

Price County Success from the Field

Positive Steps Towards Energy Conservation

Background

United Pride Dairy was formed in 1996 with the combining of the Jon Pesko and Ed Jasurda Dairies, both of which were started back in 1911. They began with 300 cows in 1996 and have since grown to 4,200 animals, milking approximately 2,000 cows three times a day. The farm is located near Phillips, Wisconsin, and they operate 5,000 acres surrounded by woods. The farm grows corn and hay to help feed the largest dairy herd in Price County.

Program Successes

In the past, United Pride Dairy has worked with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) on projects through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), such as comprehensive nutrient management planning, feed management, manure storage, and silage leachate collection. The farm has also participated in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and completed enhancements such as pollinator habitat, plant tissue testing, and GPS spray application of herbicide.

Recently, United Pride is interested in energy consumption and wanted to find out about ways they could become more energy efficient. With the help of the EQIP On Farm Energy Initiative, the farm completed an energy audit in 2014. The farm wanted an energy audit done by a party that was not selling a product so they could feel the audit was unbiased. This goal was accomplished by the plan writer they selected from the NRCS Technical Service Provider list.

United Pride was interested in implementing the recommendations from the completed energy audit. The main resource concern identified were the 20-year-old high pressure sodium lights. It was expected, through the audit, that the cost to replace these lights would have a 5 year payback in energy cost savings. In 2016, the farm worked with NRCS through the EQIP On Farm Energy initiative to replace the lights in 3 barns, the shop, the sand recycling building, as well as 12 outdoor lights.

The lights were replaced with energy efficient LED light fixtures. The strategic light placement and the increased lumens for the LED lighting has resulted in better visibility in the buildings, as well as energy savings. This helped improve management on the farm by making it easier for staff to read animal tags, which helps sort and move cattle more efficiently.



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A 60 stall rotating parlor on the United Pride Dairy Built in 2010 for increased cow and human comfort.

The brighter shop and sand recycling building also made it easier for staff to efficiently work on equipment.

The farm had always planned to update the lighting, but without the EQIP On Farm Energy Initiative, it would have taken much longer to implement. The program enabled the lighting update to be completed quickly so United Pride could focus on other farm improvements. The energy audit numbers showed the updates made sense financially. Overall Jon Pesko stated, "I appreciate the partnership with the NRCS to help the farm accomplish goals and do good for the environment."

Future Plans

In the future, the farm is looking into further improving their energy efficiency by installing solar panels. Over time, solar power technology has become better and less expensive, so Jon feels that it is a good route to take to reduce energy costs and protect the environment. Besides improvements in energy consumption, United Pride is thinking more about soil health and cover crops and how they can implement more cover crops into their crop rotation while dealing with Price County's short growing season. Melissa Knipfel, the District Conservationist in Price and Taylor County, reminds everyone, "Conservation not only happens in our fields and pastures, it involves all the resources in our community. United Pride has taken conservation in that direction by taking steps to reduce the energy they use."

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