

Dairy Stewardship Alliance

Center for Sustainable Agriculture

University of Vermont

EAAP 2008 25 August, 2008



Dairy Stewardship Alliance



Partners include:

Farmers

Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Univ. of Vermont Extension

Ben & Jerry's

St. Alban's Co-op

VT Agency of Agriculture

Agricultural Economics

Vermont Population 600,000 persons

Land Area 23,000 sq km

9,249 sq. mi.

Land in Farming .54 M Hectares/ 1.34 M acres

Farm & Food value \$2.54 Billion/ 1.64 Billion Euro

Total farms 6,571

Vermont ranks #1 in per capita Direct
Sales to consumers in the USA

Changes in Vermont dairies

- Dairy farms have decreased from over 6,700 in 1964 to less than 1,098 in 2008
- 90% of Vermont Dairy farms milk <199 cows
- Some projections indicate that by 2015, Vermont may have only 800 dairy farms.
With 50% being up to Organic

Research Background

- Question: Can we develop a comprehensive set of indicators of sustainable agriculture for dairy farmers
- Guidelines: Value added, easy to use, no cost and comprehensive
- Outcome: Self assessment that allows farmers to self evaluate the stewardship practices on their farm



Understanding the Self Assessment

- Sustainable dairy farming endeavors to protect the natural environment of the farm while striving for profitability and providing a high quality of life for farmers, their families and their community.



Goals

- To provide the Farmer, a self-assessment indicators to measure and evaluate
 - environmental,
 - social, and
 - Economic aspects
- To provide information and resources about sustainable dairy farming practices.



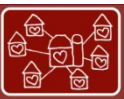
The 10 Indicators



Animal Husbandry



Biodiversity



Community Health



Energy



Financials



Nutrient Management



Organic (no questions,
simply informational)



Pest Management



Soil Health



Water Management



Initial Steps

- Establish set farmers and reserchers as advisors
- Trial farmers provided on-going feedback on the project and edited manual sections.
- Develop a database for organizing results.
- Identify changes in sustainable practices that could benefit the farm



Module Sections

- Higher number score for each indicator question reflects a greater level of “sustainability”
- Provide additional information about topic
- Relevance to other sections of the tool kit



How the Scoring Works

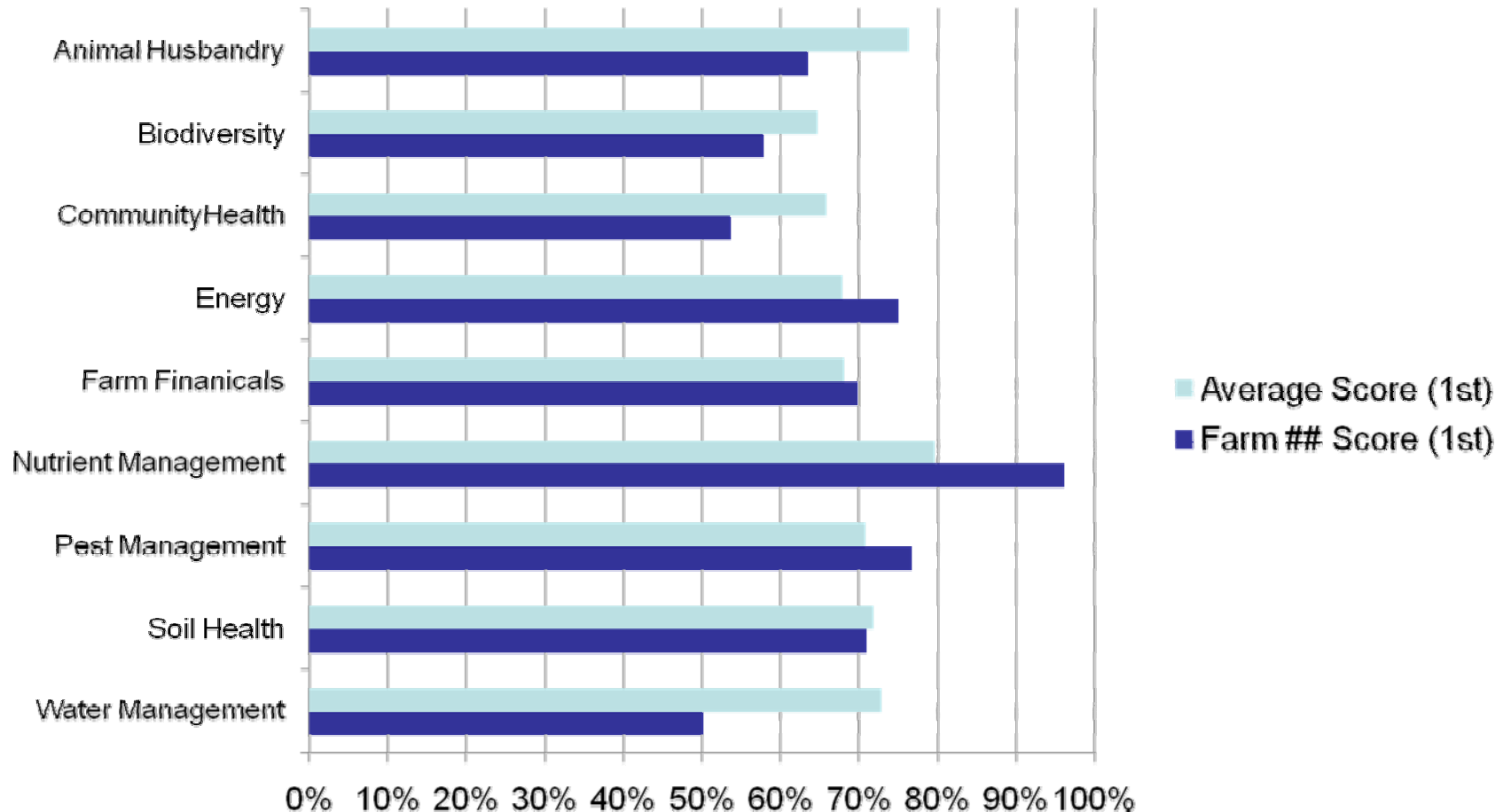
- “Traffic light” scoring system for each section
 - Green: high level of sustainable farming practices are being used
 - Yellow: some sustainable practices are in place, but there is room for improvement.
 - Red: There is significant opportunity for improvement to address sustainable practices
- Overall Farm Score related to all other farms



Data Results

- Specific farm information entered into the database.
- Confidential information includes farm specifics and individual farm results.
- Individual reports outline results from each question.
- Summary reports compare each farm's scores to average of all farms.

First Assessments - Overall Farm Average Performance vs Individual Farm ## Performance

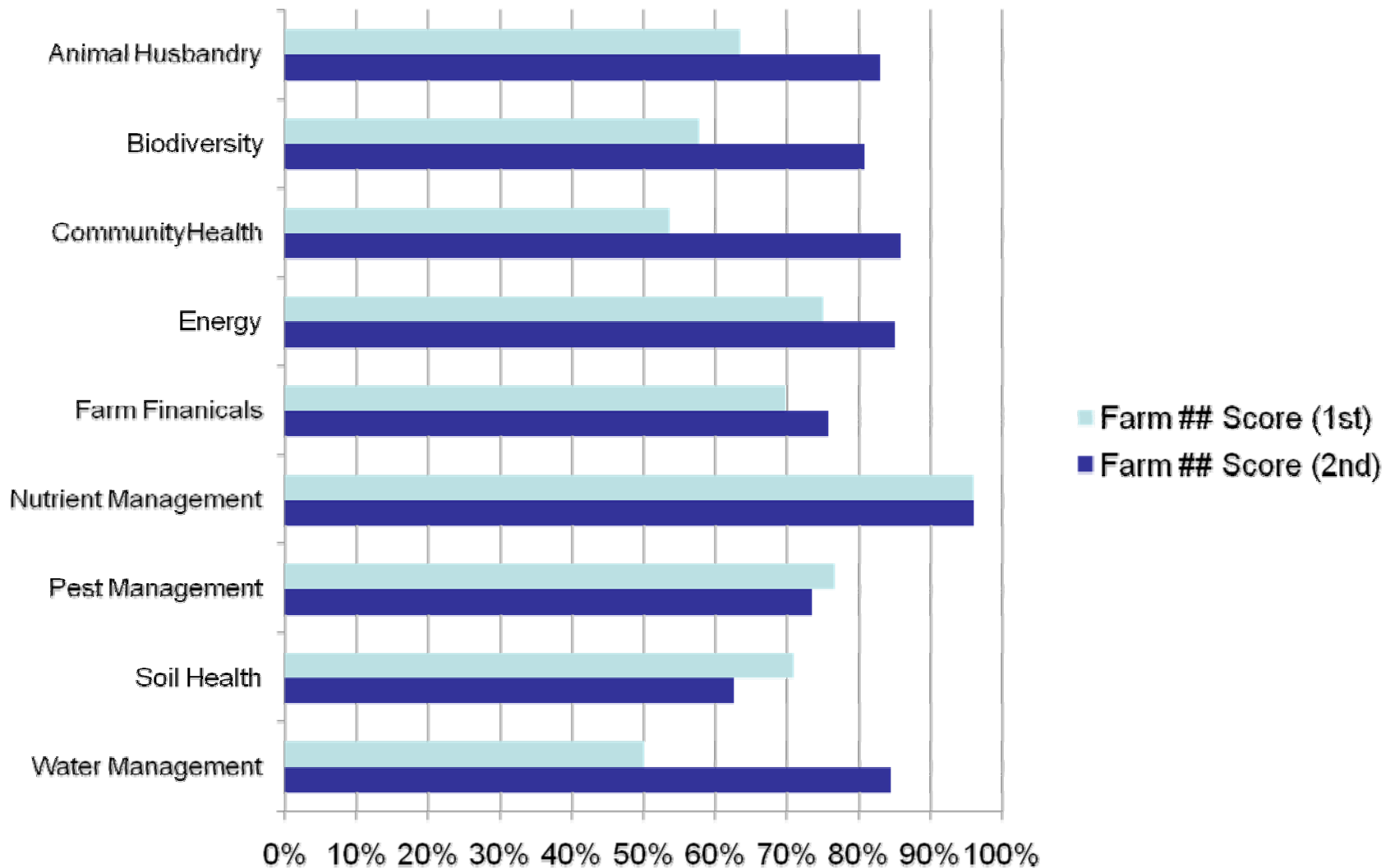




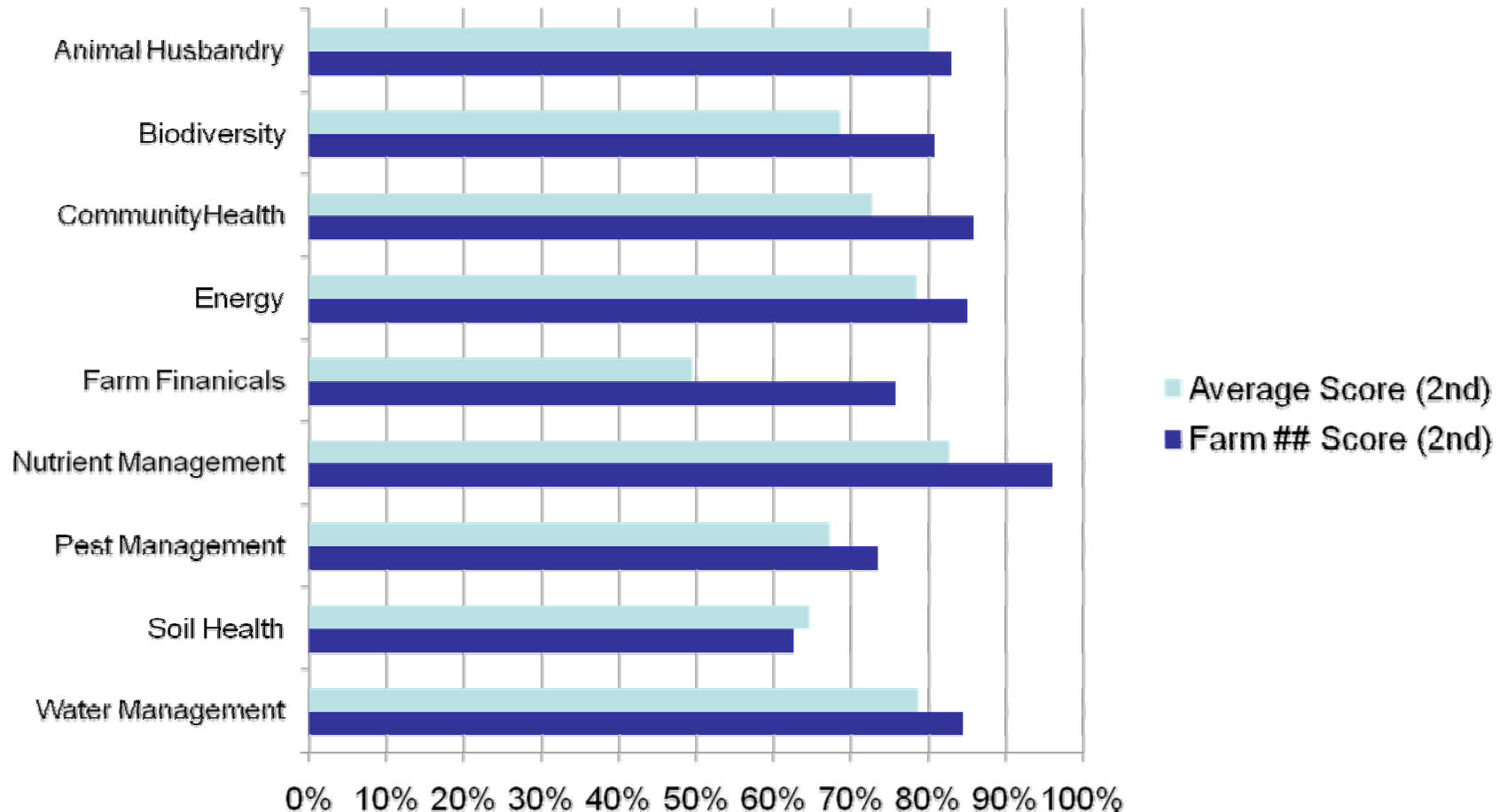
Sustainability Indicators

Farm Results

1st Assessment vs 2nd Assessment Farm ## Scores

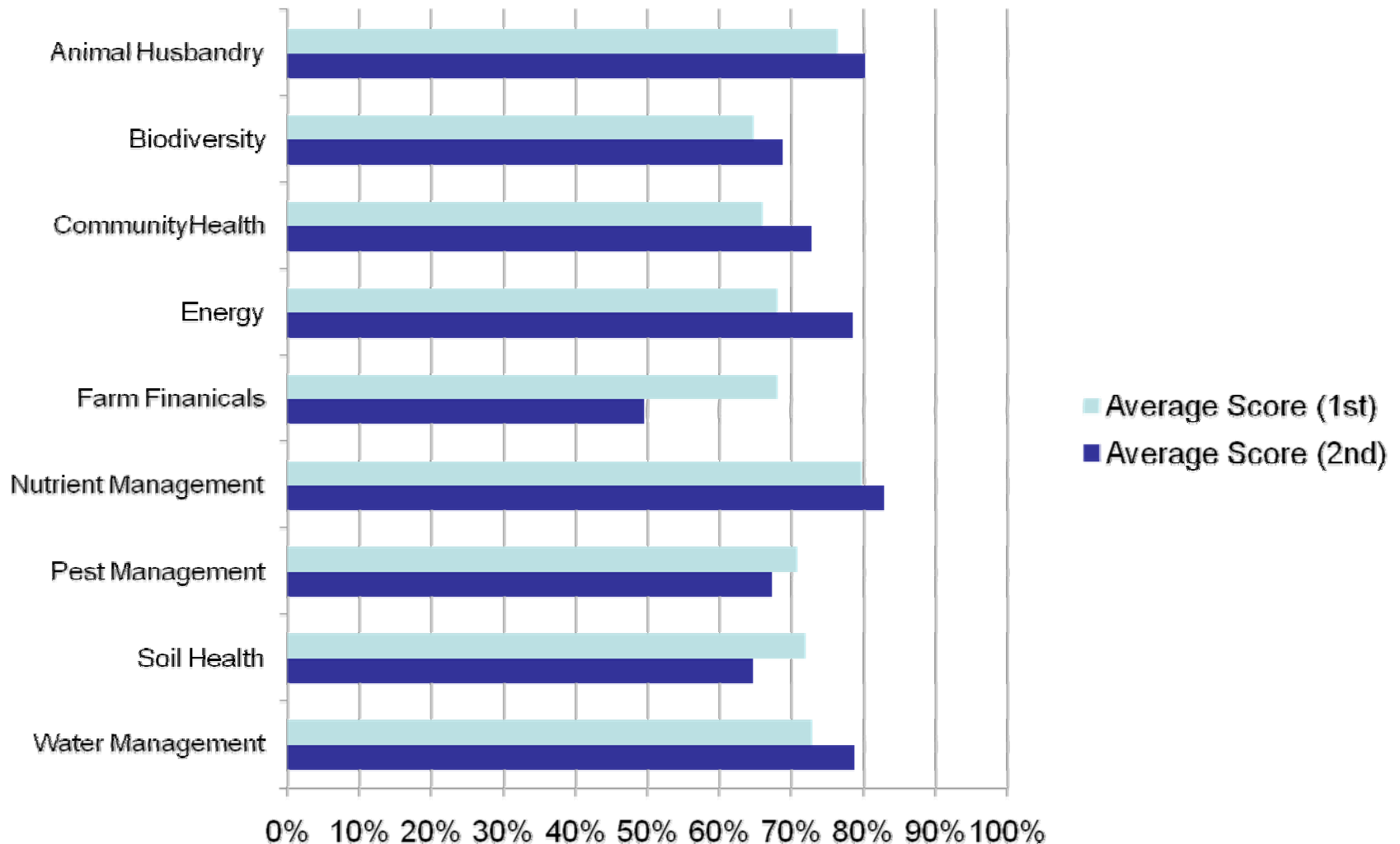


2nd Assessments - Overall Farm Average Performance vs Individual Farm ## Performance



Overall Average Farm Scores

1st Assessment vs. 2nd Assessment



Anticipated Benefits to Farms



- Broader understanding of sustainable practices
- Better understanding of Accepted Agricultural Practices (AAP)
- Expanded and targeted technical assistance
- Incentive payments for Stewardship

Recommendations

- Complete final “edit” based on information identified by farmers
- Assist farmers to identify opportunities for improvements
- Develop module for indicating “carbon footprint”
- Develop an on-line version of Sustainability Indicators
- Identify further benefits and incentives for farmers
- Engage other Researchers and Corporations in the use of Sustainability Indicators.

A special Thank you to our partners in The Netherlands
Caring Dairy Farmers
Ben & Jerry's Europe
Wageningen University
CONO Co-op

