

First District Association

Who We Are

First District Association is a dairy cooperative that manufactures wholesome dairy production from high quality milk supplied from our family farms located in Minnesota.

Facts

- 580 Family Farms spread across 46 counties in MN
- 230 Dedicated Employees
- \$1 Billion Annual Revenue
- 48,500 MT Protein & Lactose Exports
- US Dairy Stewardship Adopter
- \$200 million invested in 2021
- \$50 million upcoming investment in wastewater project

The Ask

We seek \$20 million in funding support for our wastewater pretreatment and renewable energy project.

Wastewater Pretreatment Project



- ✓ \$50 Million Project
- ✓ Creates Renewable Energy
- ✓ Meets MPCA Compliance
- ✓ Commitment to Sustainability

First District Association is an independent dairy cooperative that maximizes returns for its producers and employees through innovation and by providing superior quality products to a global market. The cooperative has been in operation for over one hundred years and has had a recent three-part expansion and recently completed a 200-million-dollar expansion to process 7.5 million pounds of milk per day. This expansion included a new drive through, eight bay milk receiving facility, an expansion of the lactose plant and a brand-new cheese plant.

Every day, dairy farmers impact the land, water, and air we all share. But as good environmental stewards, they have always innovated and adopted new practices and technologies to produce the same amount of food using fewer natural resources, yet still provide all the same great nutrition. This wastewater pretreatment project will align our manufacturing plant with the same values of our dairy farmer owners, allowing us to leave this land better than we found it.

History

Since 1921, First District Association has been a leader in Minnesota's dairy industry, fostering growth, innovation, and environmental responsibility. Over the decades, we have maintained a strong partnership with the City of Litchfield, collaborating closely to establish wastewater solutions that support our expanding operations. In preparation for our new plant, we worked with the city to ensure a wastewater plan was in place; however, the new facility has exceeded its anticipated discharge limits. As we continue to evolve, we remain committed to responsible and sustainable practices that benefit both our farmers and our community.

"At First District Association, we remain mindful that the decisions we make as a business, positively impact the environment, our customers, local communities, and employees."

Project Need

To sustain and strengthen Minnesota's dairy industry, we seek support for a critical \$50 million wastewater pretreatment project. Our organization has been the backbone of Minnesota's dairy industry since 1921, and in 2021 we invested over \$200 million into a new, state-of-the-art plant to expand production capacity and serve Minnesota farmers. However, with increased production, the new plant has exceeded expected wastewater discharge limits, necessitating immediate action to ensure compliance and environmental stewardship.

In 2023, we received a \$5 million grant from the state of Minnesota, demonstrating significant support for this endeavor, and narrowly missed a \$10 million grant in 2024. Continued investment in this project is essential for sustaining our operations, supporting local dairy farmers, and upholding our commitment to sustainable practices. We ask for support in funding this project, which is pivotal not only for our organization but for the resilience and growth of Minnesota's dairy industry as a whole.

Project Overview

Our goal is to design, construct, and implement a Wastewater Pretreatment Plant using a Low-Rate Anaerobic Digester to efficiently treat waste from our cheese plant. This facility aims to significantly reduce the environmental impact of our operations by capturing methane from the digestion process to generate electricity or produce renewable natural gas. By pre-treating wastewater before discharge, we will ensure compliance with local environmental standards, support the Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) in maintaining operations within its design capacities, and contribute to sustainable energy solutions within our community.

