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National Pork Board carbon footprint project

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In June 2008, the 15-member National Pork Board concluded that determining the carbon footprint of U.S. pork production is a significant emerging issue. The board directed Pork Checkoff staff to evaluate this issue in order to define the baseline carbon footprint of U.S. pork production and identify opportunities and challenges, from which solutions that are ethically grounded, scientifically verifiable and economically viable can be implemented.

There are three primary motivating factors behind the call for this project.

Identify areas where greater efficiencies may be possible in pork production operations that can lead to improved economic performance. This project will aid in identifying those areas for the industry as a whole and provide a tool that producers can use to identify areas specific to their farms.

A growing segment of customers are looking for products produced in sustainable ways as determined by the overall environmental impact of the production process. This project can help align the pork industry with that customer base.

Pork producers in the U.S. have a history of commitment to practicing good stewardship of natural resources and the environment and caring for their community. This project is an extension of that commitment and caring.

The means for determining pork's carbon footprint is through life-cycle assessment methodologies involving three distinct tasks.

1. Review available literature and information on energy use and emissions at pork production facilities.
2. Complete a "scan level" life-cycle assessment of energy use and emissions across the entire pork chain including feed-crop production, feed formulation, swine production, transportation, meat processing and retail components.
3. Complete a detailed life-cycle assessment of the swine production component.

