Sowing the seeds of resilience



FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN AGRICULTURE

DAIRY

Protect your business's future and bottom line to overcome the sector's key sustainability challenges

Desjardins Business

Desjardins understands the challenges facing farmers, and we're committed to supporting our members in this important transition. Our goal is to help our members achieve long-term success and contribute to food security in our communities.

This fact sheet highlights:

- The most material[1] sustainability challenges facing the dairy sector.
- Practical actions farmers and their partners can take.

Human resources

Challenge	Actions
Producers' physical and mental health	Helpful resources: • Travailleurs de rang (mental health outreach for farmers, in French only) • Sentinelles network (suicide prevention, in French only) • Au cœur des familles agricoles (psychosocial services, in French only)
Labour shortage	• Offer competitive employee benefits • Provide housing support • Recognize employee contributions • Provide training tailored to employees' interests • Automate selected tasks

Temporary foreign workers

Desjardins has a dedicated team to support agricultural workers that includes Spanish-language assistance. Foreign workers are able to open an account remotely before they arrive.

For more information, email accompagnement-ri@desjardins.com

The Union des producteurs agricoles has a hotline for temporary foreign workers in Quebec to answer their questions about taxes, labour standards and their rights and help them report issues with their employer.

Services aux travailleurs étrangers temporaires – UPA
(in French only)

Animal welfare

Challenge	Actions
Societal pressure	• Exceed standards through voluntary practices (National Farm Animal Care Council recommendations) • Monitor trends and provide training to stay current and meet the latest requirements under the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle • Train employees on best practices for animal welfare
Major investments needed to meet standards	• Plan financing and structure debt with the Desjardins Agri Offer* • Take advantage of government assistance programs • Develop a plan to upgrade to current and future standards on a timeline aligned with upcoming deadlines

* Terms and conditions apply. Financing is subject to credit approval by Desjardins. The Desjardins Agri Offer may be modified or cancelled without notice. Contact your Desjardins account manager for more details.

Business transfer and succession

Transferring your business's *knowledge*, *assets* and *leadership*.

Challenge	Actions
Financial health of the business	• Optimize productive capacity • Identify drivers of productivity
Owner's vision and expectations during and after the transition	• Reflect on life after the farm and communicate expectations clearly • Plan for the owner's financial needs (Wealth Management) • Identify successors with the right qualities
Successor's vision	• Ensure the successor is experienced and has received proper training and support • Provide ongoing training on best practices • Consider business development based on agricultural assets
Human, financial, tax, legal and management aspects of the transfer	• Plan the transfer 5 to 10 years in advance with agricultural, financial, tax and legal advisors
Preparing farm assets (land, quota, livestock) for succession	• Take advantage of government assistance and succession programs: directory of resources and programs for the next generation of farmers (in French only) • Access quota loans for young farmers through Les Producteurs de lait du Québec[2] (in French only) • Adapt the financing structure

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2021, 83% of young dairy farmers took established themselves through a family transfer.[3]

The Desjardins business transfer team

Support every step of the way:

1. Reflection 2. Planning 3. Transaction 4. Transition

Learn how our farm succession solutions can help:
Young farmers – Desjardins

Water management and quality

Water management—a pillar of climate resilience

Shortages of potable water and declining groundwater levels highlight the importance of securing access to water to reduce risks for farms. Optimizing water management can strengthen resilience against future costs related to potable water and well drilling and support sustainable production in the face of climate uncertainties.[4, 5]

Challenge	Actions
Compliance with regulations on watercourse contamination[6]	• Create riparian buffer zones • Manage effluents: storage methods (location, duration), compliant spreading plans • Reduce chemical inputs • Treat wash water • Control erosion: permanent cover crops, controlled drainage
Water use[7]	• Keep cows cool to reduce their water requirements • Maintain water systems to prevent leaks • Reuse cooling and wash water

Adapting to climate change

The impact of climate change on dairy production

Climate change is causing greater swings in average temperatures and more frequent extreme weather events, which are directly impacting herd health. Heat stress can affect cows' productivity, fertility, susceptibility to disease and metabolic function.[8]

Challenge	Actions
Rising temperatures	• Improve and modernize infrastructure • Optimize climate management to limit temperature fluctuations in buildings
More frequent extreme weather events	• Improve soil health to boost resilience[9] • Stay informed about financial assistance available for extreme weather events • Stay informed about financial aid for adopting soil management practices[10] • Participate in savings programs like Agri-Québec and AgriInvest** • Participate in crop insurance and income stabilization programs**

** Subject to the terms and conditions of these programs. For more details, visit La Financière agricole du Québec (in French only).

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Canada's dairy industry is aiming to be carbon-neutral by 2050

There's mounting pressure to lower greenhouse gas emissions, driven by national climate policies and growing expectations from consumers and big players in the agri-food industry.

Major sources of emissions	Actions
Methane from enteric digestion	• Optimize cow diets to reduce enteric fermentation • Manage forage effectively (harvest, storage, rations) • Monitor herd health • Select cows genetically (methane index[11])
Field production	• Manage soil health and carbon sequestration potential • Optimize nitrogen fertilizer use • Reduce machinery passes in the field
Manure management	• Manage manure types • Use effective storage methods • Optimize field application methods and timing
Energy use	• Choose suitable energy sources • Improve energy efficiency • Maintain infrastructure to ensure quality

DID YOU KNOW?

Agriculture is one of the few sectors that has the natural potential to capture greenhouse gases. The soil on farmland can transform farms into important carbon sinks.[12]

How can these actions help protect your business's future and boost profitability?

Animal welfare practices can influence the number of lactations, extend herd longevity and increase milk production per cow, leading to lower replacement costs and directly improving profit margins.

Optimal nutrition can increase milk production per cow, improve the profitability of the business and reduce the carbon footprint per kilogram of milk.

Improving infrastructure and cow comfort reduces disease risk and promotes higher milk production.

Better energy management helps adapt to temperature fluctuations while reducing the impact on electricity costs. Diversifying energy sources decreases vulnerability to rising costs.

Optimizing nitrogen fertilizer use can be an effective way to reduce production costs.

TEAMS DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

Sustainable financing

Specialized sustainability support for agricultural businesses
Desjardins members have access to a team of sustainability professionals.
Email financementdurable@desjardins.com for more information.

Financing and loans for agricultural businesses*

No matter your sector of activity or the size of your farm, our account managers are well equipped to provide financing solutions tailored to your needs. The Desjardins Agri Offer* lets you optimize your financing solutions with a structured, long-term approach.

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Sources:

1. Assessing materiality helps identify the most significant ESG challenges and allows businesses to align their strategies with stakeholder expectations.
2. Selon les conditions et modalités applicables du programme, géré par les Producteurs de lait du Québec.
3. MAPAQ (2023). Portrait de la relève agricole établie dans le secteur laitier
4. Radio-Canada (2025). « Il va manquer d'eau dans plein d'endroits si on continue comme ça »
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6. Dairy Farmers of Canada. Water Use in the Canadian Dairy Industry.
7. Dairy Farmers of Canada. Managing Water Use on the Farm | Dairy Farmers of Canada.
8. Agriclimat.
9. Parent-Bouchard, É. (2025). Des sols plus résilients pour affronter les défis à venir. La Terre de chez nous.
10. FADQ (2025). Guide des normes reconnues par la financière agricole en matière de pratiques culturales 2026.
11. Le producteur de lait québécois (2024). Réduire les émissions de méthane par la génétique
12. Université Laval (2023). Les sols comme solution climatique en agriculture.

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