool for FARM Participants to use with their members. FARM will support Participants by creating a training for 2 <sup>nd</sup> party evaluators to be released in 2020.
Program Implementation	Concern that a ‘N/A – no hired employees’ response will be viewed negatively, or equated to a ‘No’.	The evaluation is a best practices guide. A farm participates simply by going through the evaluation – even if they currently are only implementing a few or even none of the best practices. There is no penalty for answering ‘N/A’ or ‘No’ to every question. The goal is to share information and track improvement over time.
Program Implementation	Concern that the program will provide no additional premium to producers or plants.	Retailers and brands are fast pursuing their own programs in the area of on-farm labor for dairy. FARM WFD is an opportunity for the industry to lead in this area and create a program that both provides customer assurances as well as helps the dairy producer. The program is designed to add value to producers by: (1) avoiding the need to go through multiple audit programs required by customers that may not even be appropriate for the U.S. dairy industry; (2) providing information and support for producers so that our farms can become employers of choice – reducing \$ associated with turnover and safety incidences.
Other	Suggestion to benchmark the program against the labor & human rights section of the latest RSPO standard.	FARM has reviewed other programs to inform the development of the FARM WFD evaluation tool, but not yet RSPO. FARM will explore benchmarking our tool against the RSPO standard to see how it may inform future refinements to the tool.