

Circularity and Its Role within Sustainable Feed Systems

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A circular economy seeks to design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use and regenerate natural systems. Waste reduction and food loss recovery via the utilization of coproducts and by-products has long been a component of the feed supply chain. The animal food industry is advancing strategies and innovations to help reduce the footprint of the food supply chain, but we must ensure mechanisms are in place to capture the needed accountability and traceability.

Circularity will continue to evolve as an indicator within the broader sustainability discussion. Relative to the biologic, interconnected and complex nature of food and agricultural systems, advancing our ability to assess those systems' circularity is paramount to gaining sustainability benefits of a circular economy. The use of coproducts and by-products in feed is one component of circularity opportunities in food and agricultural systems. Discussions are already framing the role our own diet choices can have on circularity as we work to reduce waste and further close the loop on our food supply.

Because of its position within the supply chain, animal food has an important role in helping reduce the environmental footprint of our downstream stakeholders. Yet, animal food ingredients and additives remain one of the least measured and documented sustainability components within the U.S. food supply chain. An effort is underway to change this with partners across the animal food value chain. With a mission to advance understanding and trust in a sustainable animal feed and pet food supply chain, the Institute for Feed Education and Research (IFEEDER) is collaborating with industry members and stakeholders on a multifaceted strategy to advance feed systems sustainability.

IFEEDER's [Sustainability Road Map](#) will help guide and equip industry members with tools and resources to develop and advance internal sustainability programs; respond to product stakeholder and transparency demands; communicate their sustainability stories to a variety of audiences; and align sustainability initiatives and strategies at field, farm, facility and association levels. The road map and the supporting [Feed Systems Sustainability Summit](#) are exposing barriers and opportunities to be pursued in support of industry and food supply chain sustainability efforts. And, its creating alignment with feed's stakeholders.

The value of coproduct and by-product use is a key element and story line that needs to be told and accounted for relative to feed, livestock and poultry production. Leaning in on the circulatory theme offers an opportunity to engage. It's important that we are achieving solutions through innovation and change, but we won't be able to take the deserved credit if we don't have a way to track it and trace it.