

California Department of Food and Agriculture
2026 Dairy Plus Program
Questions and Answers (Q&A)*
August 28, 2026

1. A few of us will be working to submit a number of proposals under a single organization. We have registered as individuals and the organization registered as an organization in GOATS. Is there a way for us to connect so we can login and work on the organization's proposals collaboratively, or does the organization need to have a single user?

While adding other contacts to an account/organization is possible, unfortunately it only provides view access on draft applications and collaboration/editing is not yet supported. Technical support for the system understands it's a critical and important feature and will keep GOATS users informed on when it may become available.

2. Given the Dairy Plus is the only program available this year (no AMMP or DDRDP), I noted that producers who have previously installed or are currently in the process of implementing an AMMP or DDRDP practice are eligible to apply. Could you please clarify if there is a specific timeframe regarding the installation of these practices? For example, if a digester was installed seven (7) years ago, would it still be eligible for consideration?

In the current program guidelines, there is no specific time limitation associated with previously installed AMMP or DDRDP projects (or approved AMMP or DDRDP-like practices), as long as they are still operating and have the capability to integrate or add on an advanced practice. The rationale for including in-progress or previously installed projects as eligible scenarios is to recognize farms that have already implemented an effective practice (such as a solid-liquid separator or an anaerobic digester) may seek to further improve their manure and nutrient management through the addition of a more advanced or secondary system. An applicant with a functioning anaerobic digester installed seven years ago may propose a post-digester practice.

3. If a producer is interested in implementing a solid-liquid separation assisted by flocculants practice and wants to connect it to the backside of their anaerobic digester, is that eligible? I'm not sure if there are restrictions on how or where it can be installed.

Yes, for Dairy Plus Program proposals accompanying an in-progress or previously completed anaerobic digester project, it is essential that the advanced manure management system be installed post-digester. These practices are intended to enhance treatment of the digestate, that is, further removal of volatile solids or nutrients from the wastewater stream, before its storage or application to the field. For further details, please refer to the [Request for Grant Applications \(RGA\)](#), pages 4-5.

4. We are working on a proposal to install a vermifiltration system post-digester. We wanted to make sure that DDRDP (a digester funded by CDFA's DDRDP project) is not a pre-requisite. This is for a dairy with an unbuilt digester (that is permitted and planned) that will not get DDRDP funding (due to the program currently not being available). The digester will be completed by the end of the Dairy Plus Program project (that is, by February 2028) with a vermifiltration system. Is this dairy eligible to apply with this digester not yet completed?

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Yes, this dairy would be eligible to apply for a Dairy Plus Program project. In-progress projects 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 practice that will be requested through the Dairy Plus Program in the application packet. And, no funding from the Dairy Plus Program can be utilized for any part of the anaerobic digester system. The AMMP- or DDRDP-like practice (i.e., primary manure management practice) must be complete and fully operational by the end of the Dairy Plus Program grant agreement term, when CDFA verifies that the Dairy Plus Program project is finished. If the systems are not operational at that point, the grant agreement will be considered incomplete, and CDFA will withhold 10 percent of grant funds until the project is deemed complete.

5. Attachment A (Project Description template) has a section that states: *"If a project is being submitted by a project developer, a contractual agreement documenting project support from the dairy or producer/livestock operator must be included. Letters of commitment from team members demonstrating understanding of their participation and specific role(s) in the project must be included."* If we are submitting an application on behalf of a producer to build a vermifiltration unit on their dairy, does this requirement pertain to our application as well (i.e., similar to DDRDP where digester developers administer the majority of projects for the dairy farmers)?

It depends on the role of the submitting entity. According to the Attachment, "if a project is being submitted by a project developer, a contractual agreement documenting project support from the dairy or producer/livestock operator must be included," along with letters of commitment from participating team members. A project developer is defined by their function in the project, which may include responsibilities such as managing the grant agreement directly or on behalf of the producer through a contractual obligation, overseeing the construction and delivery of project components, providing ongoing assistance throughout and after the grant term, or participating in the capitalization of project outcomes. In such cases, where a project partner plays a significant or integral role in the implementation of the project, it is strongly recommended to include the documentation described in Attachment A. However, when an entity/person is solely assisting a producer with application preparation or offering advisory support after awarded (such as technical assistance providers or consultants who are not responsible for project implementation), the documentation described in Attachment A (contractual agreement and letters of commitment) is not required.

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6. On reviewing the presentation slides of the CDFA Dairy Plus Program informational webinar, I found the following points about the CPA-52 form:
- *Work with CDRF and UCD to receive approval on the project environmental evaluation (CPA-52 process)*
 - *Application info used to complete the CPA-52 form, including site map, design and construction, and budget.*

Do farmers have to work with CDRF and UCD to receive approval on the project environmental evaluation (CPA-52 process) before submitting the application? Or can they work with CDRF/UCD after my project is funded but before starting the project?

After the application submission deadline and only if offered an award, applicants will be contacted by the California Dairy Research Foundation (CDRF) and University of California team regarding the information needed to complete the USDA CPA-52 environmental review. The CDRF and UC team works directly with NRCS to complete the USDA CPA-52 process on behalf of awardees. No applicant action related to CPA-52 is required prior to submitting the application.

7. We are working with an applicant dairy farmer that would meet the requirements for a beginning/young farmer in the grant guidelines for the Dairy Plus proposal.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher means a participant who:

- *Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, and who:*
 - *Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.*
 - *In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.*

We see that we can enter "Yes" or "No" to this question in the application questionnaire. Is there any additional information that we need to provide as backup for identifying the applicant as a beginning farmer? Does the applicant need to match the name on the FSA registration?

Applicants may indicate "Yes" or "No" to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher question in the application questionnaire. No additional documentation is required at the time of application submission. Beginning Farmer and Rancher status is verified through the applicant's USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) records. The Dairy Plus Program requires producers to have established farm, tract, and field numbers with FSA, and to complete the required FSA forms as part of the award process. The applicant's name entered in

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the Dairy Plus Program application must match the name associated with their FSA registration, and any Beginning Farmer and Rancher designation must be reflected in those FSA records to be recognized. FSA is the responsible agency for evaluating and confirming the Beginning Farmer and Rancher status.

8. Is there a minimum amount or proportion of the awarded grant funds that must go towards the eligible advanced manure management practice (e.g., vermifiltration, solid separation through a weeping wall, advanced solid-liquid separation assisted by flocculants or bead filters, advanced solid-liquid separation through centrifuge) relative to a secondary practice (e.g., subsurface drip irrigation using liquid manure or aerated composting) if one is included?

No, there is no specific percentage or dollar amount in the 2026 Dairy Plus Program RGA regarding the proportion of a grant award that must go towards the primary Dairy Plus Program practice relative to a secondary practice, if one is being proposed.

9. We are working with an applicant who is applying for a vermifiltration system. The applicant is the dairy that will implement the project, and the manure from this dairy will be used in the proposed vermifiltration system. However, their FSA only covers the land on the dairy specifically. The proposed vermifiltration system would be built on adjacent land, owned under a separate name and with a different FSA. Can we apply with the dairy's FSA even if the land for the proposed system is under a different FSA or should we apply under the FSA name that the land is under?

A Dairy Plus Program project should apply using the FSA information for the specific tract and field that the project will be located on, as the location and practice information (i.e., level and depth of soil disturbance, use of land, etc.) will be a requirement for completing the NRCS CPA-52/environmental evaluation if the project is awarded.

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