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UWRF researchers studying impact of robotic milking tech

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Two researchers at UW-River Falls have been awarded a $250,000 grant to explore the impacts of dairy farms adopting robotic milking technologies.

According to a release from the university, Luis Peña-Lévano and Shaheer Burney from UW-River Falls' Agricultural Economics Department will be working with other specialists from the University of Minnesota, University of Georgia, North Carolina State University and Texas A&M University.

Data will be collected through a survey of about 2,000 dairy farmers in Wisconsin in Minnesota early next year. Agricultural economics students will help develop the questionnaires and analyze results through the university's Survey Research Center.

"Our goal is to evaluate the feasibility of [automatic milking systems] from the financial, environmental and labor demand perspective," said Burney, who heads up the research center. "Ultimately, we are trying to answer the question: 'Do the long-term benefits of adopting AMS exceed the high up-front cost of installing such systems?'"

These systems can cost more than $200,000, the release shows. Along with an assessment of the return-on-investment for farmers, the research will also study the effect of these machines on animal welfare and the surrounding environment.

"Our goal, first and foremost, is to provide that information for Midwest farmers, but it will absolutely be applicable for dairy farmers across the country," Burney said.

The grant comes from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, which is funded by the USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture. UW-River Falls' research project is one of 14 nationally to receive funding out of 107 initial proposals.

The project is expected to be completed by October 2024.

See more project details:
https://www.uwrf.edu/News/UWRF-lands-grant-to-research-robotic-milking.cfm