

California Department of Food and Agriculture
2026 Dairy Plus Program
Questions and Answers (Q&A)*
July 10, 2026

1. (a) If a producer previously installed and operates a digester using entirely private funds, can that producer apply for Dairy Plus funding for eligible post-digester practices? (b) If so, how would CDFA classify that operation for eligibility and matching fund purposes?

(a) Yes, this producer is eligible to apply for the Dairy Plus Program. This year, the program has expanded eligibility to include those with approved practices under the Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP) and the Dairy Digester Research and Development Program (DDRDP), also known as AMMP- and DDRDP-like practices. Since there are no concurrent AMMP or DDRDP funding opportunities during this round of the Dairy Plus Program, the program aims to encourage more applicants to take advantage of this final opportunity.

(b) The project proposal would be classified as an eligible project type: "In-progress or already operational DDRDP approved practice/DDRDP-like practices system proposing a 2026 Dairy Plus Program project (refer to Appendix F)", as described in the [Request for Grant Application \(RGA\)](#) on page 3. Eligible post-digester practices are listed in the RGA on page 4. And matching funds are not required for the 2026 Dairy Plus Program, regardless of project type (for more information, see Funding Scenarios in the RGA on page 9).

2. Would Nitrogen Management Improvements include reduced ammonia emissions to the atmosphere?

While the Dairy Plus Program primarily focuses on reducing methane emissions from dairies and managing nitrogen and salts from manure water to protect water quality, it would also encourage projects able to mitigate ammonia emissions - and other air pollutants - to the atmosphere as a co-benefit.

3. If an applicant is in the process of getting permits to install a compost bedded pack barn or other AMMP-like/ DDRDP like practice, and have not started work, are they eligible to apply? Could you please provide a bit more clarification on the "in progress" requirement; does this mean paperwork can be in progress, or the work needs to be in progress?

Yes, they would be able to apply for a project on that operation. In-progress can include approved AMMP- or DDRDP-like practices that are in planning or permitting stages where work, installation or construction has not yet begun. The applicant would still need to clearly describe the planned implementation of the AMMP- or DDRDP-like practice along with the proposed advanced manure management systems in the application packet. The AMMP- or DDRDP-like practice should be complete and operational by the end of the Dairy Plus Program grant agreement term (i.e., when CDFA verifies that the Dairy Plus Program project is finished).

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For certain practices such as compost bedded pack barns, the proposed advanced practice for the Dairy Plus Program must address the portion of the herd not already covered by the in-progress or previously implemented AMMP or “AMMP-like practices” project, as the manure handled by those systems should already be largely removed from a liquid waste stream.

4. Can we include heifers in the herd count if they are a part of the project? Or is it just milking and dry cows?

Yes, all types of cows on a dairy (with the exception of calves) can be counted as a “cow” in Dairy Plus if their manure will be affected by the project, as they can be quantified in the AMMP or DDRDP Benefits Calculator Tools (lactating dairy cows in both freestall and open lot corrals, dry cows, and heifers are included livestock categories in both calculators).

5. If a dairy operation doesn't have a separator now, are they eligible to apply (even if the dairy pays for it)? If the dairy is awarded the grant, the dairy would plan to have a separator built by March 1, 2027. In essence, we are asking what “in progress” means if the proposal includes the separator as part of the workplan and permitting.

If a dairy has plans to implement a solid-liquid separator (or another AMMP- and DDRDP-like approved practice, as referenced in Appendix F of the RGA, page 38), it may still be considered eligible for the Dairy Plus Program even if construction has not started by the time of the application, as long as the implementation will be completed by the end of the Dairy Plus Program grant agreement term (i.e., when CDFA verifies that the Dairy Plus Program project is finished). It is crucial for the applicant to clearly describe the implementation of both the primary manure management and the advanced manure management systems in the application packet, including all relevant attachments (e.g., work plan, permitting, etc.). During the final project verification, CDFA and CDRF will assess the implementation of the primary manure management system along with the funded advanced manure management system. Final reimbursement for incurred approved expenditures, as described in the Dairy Plus Program budget worksheet, will only be granted if both systems have been successfully completed and deemed satisfactory at the time of the verification process. Note that expenditures incurred outside of the grant term are not reimbursable.

6. If a dairy operation doesn't have a separator now, but they will add one in parallel with or shortly before implementing an awarded Dairy Plus Program project, would it be included as part of the baseline manure management practices (in the Benefits Calculator Tool) or can this be added to the practices after implementation of the project and included under the project's benefits?

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If a solid-liquid separator is not already in place and operating on a dairy at the time of application, the planned/in-progress one can be added in the post-implementation section of the Benefits Calculator Tool so that the project's GHG reduction estimate is inclusive of the whole new system. Please also refer to question 5 for more information on this type of scenario.

7. Are agricultural technology companies that are developing technology for manure management in California eligible?

No, only California farmers, ranchers, and California Native American Tribes are eligible to apply. Producers receiving grant award funds must be located in California with a physical California business address, and producers receiving grant award funds must be registered with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) for the specific farm/tract information for all tracts. A technology company may work alongside or in partnership with a dairy producer on a project to implement an eligible practice, but the primary applicant and grant recipient must be a producer.

8. Can we use funds to create a capture system for our compost windrow leachate?

Each Dairy Plus Program project requesting funding must include at least one project component (eligible primary advanced manure management practices; listed in the RGA, pages 3-4) that reduce methane emissions, and nitrogen and salt surpluses. Other components directly related to the new advanced manure management system (either for the required primary practices or the optional secondary practices), such as having sufficient infrastructure for proper handling and treatment of manure solids, or improving nutrient management or managing leachate from composting, may be eligible allowable costs within the overall funded project, but cannot be standalone.

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