



NUTRITION RESEARCH FUNDING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Updated September 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

[Dairy Farmers of Canada](#) (DFC) is a non-profit organization, funded by dairy farmers across Canada and representing Canada's 10,000 dairy farms. Our organization plays a leadership role on behalf of the industry in several important areas, including funding and support of research in dairy production and in human nutrition and health. DFC has a long-standing commitment (over 30 years) of investing in dairy research to drive innovation and ensure a sustainable future for the sector.

DFC's investments in science are guided by the [2022-2027 National Dairy Research Strategy](#). The strategy was developed through extensive consultations involving a broad range of stakeholders from the scientific community and industry and resulted in the identification of targeted outcomes and research priorities under three areas: dairy farm sustainability; animal health, care and welfare; and dairy in human nutrition and health.

DFC's Nutrition Research Funding Program ("**Program**") aims to support scientific research in the areas of nutrition, health, food science and sustainable diets, in relation to dairy products, in order to generate new knowledge and innovations to the benefits of the dairy sector and all Canadians.

DFC has adopted a peer-review system and a funding application process similar to those of major granting agencies (e.g., NSERC and CIHR).

II. RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The objective of the Program is to gain a better understanding of the specific role of dairy products in attaining and maintaining optimal health as well as their contribution in a sustainable diet. DFC considers proposals that have nutrition and health implications for Canadian dairy products and are relevant to Canadian dairy farmers.

Of specific interest to DFC are proposals which feature dairy products in their entirety (particularly milk, cheese and yogurt, including regular fat versions), demonstrate technological innovation and utilize a multidisciplinary approach, whenever possible, to address fundamental and applied research questions. Applied human randomized controlled trials and mechanistic studies in humans are of particular interest.

Please note that studies that refer to or involve the potential for a health claim should ensure compliance with Health Canada's Guidance Document for scientific substantiation of health claims. For more details, please consult Health Canada's website at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/claims-reclam/assess-evalu/index-eng.php>

Please refer to the Appendix for our latest research priorities.

III. ELIGIBILITY

Investigators proposing to undertake studies relevant to human nutrition and health addressing at least one of the research priorities and who hold an academic appointment in a Canadian university or affiliated institution, or a federal research centre (a "**Research Institution**") are eligible to apply to the Program. Non-Canadian researchers could be considered as co-investigators or collaborators.

The principal investigator (the "**Principal Investigator**") is responsible for the complete direction of the approved study (the "**Study**") and other activities associated with its efficient execution. The role of the co-investigator(s) in the Study must be clearly defined. Students and trainees are normally not eligible to act as co-investigators.

A researcher cannot have two studies simultaneously under this Program for which he/she is the Principal Investigator. However, the same researcher can be co-investigator of no more than one additional study (as defined hereinafter).

Studies should, when possible, involve complementary teams of researchers from across Canada.

Commercial product research and development is not eligible.

IV. FUNDING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Under this Call for Proposals, the submission of a Letter of Intent (the "**Letter of Intent**") is the first step of the funding application process. Please consult the [website](#) for all information about the Program.

The Letter of Intent will be first reviewed by the Nutrition Expert Scientific Advisory Committee, an independent body of researchers. [DFC's Canadian Dairy Research Council](#) will make the final decision, based on the recommendations of the advisory committee, regarding the selection of Letters of Intent. Principal Investigators, whose Letter of Intent is retained will be invited to submit a Full Proposal ("**Proposal**").

The Proposals will be evaluated based on their overall presentation, clarity and soundness, scientific merit and technical feasibility, team expertise, training opportunities, knowledge translation and transfer opportunities, and realistic budget. The Proposals will first be subjected to an independent external peer review process. Based on the external peer reviews, the Nutrition Expert Scientific Advisory Committee will evaluate the Proposals and make recommendations. DFC's Canadian Dairy Research Council will make the final decisions regarding the Proposals. Decisions will be communicated to the Principal Investigators by early Fall. Expected start date of the studies is January 1st of following calendar year.

Approval of the Letter of Intent and/or the Proposal does not ensure Study funding *per se*. Approval is considered final upon signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (the "**Memorandum of Agreement**") (section VI).

In certain instances, studies of interest to DFC, that fall outside the established timelines, may be considered. In the interests of improved coordination and funding efficiency, DFC reserves the right to share Letters of Intent or Proposals with other research funders.

V. FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS

a) Letter of Intent

The Letter of Intent must be submitted on the Letter of Intent Form at dairyresearch@dfc-plc.ca by **December 1st, 2023**. The Form of the Letter of Intent can be found on the [website](#).

Please note: The same investigator can submit more than one Letter of Intent. However, regardless of how many Letters of Intent are approved, only one Proposal per Principal Investigator can be submitted for final review. Switching the names of Principal Investigator and co-investigators is not appropriate and may exclude the Letter of Intent or the Proposal.

The PDF Form provided for the Letter of Intent is self-explanatory and specifically designed to eliminate the need for additional supporting material to transmit relevant information (i.e., appendices or cover letter). **Additional pages will be removed from the Letter of Intent**

Form. Please also comply with the space and format limitations as presented in the Letter of Intent PDF Form. Do not use photo-reduced type. The **font size is Arial 11 points.**

Letters of Intent submitted in French will be translated for English reviewers; the Principal Investigator and/or their team may not review the translation.

b) Full Proposal

Upon approval of the Letter of Intent, DFC will provide a Full Proposal Form to be completed and submitted to dairyresearch@dfc-plc.ca by **April 8, 2024.**

Major change(s) from the Letter of Intent will not be permitted unless they had been indicated by the Nutrition Expert Scientific Advisory Committee. This could lead to the Proposal not being reviewed.

Guidelines for completing Proposals:

- Please comply with the space and format limitations as presented in the Full Proposal Form. Do not use photo-reduced type. The **font size is Arial 11 points.**
- **The body of the Full Proposal Form is self-contained and must not include additional pages and/or attachments other than tables and figures. Up to three manuscripts can be appended to the Full Proposal and must be relevant to the current proposed Study.**
- **CV for the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators**
A complete Curriculum Vitae for the Principal Investigator and each Co-Investigator, in the Canadian Common CV (CCV) format (CIHR or NSERC) or on the DFC CV Form (available upon request), must be appended to the Proposal.
- **Title of Study**
The title should be concise and provide a clear indication of the subject/topic of the proposed Study and reflect its main purpose. The title may be modified upon mutual agreement between DFC and the Principal Investigator.
- **Study Details**
In the Full Proposal Form, detailed information is required regarding background information; objectives and hypothesis; experimental approach; milestones; team expertise and training of highly qualified personnel; potential benefits and economic impact for the dairy sector; and knowledge translation and transfer activities. **Please note that power and sample size calculations must be provided** in the Proposal.

c) Budget Information

The funding under the Program is for a maximum of 2 years. The total amount requested from this Program can be up to \$150,000. For studies requiring more than \$150,000, it is strongly recommended that other sources be identified.

Detailed information about the financial requirements for the Study is to be provided as outlined below.

- **Personnel**
There are four categories of individuals who may be paid from the Program:
 1. Research personnel whose skills are required to conduct the Study;
 2. Technicians who are formally classified as such by their research institutions;

3. Graduate students (MSc and PhD); and
4. Postdoctoral fellows

Budget justification for personnel is to be included. DFC reserves the right to request further information regarding fringe benefits. Salaries for Principal Investigator and co-investigators are not eligible under the Program.

- **Major Equipment**

DFC does not provide equipment grants. However, in special cases where equipment is shown to be essential to the Study, DFC may, at its entire discretion, contribute to the purchase of major equipment upon request in writing from the Research Institution and/or Principal Investigator to such effect. Major equipment is considered a single item for which the price exceeds \$10,000.

- **Material and Supplies**

Expenditures include expendable materials, such as experimental animals and feed, chemicals, glassware and supplies for existing equipment and routine maintenance of existing equipment. Expenditures in excess of \$500 per article are to be itemized.

- **Publication and Publication Costs**

Publication of research results in a reputable, peer-reviewed scientific journal is encouraged. The choice of the journal for publishing results rests with the Principal Investigator. Primary consideration should be given to reputable Canadian or international journals with extensive readership in Canada. Publication costs **should not** be included in the budget.

Note 1: The invoice from the journal for costs related to the publication of a manuscript, should be sent to DFC no more than 18 months after the end of the Study (DFC does not usually pay for open-access publications). Subject always to the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement (as defined in section VI), a copy of manuscripts and/or abstracts which includes DFC funded Study should be sent to DFC prior to submitting for publication or presentation.

Note 2: Publications resulting from DFC's support should be acknowledged using the following statement: *This study was supported by Dairy Farmers of Canada. As per the research agreement, Dairy Farmers of Canada had no role in the design and conduct of the study, data collection, and analysis or interpretation of the results as well as the decision to publish the findings.*

- **Travel**

Travel to scientific meetings within Canada or pertinent meetings outside Canada to present research data obtained from the funded Study is encouraged. Travel costs may be either \$2,000 per annum or 10% of the budget, whichever is less.

- **Other Expenses**

Computer costs related to data analyses, reimbursement to Study subjects and other routine expenses incurred, as part of the funded Study are eligible. Expenditures in excess of \$500 per item are to be itemized.

- **Overhead Charges or Indirect Costs**

DFC will pay no overhead/indirect costs for DFC funded studies to the Research Institution, the Principal Investigator and/or the Co-investigator(s), as the case may be.

- **Unauthorized Expenses**

Consultant fees are not eligible unless prior written approval is given by DFC.

- **Transfer of Funds between Budget Categories**

Expenditures which exceed budgeted items are permitted provided the total annual budget does not change. Budget transfers in excess of 10% of budget category require the prior written approval from DFC.

d) Matching Funding/Other Sources of Funding

DFC encourages the Principal Investigator to get matching funds from federal funding agencies and/or from other sources. The funds that will be requested must be described in the Budget Section of the PDF Forms as well as the objectives/parts of the Study that will be funded by other sources. **Principal Investigators must have verified with the funding agencies if the Study complies with the research priorities and guidelines of the agency.**

Note that DFC is an eligible organization for Mitacs programs.

VI. MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The funding is to be used entirely for specific activities supervised by the Principal Investigator. Prior to initiation of the Study, a Memorandum of Agreement (available to view upon request) is entered into by and between the Principal Investigator, the Research Institution and DFC.

The Memorandum of Agreement defines the rights and obligations of the Principal Investigator, Research Institution and DFC, including without limitation:

- Principal Investigator and Research Institution's responsibilities in the conduct of the Study;
- Financial responsibilities of the parties with respect to the Study;
- Progress and final reports;
- Publication of the Study results;
- Intellectual property rights;
- Commercial use of the Study results; and
- Confidentiality.

In accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement, Research Institution and/or Principal Investigator grants DFC with a license to use the Study results for internal, non-commercial and research purposes; with a first option to negotiate an exclusive commercial licence to commercially exploit Study results; and with a right of first refusal to match any third-party offer to commercialize the Study results. In the event where DFC is not involved in the commercialization of the Study results, DFC shall earn a royalty based on the net profits generated by the Research Institution from the Study results; the percentage of the royalty would be determined prior to commercialization through good faith negotiations based on commercially reasonable terms.

VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Failure to complete and submit the Letter of Intent or the Full Proposal in the manner outlined in these guidelines may delay or preclude review by the Nutrition Expert Scientific Advisory Committee for funding by DFC. Deviations from the above guidelines will be allowed only if approved by DFC.

All inquiries for additional information pertaining to any of the above points should be directed to dairyresearch@dfc-plc.ca.

APPENDIX RESEARCH PRIORITIES

DFC considers those applications that have nutrition and health implications for Canadian dairy products and are relevant to Canadian dairy farmers. Of specific interest to DFC are research proposals which feature milk products in their entirety (particularly milk, cheese and yogurt, including regular fat versions), demonstrate technological innovation and utilize a multidisciplinary approach, whenever possible, to address fundamental and applied research questions. Applied human randomized, controlled trials and mechanistic studies in humans are of particular interest. Our current research priorities and areas of interest are as follows:

Targeted outcome: The contribution of dairy products as whole and unique foods in optimal health and wellness across the human lifespan is strengthened

Research priorities:

- Improve the understanding of the impact of dairy products on optimal growth and development in children and adolescents.
- Reinforce the benefits of dairy products in musculoskeletal health.
- Identify the effects of dairy products on healthy aging (particularly on preserving mobility, cognition and nutrient adequacy) in older age.
- Further define the role of dairy products in supporting healthy weight and body composition (including supporting satiety).
- Investigate the role of dairy products and milk components, amongst others A2 beta-casein, in a healthy gut, including intestinal integrity and digestibility, and on the microbiome.

Targeted outcome: The role of dairy products as whole and unique foods (particularly full fat milk, yogurt and cheese) in chronic disease prevention and management is reinforced

Research priorities:

- Identify the specific impact of including dairy products in healthy plant-based dietary patterns on various health outcomes.
- Further support the role of dairy products in cardiometabolic disease (CVD, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes) prevention and management.
- Contribute to build convincing evidence for the role of dairy products in colorectal cancer prevention.
- Expand the understanding of the role of dairy products in breast cancer prevention.

Targeted outcome: The value of dairy products as whole and unique foods within healthy sustainable diets in a Canadian context is further recognized

Research priorities:

- Identify the differential health effects and nutritional attributes of dairy products in relation to plant-based alternatives.
- Determine the value of dairy products within healthy sustainable diets in supporting nutrient adequacy, considering nutrient bioavailability and protein quality.
- Assess the effects of dairy products within healthy sustainable diets in a Canadian context taking into consideration the four key dimensions of healthy sustainable diets (human health and wellbeing, environmental impact, affordability, and cultural acceptability).