



## Sustainability

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# UNH Eats Equitably: Cabot Creamery Cooperative

FRIDAY, MAY 06, 2022

by Paul Young, AmeriCorps VISTA

*Guest blogger Paul Young is an AmeriCorps VISTA member serving at the University of New Hampshire on Food Security and other Basic Needs initiatives. Paul has a passion for food systems and how they interact with climate change, health, opportunity and so much more.*

*While working at UNH, in addition to working with the Sustainability Institute on the 21 Day Challenge, he has helped launch a food repurposing kitchen and the [Cats' Cupboard](#) (the UNH food pantry).*

Photos Courtesy of Cabot Creamery Cooperative

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In the next installment of our UNH Eat Equitably series, we are highlighting a key player in one of



the most important industries in our agricultural system. Dairy is one of the most nutrient dense options in our food system and [Cabot Creamery Cooperative](#) is a major supplier in the region. This Co-op was started in 1919, when 94 families located in and around Cabot, Vermont knew that they were stronger together than they were apart. The Co-op has now grown to over 700 farms that all want the same thing - to provide for their families, give back to their communities and produce the best products possible. I had the pleasure of speaking to Jed Davis, the Director of Sustainability at Cabot.

Co-ops are member-owned and member-controlled businesses that operate to benefit their membership. Active members of a co-op benefit from the products and/or services provided. Cabot has centered their co-op around helping their community while also being a profitable, value-added dairy company. Due to this, [sustainability](#) is built into everything they do. Instead of just profits, Cabot focuses on the “triple bottom line:” “People, Planet, Profits.”

“Each one is very important to be self-supported and truly sustainable.”

Cabot remains committed to the [betterment of the communities](#) where they farm and where their products are made, bought, and sold. This commitment is woven into the fabric of who they are. One of the biggest signs that Cabot practices what they preach is that they are [B Corp Certified](#). B Corp Certification is a designation that a business is meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency. Factors that are evaluated include employee benefits, charitable giving, supply chain practices, input materials and so much more.



In order to get this certification, a company must: demonstrate high

social and environmental performance; exhibit transparency by allowing information about their performance be measured against B Lab's standard; have that information be made publicly available on B Lab's website; and must make a commitment to be accountable to all stakeholders. In 2012, Cabot became the first dairy co-op to get this certification.

Cabot knows that it is important to understand how they impact each aspect of the bottom line and how they can improve. It is part of their business model to continuously improve:

“Sustainability is all about impact: understanding, measuring and improving our impact.”

Cows are one of the leading sources of methane emissions. The dairy industry recognizes that in order for our food system to be more just, they need to make strides to improve that impact. In order to make this



difference, no one company can do the work on their own. There are pre-competitive efforts from the dairy industry, nationally, to focus efforts by companies to continue to improve. The main areas these efforts are being used are in the [field harvesting what the cows eat, on the farms where the cows live, the nutrient inputs and outputs, and the energy use.](#)

[The US Dairy Stewardship Commitment](#) is the formalized commitment of this work. There are goals to get nationwide dairy to be carbon-neutral by 2050, to optimize nutrient and water use and to create third-party companies to house best practices so that everyone can benefit from the leading research done by organizations like Cabot, who strive to move the industry forward.

Some of the efforts that Cabot is trying to pilot include alternative feed options to decrease enteric emissions from cows; finding uses for the

manure of the cows; minimal to no till farming and using cover crops on the fields that produce the feed for the cows; and ways to decrease the energy requirements or transition to renewable sources.

In addition to solar projects and other renewable energy interventions, one of the big things Cabot has been researching is the best way to allow smaller farmers to use technology to produce energy from the manure of cows. Normally you need around 1,000 cows to support an anaerobic digester which can be prohibitive to the average dairy farmer. Cabot has found ways to use some food byproducts and scraps from their farms and production plants to mix with the manure and allow only 300 cows to support an anaerobic digester.

“We need to find a way to use those waste streams and upcycle. [Our farms and plants] can then use this renewable energy to decrease energy requirements.”

The dairy industry has progress it needs to make in order to be a truly sustainable force for good. But I have hope that with a company like Cabot Creamery Cooperative leading by example, dairy will start to look more and more sustainable every day.

***Cabot Creamery Cooperative’s cream cheese was featured in the UNH Philbrook Dining Hall on April 17, 2022 during the [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#).***

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