



# Dairy Innovation Awards 2026





Dairy  
Innovation  
Awards  
2026

## ABOUT THE IDF DAIRY INNOVATION AWARDS 2026

The IDF Dairy Innovation Awards 2026 celebrate the groundbreaking work shaping a more sustainable, resilient, and forward-looking global dairy sector. Now in their fifth edition and proudly sponsored by Tetra Pak, the Awards spotlight innovations that strengthen the entire dairy value chain, from farm to consumer.

This annual programme honours solutions that demonstrate real-world impact: advancing climate action, improving resource efficiency, enhancing animal health and welfare, delivering high-quality nutrition, and fostering inclusion and transparency across the sector. By showcasing leadership and ingenuity at every stage of production and processing, the Awards highlight how innovation is helping dairy meet evolving global challenges while building trust with the communities it serves.

The 2026 edition continues to champion excellence in sustainable farming, cutting-edge processing and product development, and initiatives that support people and the planet; affirming dairy's essential role in creating strong food systems and contributing to global development goals.

“ **Innovation is fundamental to the future of the global dairy sector. It shapes how we produce, process, package and deliver nutritious foods while strengthening sustainability, efficiency, and livelihoods. As we launch the fifth edition of the IDF Dairy Innovation Awards, we remain committed not only to recognising excellence but also to championing diversity and gender equity across the value chain. When more voices and perspectives are included, the entire sector becomes stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.** ”

**Laurence Rycken**  
Director general,  
International Dairy Federation

**The awards will be open for entries from 2 March to 5 June 2026**

The winners will be announced at the IDF Dairy Innovation Awards 2026 Ceremony, held during the IDF World Dairy Summit in New Zealand, in mid-November 2026.



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# AWARD CATEGORIES

These categories recognise innovative and game-changing ideas, concepts, methods or processes that enhance sustainability and positively impact the dairy sector. The solutions presented address sector trends and the needs of consumers and the planet.

## 01. SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

- a) Innovation in Environmental Sustainability in Farming
- b) Innovation in Animal Care in Farming
- c) Innovation in Socio-Economic Sustainability in Farming

## 02. SUSTAINABLE PROCESSING INNOVATION

## 03. NEW PRODUCT INNOVATION

- a) Innovation in Dairy Products for Human Nutrition
- b) Innovation in Food Safety Equipment
- c) Innovation in Packaging and Transparency for Dairy Products

## 04. PEOPLE & PLANET IN THE DAIRY SECTOR

- a) Innovation in Inclusion and Women's Empowerment in Dairy
- b) Innovation in Climate Action in the Dairy Sector
- c) Innovation in Marketing and Communication for Sustainable Dairy

\*You can see all the questions required for each category at the end of this document.





# Dairy Innovation Awards 2026

## WHO CAN ENTER

Entry is open to dairy farmers, dairy cooperatives, dairy processors, dairy research operators, private companies, and service or equipment providers across the dairy sector. Submissions are free for IDF members, while non-members may participate for a fee.

## ENTRY COSTS

Entry to the awards is free for IDF members\*.

Entry for non-members is €150 per category (for a single category only)

or €90 per category, for entry into multiple categories (minimum of 2)



**IDF members:** Please enter the promotional code shared by your National Committee Secretary in your Entry Form. If you have misplaced this booking code, please get in touch directly with your National Committee Secretary who will share it with you.

## CRITERIA OF ELIGIBILITY

Entrants may participate in multiple categories (as applicable), with the following limitations:

- No more than three entries may be put forward in a given category.
- The same project cannot be submitted in more than one category.
- Projects that have won in previous editions of the awards may only be resubmitted if significant changes have been made.
- Projects entered into the Innovation in Marketing and Communication for Sustainable Dairy category cannot be submitted into additional IDF award schemes (e.g. IMP trophy) in the same year.
- The parameters of evaluation include: Innovation, Scalability, Partnerships, Global Agenda and Evidence. Specific questions for each category must be answered in full. You can preview the questions in the Category Entry Details or at the end of this document.



The International Dairy Federation (IDF) facilitates the IDF Dairy Innovation Awards to highlight innovation across the global dairy sector. The views, claims, practices, or scientific positions presented in award submissions, and by award winners, are solely those of the respective entrants and do not necessarily reflect the official views, policies, or positions of the IDF. The judging panels operate independently and evaluate entries based on the criteria established for each category. Their evaluations and selections do not imply IDF endorsement of the content, technologies, or claims submitted.



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# BENEFITS OF ENTERING THE AWARDS

The IDF Dairy Innovation Awards demonstrate the engagement and dynamism of the dairy sector worldwide, offering a platform for innovators to showcase their contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- Gain recognition for your innovative and sustainable sector practices.
- Gain credibility with buyers and investors by leveraging your status as a finalist or winner.
- Receive international media attention through the publication of finalists and winners in leading sector media.
- Help reinforce your position in the global dairy community.
- Build awareness of your operations, engaging consumers and other sector stakeholders.
- We share the news of your success with a dedicated announcement across IDF platforms, while all finalists benefit from internal visibility within the IDF network.
- Receive a comprehensive communications kit complete with press release, a digital logo package, certificate and a trophy for winners.
- Presentation of your shortlisted innovation in a special awards session, attended by participants from the global dairy community at the IDF World Dairy Summit in New Zealand, mid-November 2026.





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# ENTRY PROCESS

## FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO ENTER THE IDF DAIRY INNOVATION AWARDS

### ENTRY FORM

#### 1. Registration website

Visit the designated [landing page](#) to complete your entry details and review and accept the terms and conditions for the IDF Dairy Innovation Awards 2026.

#### 2. View your email inbox for links to the next steps

- a. If you are not an IDF Member you will need to continue to payment before receiving your submission form.
- b. If you are an IDF Member, you can continue to the submission form.

### SUBMISSION

#### 3. Category template

In your email received from the previous step (or after payment) you will receive links to complete category templates. Please complete your chosen category templates, explaining why your innovation merits the award, before continuing to the next step.

#### 4. Complete the submission form

You will upload your category template document, and will also need to provide your details about your business, brand and contact details. This must be completed **individually** for **each category entry**. Your submission **cannot be completed** if the **membership code is incorrect** or the **invoice number is missing**.

**Follow these steps carefully for a seamless entry process!**





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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## ★ Finalist announcement ★

The jury will evaluate submitted projects from August. Finalists will be announced on the IDF website on 5 October. Finalists will be invited to share a 30-second award acceptance video which may be included in the awards presentation, should they win in their category.

## ★ Winners announcement ★

The winners will be announced during the IDF Dairy Innovation Awards 2026 Ceremony at the **IDF World Dairy Summit** in New Zealand, mid-November 2026. Alongside the 10 category winners, the judges will present a special Judges' Choice Award to an entrant they feel demonstrates exceptional merit.

## Contact

If you have a query about the awards, please get in touch: [idf-dairyawards@foodbev.com](mailto:idf-dairyawards@foodbev.com)

“ The Dairy Innovation Awards highlight the remarkable creativity, expertise, and forward thinking approaches emerging across the entire dairy value chain. Each year, our judging panels, composed of seasoned experts from diverse technical, scientific, and industry backgrounds, bring rigorous evaluation and deep field knowledge to the process. Their collective expertise ensures that the innovations recognised truly reflect meaningful progress for communities, businesses, and the environment. As jury president, I look forward to discovering the pioneering solutions that will shape the future of dairy and inspire excellence throughout our global sector. ”

**Laurent Damiens**

President of the Jury,  
IDF Dairy Innovation Awards



# Dairy Innovation Awards 2026

## CATEGORY ENTRY DETAILS



# 01. SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

## a) Innovation in Environmental Sustainability in Farming



This category recognises innovative approaches in the dairy sector that enhance efficiency and productivity while addressing key environmental challenges across diverse production systems. By prioritising sustainability, these innovations align with consumer expectations and strengthen the long-term viability of dairy farming in all regions. Examples include efficient use of water, land, and energy; renewable energy solutions for farm operations; effective waste management (including manure handling and packaging waste reduction); feed optimisation and dietary supplements; rotational grazing and improved rangeland management; practices that help prevent desertification; and production models that support pastoralist and rangeland-based systems.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. Describe your innovation and how it differs from existing solutions within the dairy sector.
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. How does this innovation improve efficiency or reduce cost, water, soil, energy use, or emissions? (Describe the innovation, problem, solution, and impact. Include metrics).
4. How does this innovation contribute to increasing the engagement with dairy farmers and milk/dairy products?
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the results of your impact?
9. Share information about your project to demonstrate the results of its impact. Examples include: impact reports, pre/post evaluation questionnaires, performance evaluations, and others.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 01. SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

## b) Innovation in Animal Care in Farming



This category recognises innovative dairy products that prioritise human nutrition and support healthier lifestyles across all life stages. As consumers increasingly seek foods that help sustain energy, support metabolic well-being, and contribute to greater satiety, dairy innovation continues to evolve to meet these expectations. Examples include products enriched with beneficial substances such as omega-3 fatty acids, collagen, and vitamin D, advancements that support digestive health, cardiovascular function, and bone strength. These innovations deliver meaningful functional benefits while maintaining the great taste and quality consumers expect.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. Describe your innovation and how it differs from existing solutions within the dairy sector.
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. What does your innovation consist of, and how does it enhance animal health and welfare? Please outline the problem it addresses, the solution it offers, and its overall impact.
4. How does this innovation contribute to increasing the engagement with dairy farmers and milk/dairy products?
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the results of your impact?
9. Share information about your project to demonstrate the results of its impact. Examples include: impact reports, pre/post evaluation questionnaires, performance evaluations, and others.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 01. SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

## c) Innovation in Socio-Economic Sustainability in Farming

This category recognises strategies that enhance the socio-economic aspects of dairy farming to improve farmers' livelihoods, promote community development, and ensure long term economic viability. Some examples include financial literacy and management training, access to finance such as loans and investment mechanisms, business planning and succession support, education and skills development resources, community health-focused research, targeted farmer training, and collaboration with local communities to foster opportunities for growth, among others.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. Describe your innovation and how it differs from existing solutions within the dairy sector.
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. Describe your innovation, detailing its positive community impact. Identify your beneficiaries, and support your claims with data demonstrating improvements in efficiency, livelihoods, or overall community well-being.
4. How does this innovation contribute to increasing the engagement with dairy farmers and milk/dairy products?
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the results of your impact?
9. Share information about your project to demonstrate the results of its impact. Examples include: impact reports, pre/post evaluation questionnaires, performance evaluations, and others.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

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## 02. SUSTAINABLE PROCESSING INNOVATION

This category recognises initiatives and programmes that enhance efficiency in the dairy sector by optimising resource use, reducing costs, and improving product quality. Some examples include AI technology that monitors milk quality in real-time, ensuring safety and excellence while improving efficiency. Circular economy practices that upcycle by-products to minimise waste and enhance resource efficiency. Additionally, innovations aimed at reducing water and energy use during processing can significantly lower operational costs and emissions. Waste conversion processes, such as turning manure into biogas, that further contribute to a more sustainable and profitable dairy sector.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. Describe your innovation and explain how it contributes to production efficiency while simultaneously enhancing sustainability in the dairy sector.
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. How does this innovation improve efficiency, cut costs, and reduce water, energy use, and emissions in processing? Please include data or indicators showing measurable improvements.
4. How does your innovation contribute to national and sector programmes?
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the results of your impact?
9. Share information about your project to demonstrate the results of its impact. Examples include: impact reports, pre/post evaluation questionnaires, performance evaluations, and others.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 03. NEW PRODUCT INNOVATION

## a) Innovation in Dairy Products for Human Nutrition



This category recognises innovative dairy products that prioritise human nutrition and support healthier lifestyles across all life stages. As consumers increasingly seek foods that help sustain energy, support metabolic well-being, and contribute to greater satiety, dairy innovation continues to evolve to meet these expectations. Examples include products enriched with beneficial substances such as omega-3 fatty acids, collagen, and vitamin D, advancements that support digestive health, cardiovascular function, and bone strength. These innovations deliver meaningful functional benefits while maintaining the great taste and quality consumers expect.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. What is your new product and its innovation? How does it differ from existing market offerings? Also, outline the nutritional contributions, highlighting key nutrients like vitamins and minerals, and their potential benefits for consumers.
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. How does your new product development contribute to human nutrition, and in what ways did you incorporate this interest into the development process?
4. How have you measured the impact of your new product development on food safety and consumer nutrition?
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the improvements in the product and its associated benefits?
9. Please share information about the scientific assessments used to validate the benefits of your innovation in human nutrition.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 03. NEW PRODUCT INNOVATION

## b) Innovation in Food Safety equipment

This category recognises innovations in food safety equipment that play a vital role in ensuring the safety and quality of dairy products. It emphasises the adoption of advanced technologies that uphold rigorous food safety standards across the entire dairy supply chain. Examples include efficient cold chain management systems, real-time monitoring and detection technologies, automated cleaning and sanitisation solutions, microbial testing equipment, blockchain-based traceability tools, smart packaging that supports freshness verification, and HACCP-based systems designed to identify and manage production risks. Collectively, these innovations demonstrate the sector's strong commitment to delivering safe, high-quality dairy products and protecting consumer health.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. Describe your innovation, differentiating it from existing market solutions. Detail its advantages and how it improves upon current technologies.
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. Describe how your innovation improves food safety in the dairy supply chain, specifying the challenges it addresses and providing concrete examples.
4. What measurable improvements in food safety have been achieved using your equipment? E.g. reduction in contamination rates, improved shelf life, etc. Support with data if possible.
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the improvements in the product and its associated benefits?
9. Please share information about the scientific assessments used to validate the benefits of your innovation in Food Safety.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 03. NEW PRODUCT INNOVATION

## c) Innovation in Packaging and Transparency for Dairy Products



Hryshchysen Serhi/Shutterstock.com

This category celebrates innovations in packaging and transparency within the dairy sector. It highlights solutions that protect product quality while providing consumers with clear, trustworthy information about ingredients and sourcing. Examples include smart packaging with QR codes for extended product details, recyclable or biodegradable materials, and aseptic technologies that enhance shelf life. Other innovations, such as transparent windows that showcase product quality, further strengthen consumer confidence. Together, these advancements demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability and transparency, aligning with evolving consumer expectations and reinforcing brand trust in dairy products.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. What packaging innovations have you implemented to enhance product quality and safety, and how do they provide clear information about ingredients, nutritional value, and sourcing?
2. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
3. How do the materials used in your packaging contribute to sustainability, including recyclability, biodegradability, and material savings, while also extending product shelf life?
4. In what ways does your packaging build consumer trust, improve the overall consumer experience, and align with current sustainability standards?
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. Are there partnerships or collaborations in place that support the implementation of this initiative? If so, please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Do you have data to demonstrate the improvements in packaging and transparency?
9. Please share information about the scientific assessments used to validate the benefits of your innovation in packaging and transparency.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 04. PEOPLE & PLANET IN THE DAIRY SECTOR

## a) Innovation in Inclusion and Women's Empowerment in Dairy



This category recognises initiatives that promote inclusion and empower people across the dairy sector, reflecting the diverse contexts in which dairy is produced, from smallholders and cooperatives to pastoralist, rangeland, and intensive systems. Aligned with the FAO International Year of Women Farmers, it highlights efforts that elevate women's essential roles in dairy value chains and strengthen community resilience. These initiatives create equal opportunities by addressing structural barriers and biases, improving access to resources, training, finance, leadership roles, and inclusive networks. They also support pastoralist and rural women, engage youth, and ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable dairy future.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. What specific initiatives have you implemented to promote inclusion and equal opportunities for underrepresented groups in the dairy sector?
2. Could you describe the beneficiaries, the challenges they face, and the innovative solutions you are promoting to address these issues in the dairy sector.
3. What specific aspects of your initiative make it innovative compared to other inclusion efforts in the dairy sector?
4. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
5. Does this innovation have the potential to be applied to the wider sector?
6. What support networks or partnerships have you established to promote inclusion or empower women within the dairy sector? Please provide details.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Specify which goal(s).
8. Can you provide metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) to illustrate the impact of the initiative?
9. Provide metrics to measure the community impact and participation rates of women, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups from the last period 2024. Surveys and social impact assessments are common tools used here.
10. Why does your innovation deserve to win in this category?

# 04. PEOPLE & PLANET IN THE DAIRY SECTOR

## b) Innovation in Climate Action in the Dairy Sector



Joyseulay/Shutterstock.com

This category recognises dairy sector practices that advance the Pathways to Dairy Net Zero Initiative. These include improved feed and manure management, precision livestock farming, renewable energy use, carbon sequestration, sustainable breeding and reduced food waste, all aimed at lowering dairy's environmental footprint. The initiative focuses on reducing emissions, strengthening global collaboration, supporting research and innovation, and advancing regional projects that build climate-resilient, low-emission dairy systems.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. What specific innovative climate action initiatives have you implemented in your dairy production or processing operations, and what are their primary goals including efforts to reduce GHG emissions through productivity improvements, sustainable practices, and the adoption of mitigation technologies and new innovations?
2. What measurable improvements have you observed in terms of carbon emissions reduction or overall environmental impact since implementing these practices?
3. What challenges have you faced in implementing climate action initiatives, and how have you addressed these challenges?
4. Please provide metrics and evidence that support the effectiveness of your climate action innovations.
5. What aspects of your initiative distinguish it as innovative compared to other climate actions in the dairy sector?
6. Please categorize your innovation as one of the following: radical innovation, incremental innovation, or disruptive innovation.
7. How does your innovation contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Please specify which goal(s) it addresses.
8. In what ways do these initiatives align with the objectives of the Pathways to Dairy Net Zero Initiative?
9. Why do you believe your innovation deserves to win this category?

# 04. PEOPLE & PLANET IN THE DAIRY SECTOR

## c) Innovation in Marketing and Communication for Sustainable Dairy



This category recognises innovation in marketing and communication that advances sustainable dairy. Approaches may include digital campaigns, traditional media, compelling storytelling (including farmer narratives), influencer partnerships, educational initiatives, and sustainability-focused messaging. Increasingly, AI-powered tools, such as content optimisation, audience insights, and personalised engagement, enhance the effectiveness of these strategies by improving targeting, reach, and impact. Together, these approaches strengthen brand visibility, deepen consumer engagement, and promote informed, sustainability-minded purchasing.

### YOU WILL BE ASKED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, DEMONSTRATING YOUR INNOVATION AND IMPACT WITH METRICS:

1. What specific marketing and communication strategies have you implemented to promote sustainable practices within the dairy sector including any use of AI-driven tools or insights?
2. What were the primary objectives of these strategies, and which audience were they targeted towards?
3. How have you leveraged digital platforms alongside traditional media to promote your sustainability initiatives? Please describe the specific channels used.
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns in raising awareness of sustainability and engaging consumers?
5. What feedback have you received from consumers regarding your sustainability-focused marketing efforts, and how have you incorporated this feedback to enhance your strategies?
6. How effective have your strategies or campaigns been in creating value? Please provide metrics or key performance indicators to illustrate their impact for the 2024 period.
7. How do your communication efforts contribute to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**? Please specify which goals are addressed.
8. How innovative was your campaign, and what distinguishes it from other campaigns in the dairy sector in the past year?
9. Select your main type of innovation: Radical innovation, incremental innovation, disruptive innovation.
10. Why do you believe your innovation deserves to win this category?