



CUMBERLAND VALLEY RAIL TRAIL



Dairy Industry in the Cumberland Valley

Dairy Industry: The land you see before you is not just some of the most beautiful scenery in the state, it is also key to Pennsylvania's leading industry: Agriculture. The largest component of the state agricultural industry is the dairy industry, which makes up close to 42% of the state's agricultural economy.

In 2009 Pennsylvania was ranked fifth in the nation in total milk production, providing over 40,000 jobs in the state. This is achieved with comparatively small herds of cattle which support many small family farms. For example, Pennsylvania dairy farmers have an average herd size of 74 cows per herd. In California, the average is 1,050 cows per farm operation!

In addition to providing us with fresh, high-quality dairy products, dairy farmers provide over 1,800 jobs in the county. Dairy farmers also invest heavily in the county; much of what they purchase to operate their farms is bought locally. Finally, we can thank our local dairy farmers for the role they play in helping to preserve the scenic, rural beauty of our region.

Cumberland County Dairy Data (2007)

- 16,600 head of cattle
- 300 million pounds of milk produced (enough to supply a half-million people)
- total dairy revenue over \$70 million (approximately 85% is reinvested locally)
- over 1,800 local jobs

Silos and silage: As you look north toward North Mountain you will see numerous silos of working farms. These silos exist for one reason: To store "silage" for the dairy cattle. Silage is high-moisture fodder (usually hay and corn stalks) that is used to feed cattle



when field pasturing is not available, such as during dry spells and during the winter months. Modern silos are often made of concrete and, when filled with silage, are kept air-tight so that the silage can become slightly fermented, improving its nutritional content as feed. See how many silos you can spot from this location.



Silos on the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail near Bull's Head Rd. (mile 8.4).

Image credit: CVRTC photo gallery



In addition to dairy farms, the Cumberland Valley is also home to a number of beef cattle operations. These beef cows are being raised on a farm located just north of Newville, PA.

Image credit: Don Kovacs

These local dairy cattle are a mix of Holsteins (black-and-white), Jerseys (brown) and a few crossbreeds. Blending milk from different breeds provides a richer milk with a better flavor, making it ideal for cheese production.

Image credit: Mark Fulton, Fulton's Dairy

