

FACTS ABOUT THE WASHINGTON DAIRY INDUSTRY

- There are approximately 460 dairy farms and 251,000 dairy cows in Washington (2010). The average herd size is 545 cows per farm.
- Washington ranks 10th in total milk production among the 50 United States (2010). Total milk production exceeded 5,901,000,000 pounds or over 684,570,000 gallons (2010), an increase of 6.1% from 2009 production levels.
- Washington ranks 3rd in milk production per cow in the 50 United States (2010). The average Washington cow produced 23,510 pounds (or 2,727 gallons) of milk in 2010. The U.S. national average production per cow was 21,149 pounds (or 2,453 gallons) in 2010.
- Dairy foods constitute the 2nd largest agricultural commodity produced in Washington, with a direct economic impact valued at \$950 million. Additional, indirect economic effects boost the total value of dairy farming to Washington's economy to more than \$2.3 billion (2010).
- Dairy farms can be found in 29 of Washington's 39 counties. Whatcom Co. has the largest number, with 131 dairies and 42,000 cows. Jefferson, Kittitas, Okanogan and Walla Walla counties have the smallest number of dairies – 1 each. Yakima Co. – with 71 dairies and 95,000 cows – is one of the largest dairy-producing counties in the nation (2010).
- Washington dairy farms with more than 500 cows constitute 17% of all dairies; however, they produce 77% of Washington's total milk. Farms with 200-499 cows constitute 15.9% of all dairies and produce 16% of Washington's milk. Farms with 100-199 cows constitute 12.2% of all dairies and produce 4.8% of Washington's milk. Farms with 50-99 cows constitute 8.5% of all dairies and produce 1.6% of Washington's milk. Farms with 30-49 cows constitute 2.4% of all dairies and produce 0.2% of Washington's milk. Farms with 1-29 cows constitute 44% of all dairies and produce 0.4% of Washington's milk (2007 – *most recent figures available*).
- There are 41 certified organic dairies in Washington with about 16,000 cows (6.5% of the state herd); 3 additional dairies are transitioning to organic status (2009). Consumer demand for organic milk is relatively high in Washington compared with the rest of the nation. In Seattle, organic milk represents 11.2% of all milk sales (#2 in the U.S.). In Spokane, organic milk represents 5.8% of all milk sales (#14 in the U.S.). Nationwide, organic milk constitutes about 5.8% of all milk sales (2011).
- The first cows came to Washington in 1838. Today, all seven of the major dairy cow breeds – Holsteins, Jerseys, Guernseys, Ayrshires, Brown Swiss, Milking Shorthorns and Dutch Belted – can be found in Washington. Holsteins – with their familiar black-and-white hide markings – are the most common breed, as is the case throughout the U.S.
- Cow's milk is composed of protein, carbohydrate, water-soluble vitamins, minerals and water (in fact, it is 87% water). It is especially rich in calcium, Vitamin D, riboflavin and phosphorus. It is also an important source of protein, Vitamin B-12, potassium, niacin and Vitamin A. USDA's 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends three cups of low-fat or fat-free dairy products daily for people 9 years and older.