

California Department of Food and Agriculture
2026 Dairy Plus Program
Questions and Answers (Q&A)*
July 31, 2026

1. Biological flocculation. The Eligibility and Exclusions section and Funding Scenarios table list "Post-digester advanced solid-liquid separation assisted by flocculants and/or bead filters" as an eligible DDRDP-pathway practice. We are considering a process in which flocculation is achieved through a biological mechanism (bacterially mediated floc formation) rather than an added synthetic or chemical flocculant. Would this qualify under the "assisted by flocculants" category as written, or is the program's intent limited to an added chemical agent?

Biologically mediated flocculation may qualify as an eligible practice under the main practice category "advanced liquid-separation assisted by flocculants and/or bead filters".

After consulting with the USDA regarding the use of biological flocculants as an alternative to polymer or chemical flocculants within the "advanced solid-liquid separation assisted by flocculants and/or bead filters" practice, the Dairy Plus Program has confirmed that biological additives which aggregate suspended manure solids to form flocs through a biological mechanism are accepted under [NRCS Conservation Standard Practice Code 629 \(CPS 629\)](#).

As with other more commonly used chemical or polymer additives that act as flocculants under this practice category, applicants proposing to use biological flocculants must provide the following information in their application package, as outlined in Attachments A and C:

- 1) (Attachment C, Page 1): Has the flocculant undergone a public process or environmental agency approval for use in manure treatment for solids that will be land applied?
- 2) (Attachment A, Page 2): Specify the type of flocculant being proposed, and whether it has undergone a public process, such as CEQA or a State agency approval to use flocculants in manure treatment for solids that will be land applied. Describe any evaluation conducted to determine potential environmental impacts to various media, including but not limited to soil quality, water quality, and air quality.
- 3) (Attachment A, Page 2): Describe any permits needed to implement the system, or if none are needed. Additional information, permits, and copies of communication with relevant permitting agencies can be included as supporting documentation in Attachment A.1 and addressed in the Nitrogen and Salt Management and Water Quality Improvements section.
- 4) (Attachment A, Page 2): The efficacy of volatile solids removal for GHG reductions should be quantitatively well-documented. Supporting documentation may be included in Attachment A.1, or Attachment E.1 and/or A.2, as applicable.
- 5) (Attachment A, Page 5): Describe the anticipated frequency of consumable media (e.g., polymer, wood chip substrate) use and replacement, and how this ongoing cost will be sustained by the operation, along with any routine

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maintenance of equipment for the life of the project (minimum expected lifetime is 5 years). Include vendor quotes and agreements where available.

- 6) (Attachment C, Page 2): (Provide) Information on the expected lifespan of the practice and any maintenance requirements that will be necessary to ensure continued effectiveness.
- 7) (Attachment A, Page 5): In the long term, flocculants and/or bead filters could be used at a frequency different from that originally proposed (for instance, intermittently used or less frequently used). Describe how ongoing permanent GHG reductions estimated in the original proposal will be achieved for the life of the project.

Any technology proposed should be commercially available (see Request for Grant Applications, page 12). During the technical review process, applications will be evaluated based on the merit and completeness of the information requested above, and its alignment with the program's quantification methodology and all other program requirements.

2. Integrated nitrogen treatment. We are also considering a biological nitrogen treatment stage (nitrification followed by denitrification) downstream of the solid-liquid separation step, within the same post-digester system, to further reduce nitrogen surplus in the liquid waste stream. Could this be included within the scope of the funded "advanced manure management system" alongside the solid-liquid separation practice, or would it need to be treated as a separate, non-listed practice for cost-eligibility purposes? Relatedly, how should a project combining both elements be categorized on the Application Summary Form, since only one "primary project type" may be selected and neither listed secondary option (aerated composting, subsurface drip irrigation) describes this component?

Biological nitrogen treatment, including nitrification followed by denitrification, is not currently listed as an eligible Dairy Plus Program practice for this solicitation round. Because this practice was not evaluated and approved by USDA, CDRF, and CDFA before the release of the solicitation, it must be treated as a separate, non-listed practice for cost-eligibility purposes. As a result, CDFA and CDRF cannot reimburse costs attributed to the biological nitrogen treatment component under the current Dairy Plus Program solicitation. However, applicants may still choose to investigate or implement nitrogen and salt management solutions apart from the program's eligible practices, including biological nitrogen treatment, as part of their broader manure management approach, provided those practices are permitted, allowable in California, and implemented in compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements. While such practices may contribute to a project's overall, non-quantified co-benefits and be described in the project narrative, any costs associated with a non-listed practice must be clearly separated from the eligible Dairy Plus Program budget and cannot be requested for reimbursement.

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On the Application Summary Form, because biological nitrogen treatment is not an included secondary practice under the program or an option for the question "Is there a secondary component to the project (these practices cannot be standalone)?", the applicant should select "Not Applicable", unless the project will be implementing one of the eligible secondary practices.

3. Is the Attachment A.2 - FSA Release of Information Request Form posted on the Dairy Plus Program website current, given that the heading states "2024 Dairy Plus Program"?

Yes, the posted Attachment A.2 form on the Dairy Plus Program website is still acceptable and being used to serve the same function in the 2026 Dairy Plus Program.

4. When might applicants know if the project implementation timeline extension from 12 to 24 months was approved by USDA? This answer would help us with the Attachment B workplan, as we are designing projects now for the 12-month requirement but greatly hoping it increases to 24 months.

Currently, California Dairy Research Foundation (CDRF) and CDFA have a pending extension request with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). However, we are unlikely to receive a response until after the application period ends (i.e., September 14, 2026). Therefore, we encourage our applicants to design their projects for a duration of 12 months (end date on February 29, 2028), with the possibility of an additional 12 months if we receive approval from the USDA. If the USDA extension is granted, CDFA and CDRF would work with awardees during the pre-project consultation period to amend their work plans accordingly.

5. Can a primary AMMP- or DDRDP-like practice be included in the application as part of the project proposal with the practice to be implemented as part of the overall project and funded privately/used as cost match?

Yes. If a dairy plans to implement a primary AMMP- and DDRDP-like approved practice using private/match funding (as there is no state AMMP or DDRDP funding this round), it may still be included as part of the overall Dairy Plus Program project proposal. 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. Please also refer to questions 5 and 6 in the Q&A Round 1 document for more information on this type of scenario.

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