

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION PREPARATION GUIDE

► VERSION 2



July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027

## ABOUT FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (**FARM**) Program is open to all farms, milk processors and cooperatives, and helps ensure the success of the entire industry by demonstrating to customers and consumers that U.S. dairy farmers are committed to producing the best milk with integrity.

National Milk Producers Federation (**NMPF**) with support from Dairy Management, Inc. (**DMI**), established the FARM Program in 2009. Through the **Innovation Center for US Dairy**, the dairy community has aligned behind FARM as the industry-wide, on-farm social responsibility program. Over the years, the FARM Program has expanded to provide resources and guidelines in five program areas: Animal Care, Antibiotic Stewardship, Biosecurity, Workforce Development and Environmental Stewardship.



U.S. dairy farmers have a lot to be proud of when it comes to labor. The dairy industry provides more than 125,000 jobs to hired workers, not to mention the family employees who make their living through dairying. Dairy farms provide stable, year-round employment with competitive wages in rural communities, but they face key challenges:

- Labor shortages and competitive labor market — how can a dairy become the employer of choice?
- Safety outcomes have been improving across all of agriculture, but the industry still experiences tragic fatalities and injuries — how can dairy farms improve?
- Customers and consumers are eager to learn more — how can dairy's story be shared?

The FARM Workforce Development Program, established in 2018, encourages best practices in human resources (HR) and safety. The program focuses on developing sustainable management processes and procedures to encourage positive HR and safety outcomes on dairies. The program's Second-Party Evaluation was developed

in consultation with subject matter experts, farmers, and co-op and processor staff. The process included a public comment period and an on-farm pilot program.

HR and safety management will look different from one farm to another based on individual needs. By referencing and using the FARM HR and Safety Manuals, templates and other resources, the second-party evaluation tool operationalizes the FARM Workforce Development materials – supporting dairy farmers and managers in their continuous improvement journey.

The FARM Program encourages policies and processes to be recorded in writing when applicable and shared with employees. For example, an employee handbook's content should be shared during new employee orientation. FARM Workforce Development also provides a framework for good communication and creating a positive workplace culture through recommendations like holding staff meetings, checking in with new employees, and developing grievance procedures.

## FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE

**The National Dairy FARM Workforce Development Program standards are formally revised every three years. Those involved in the developing and revising of standards include:**

### **Farmer Advisory Council**

Dedicated dairy farmers who provide guidance and input for consideration in FARM's ongoing and future development. Members work to champion FARM within other organizations, communities and throughout the industry.

### **NMPF Workforce Development Task Force**

The FARM Workforce Development Task Force comprises farmers, co-op and processor staff, and other subject matter experts from across the country. They guide program development and strategic direction.

### **Version 2 Development**

FARM collected feedback from the Task Force, farmers, participant managers and Evaluators to inform the proposed adjustments to the Workforce Development Version 1 Evaluation. Those suggestions were carefully reviewed and approved by the Task Force, to move forward to the NMPF Executive Committee.

## NMPF Executive Committee

Members are appointed by NMPF member cooperatives. The NMPF Executive Committee reviews recommendations from the Task Force for adjustments to the program. Such recommendations are subject to approval from the NMPF Board of Directors.

## NMPF Board of Directors

The NMPF Board of Directors is made up of representatives from all NMPF Member cooperatives.

**Scan the QR code to learn more.**



## ▶ WHY FARM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The FARM Workforce Development Program area is designed to support all dairy farms in enhancing their HR and safety management practices. In 2019, the FARM Program commissioned the Center for North American Studies (CNAS), part of Texas A&M University, to conduct a nationwide labor survey as to better understand current labor practices on U.S. dairy farms. Results showed dairy farmers are already committed to HR and safety management in several ways, through time off, comprehensive benefits and a focus on training employees. However, there were also areas of opportunity identified, such as high turnover rates and lack of pre-employment screening.

Implementation of the FARM Workforce Development Version 1 Evaluation provides another lens into current best practice adoption.

Across the more than 550 participating farms in Version 1\*:



**100%** provide employee training



**98%** have a process for employees to report safety concerns



**82%** have a first aid kit available

**75%** inspect their first aid kit regularly

Findings from the completed FARM Workforce Development Version 1 Evaluations also show opportunities for improvement, like documentation of processes and procedures. Farms that have gone through the Evaluation have the opportunity to set goals. Some examples of these goals are updating the employee handbook and distributing it to employees; and developing an emergency action plan and posting it around the farm.

\*Data only reflects the Evaluations completed as of May 2024 and is not nationally representative. Farms with only family employees (0 non-family employees) may not respond to every question.

# ▶ PREPARING FOR A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

Have the following documents on hand if they are in use on your farm. Print out blank copies of forms so that you do not reveal sensitive employee information.

- ☐ Summary of how job candidates are selected (i.e., selection criteria)
- ☐ New employee orientation and onboarding checklist
- ☐ Employee handbook or code of conduct
- ☐ Anti-discrimination and harassment policy (if separate from the employee handbook)
- ☐ Grievance process description (if separate from the employee handbook)
- ☐ Training records (e.g., training log, sign-in sheets, etc.)
- ☐ Blank forms to document performance issues (i.e., progressive disciplinary action)
- ☐ Blank performance evaluation forms
- ☐ Employee housing inspection checklist
- ☐ Employee housing agreement
- ☐ Written safety plan and program
- ☐ Safety walkthrough checklist
- ☐ Safety training checklist



**1**

**Review FARM State & Federal Fact Sheets**

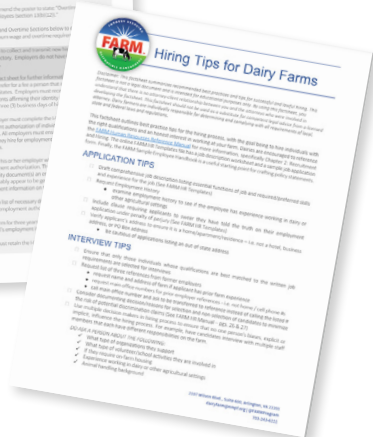
**2**

**Collect Documents**

**3**

**Evaluation**

Review all resources to aid in preparing at:  
[nationaldairyfarm.com](http://nationaldairyfarm.com)





## EVALUATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

During an Evaluation, a Second-Party Evaluator will:

### OBSERVE

- Visually inspect an area (e.g., location of records, first-aid kits, employee restroom)
- Observe safety resources in employee housing (e.g., functional fire extinguisher)\*

### REVIEW

- Read through template documents provided by the farm. All documents reviewed should be blank and not include any employee information.

### INTERVIEW

- Ask the farm management and employees about a certain policy or practice.
- The evaluator may ask permission to interview one of your employees. If no one is available or the evaluator cannot communicate easily in a common language with the employee, the interview will not be conducted.

\* This can only be done with permission of the housing occupants. If permission is not granted or if the owner/manager prefers, this component of the Evaluation can be completed through the interview with the owner/manager.

## SECOND-PARTY EVALUATION

The Workforce Development 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
- Track improvement over time

By performing on-farm evaluations, the industry can also provide important assurances to supply chain customers, dairy buyers and retailers. Dairy buyers and retailers are eager to learn more about on-farm labor practices. The FARM Program is taking proactive measures to provide this insight by offering a Second-Party Evaluation Tool. This tool will serve as the industry's voice to communicate that dairy is passionate about providing safe and thriving work environments for employees and family members. FARM also has regular conversations with dairy customers to share dairy's labor story and encourage FARM Workforce Development recognition.

### What Happens During a Second-Party Evaluation?

An Evaluator visits the farm and reviews each human resource and safety best practice from the Evaluation Tool with the dairy owner or manager. The Evaluation Tool explains why each best practice is valuable and how a farm can implement the practice on their operation. It suggests resources, such as templates, that can assist with the next steps.

### What Farms Complete Second-Party Evaluations?

FARM participants (the co-op or processor through which the farm is participating) determine how many farms and which farms will be asked to complete the Second-Party Evaluation. Participating farms may undergo a Second-Party Evaluation at a frequency determined in collaboration with the FARM Program participant. Evaluations must be scheduled in advance and are not to be conducted unannounced.

### Who Conducts Second-Party Evaluations?

FARM's network of Second-Party Evaluators implement the Evaluation Tool on behalf of FARM participants. Second-Party Evaluators participate in the FARM Workforce Development training and pass a corresponding exam to become certified.

### Does the Evaluation Result in Any Corrective Action Plans?

No. The FARM Workforce Development Version 2 Evaluation focuses on voluntary best practices. While these practices are beneficial for HR and safety outcomes, there is no penalty for not adopting any of the best practices. Farms vary in terms of how many best practices they adopt. Many farms only implement a few best practices; they will answer “no” to many Evaluation questions during their first Evaluation — this is a normal starting place.

**The topics below are covered in the Workforce Development Version 2 Second-Party Evaluation Tool:**

Human Resources	Training
<p><b>Recruitment and Hiring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References and background checks</li> <li>• Documenting the employee selection process</li> <li>• Conducting and documenting a new employee orientation with suggested topics of employee handbook, wages, grievance procedure, etc.</li> <li>• Checking in with new employees</li> <li>• Employee access to onboarding materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Employee Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff meetings</li> <li>• Grievance procedure</li> <li>• Employee handbook or code of conduct</li> <li>• Materials in understandable language and format</li> </ul> <p><b>Managing Employee Performance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplinary process</li> <li>• Performance evaluations</li> </ul> <p><b>Compensation Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timekeeping system with employee and manager verification</li> </ul> <p><b>Working Conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share work schedules in advance</li> <li>• Tracking rest and meal breaks</li> </ul> <p><b>Discrimination and Harassment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written policy, including how to report complaints and non-retaliation</li> </ul> <p><b>Recordkeeping</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining personnel files</li> <li>• Accessibility of payroll records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial training. Evaluation contains recommended list of topics to cover.</li> <li>• Training for new job duties</li> <li>• Routine refresher training and retraining following an incident</li> <li>• Documenting training</li> </ul> <p><b>Laws and Regulations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has FARM state and federal legal fact sheets and appropriate staff have reviewed them</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety</b></p> <p><b>Regulatory Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSHA safety poster or state equivalent</li> </ul> <p><b>Working Conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essential facilities: restroom facilities with locks, clean drinking water, rest areas</li> <li>• First-aid kits</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written safety plan or program. Evaluation contains list of recommended topics to cover.</li> <li>• Procedure for reporting safety concerns</li> <li>• Routine safety inspections</li> <li>• Process for managing hazards or risks</li> <li>• Tracking safety incidents and near misses</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine inspections</li> <li>• Signed written housing agreement</li> <li>• Repair or maintenance process for housing</li> <li>• Fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors</li> <li>• Emergency contacts and phone numbers</li> </ul>

## Privacy

Payroll records, personnel files, medical care records and other files contain personal information about employees and the dairy business. FARM Workforce Development does not require or recommend that Evaluators attempt to view personal and private information.

## Legal Compliance

Legal compliance is an important baseline for business operations. However, verifying legal compliance is part of proper legal and regulatory channels, not the role of the FARM Workforce Development Evaluator or Evaluation Tool.

FARM Workforce Development provides information about relevant laws and regulations through federal and state fact sheets that are updated annually. The FARM Safety and Human Resource Manuals provide more details on specific compliance topics.

## AFTER THE EVALUATION

### Evaluation or Verification Feedback

The FARM Program values feedback from the dairy community, as it influences future standards and programmatic processes. After participating in a Second-Party Evaluation, all dairy producers and managers are encouraged to complete a feedback form found on the FARM Program website: [nationaldairyfarm.com/evaluationfeedback](https://nationaldairyfarm.com/evaluationfeedback).



### FARM Database Access

All dairy farms have access to review their completed Evaluations within the secure FARM database. Farm representatives who need to create an account within the FARM database should reach out to their FARM Second-Party Evaluator.

### Resources

FARM works with industry partners and vendors to create pertinent resources to help meet FARM Workforce Development best management practices.



## PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

### Dairy Producer

- Respond to Evaluation questions honestly
- Provide documents that the Evaluator requests to the best of the farm's ability
- Show Evaluators requested locations or items for observation

### Evaluator

- Complete the FARM Workforce Development Evaluator training
- Be familiar with the relevant FARM resources available to farmers, including the HR and Safety Manuals
- Follow all safety guidelines and employ proper biosecurity protocols as set by the individual farmer
- Maintain and safeguard confidentiality of the dairy farm's information
- Properly communicate Evaluation expectations
- Upload Evaluation information into the FARM database
- Be polite and courteous



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the "National Dairy FARM Evaluation Feedback Form". The page has a blue header with the FARM logo and navigation links: Home, What is FARM?, FARM Standards, Industry Role, and FARM Resources. Below the header, the title "National Dairy FARM Evaluation Feedback Form" is centered, followed by a sub-header: "If you have participated in a FARM evaluation, please provide us with a review below." The form contains several input fields: "Name" (split into First and Last), "Milk Cooperative/Processor", "Date of Evaluation" (with a date picker), "Evaluator", and "Evaluation Type".

## RESOURCES

To learn more about the FARM Program, access protocol templates or training aids, visit the FARM website: [nationaldairyfarm.com](http://nationaldairyfarm.com).

