



Cookies and Milk with the Cows (and their Farmers, too!)

GRANT PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY:

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PILOT program for “Cookies and Milk with the Cows (and their Farmers, too!)”

Introduction:

The California Cattle Council’s mission is to advocate for and enhance the California cattle community by addressing challenges and opportunities that have the greatest impact, with consideration for the needs of each industry segment. CCC’s resources are used to defend and promote cattle production and focus on production issues like fire, water and air quality by funding research in areas and educating regulators and legislators about the many benefits of cattle production. A pilot program entitled “Cookies and Milk with the Cows (and their Farmers, too!)” achieves multiple of those goals with a creative way to engage the public and welcome visitors onto a working dairy farm where they can connect with where their milk and beef come from and how these farms make a positive impact on the environment.

Background:

Dairy farms in the United States are an important fixture of our communities and the products they produce are highly sought after. As reported by *Statista*, California is the leading state based on the number of milk cows from 2020 to 2022 with a total of over 1.7 million milk cows as of 2022. Unsurprisingly, California is also the leading milk-producing state in the United States. ([U.S. dairy: top U.S. states by number of milk cows 2022 | Statista](#)). According to The American Farm Bureau Federation, farm and ranch families comprise less than 2% of the U.S. population. ([Fast Facts About Agriculture & Food | American Farm Bureau Federation \(fb.org\)](#)). As the U.S. population continues to shift away from rural areas into cities and suburbs, consumers are ever more removed from the agricultural practices that sustain us. “Americans enjoy a food supply that is abundant, affordable and among the world’s safest, thanks in large part to the efficiency and productivity of American’s farm and ranch families.” Leading local brands of California’s North Bay, such as Straus Family Creamery and Clover Sonoma, process local milk into products such as cheese, half and half, fluid milk and butter. However, the disconnect comes when considering the consumers who purchase these products.

Goals & Purpose:

The proposed project –Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) and the Sonoma County Farm Bureau (SCFB) aim to increase education and awareness of dairy farms in the North Bay of California through onsite tours, photos and a question-and-answer session led by farmers. Through a rigorous registration process, applicants can secure a position on a tour bus that will escort them to a local farm for an in-depth look at the farm’s happenings, environmental stewardship and animal husbandry complete with a question-and-answer session over milk and cookies.

1. Connect, educate, and engage with the community regarding dairy farms and where their milk comes from.
 - a. Dairy farmer-led tour onsite at one or more dairy farms in the North Bay
2. Approach this as a pilot program whereby we establish and test protocols for on-farm tours focusing on biosecurity, on-farm security, education, and consumer connection.
3. Record and chronicle our strategies and outcomes, highlighting areas of success and those needing improvement with the intent to replicate on-farm tour opportunities around the state.

Create a “guidebook” for stakeholders across the state to utilize and find comfort in offering on-farm tours.

Strategy:

WODPA and SCFB will connect consumers to their local dairy products through on-farm tours that will include milk sourced from local processors and locally made cookies. Dairy and beef are essential to one's diet and the consumer of the future is compelled to feel connected to their food. These tours will be designed to help reinforce the message of the care for animals and the land and the production of quality products that consumers can feel confident in. Today's consumers are lacking the knowledge of where their food comes from so it is incumbent upon us as farmers to share what we do and how we do it. However, simultaneously, farmers are at risk of radical animal activists/extremists, especially in the North Bay. This tour will be coordinated with the security of the farmer in mind. Unfortunately, the extreme actions of a few hinder the opportunity for most. This pilot project intends to create a safe opportunity for both consumers and farmers to connect, paving the way to expand this program across the state.

1. Pre-registration is mandatory.
 - a. Each registered participant will be fully vetted to ensure their intent. (This is to protect the farmer from animal rights extremist disruptions.)
 - b. Spaces are limited.
 - c. Day-of registration will not be available.
2. 30 – 50 guests maximum. This will depend on the bus's capacity and the logistics at the farm(s) chosen.
3. Enlist a photographer to capture the events of the day; no personal cameras allowed.
 - a. A link to photos for downloading will be provided to participants after the event.
4. Security will accompany the tour to enforce the rules that are in place, for both farmer and participant safety.
5. Pre- and post-experience surveys and participant feedback
6. Goal: Establish and build relationships with the community while educating them about dairy farming and beef production.

Estimated Budget Breakdown:

1. Administrative Costs- \$4,500
 - a. 70-80 Hours
2. Cookies- \$500
 - a. Fresh, locally sourced cookies
 - b. Approximately 200 cookies
3. Tour Bus- \$5,000
 - a. Check-in at and departure from a designated public location
 - b. No private vehicles
4. Photographer- \$800 for one tour; \$400 per additional tour in the same day
 - a. Professional photographer hired to take photos of attendees – Rural Oak Photography
 - i. Photos will be available on the website to download for all attendees.
 - b. No personal photography is allowed.
5. On-farm reimbursement costs - \$500
 - a. Disposables, facility usage such as bathrooms, cleaning of facilities, chairs, and table rentals.
6. Biosecurity Equipment- \$500
 - a. Shoe covers/Plastic booties, and/ or coveralls
7. Local dairy product purchase- \$500
 - a. Locally processed milk supplied by local dairies.
8. Marketing and Advertising- \$1,500
9. Private Security (Quote requested but not back yet)
 - a. \$2,000 Estimate

Total Requested: \$15,800