

# **SION REPORT 2024-25**

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT JOE O'CONNOR



#### **DEAR FRIENDS,**

I used to think that a watering hole was just what it sounded like: a pond where grazing animals could get a drink. But on a visit to one of our grass-fed cattle producers in Tasmania this year, I discovered a lot more. A whole ecosystem had been drawn to the water's edge: birds like magpies and honey eaters, spiders and snakes (!) and butterflies.

This was what regenerative grazing looked like in real life, a world alive with hundreds of species, each doing their part to help build healthy soil. It was a world that Applegate's investment in regenerative agriculture had helped grow. I felt so lucky to have traveled halfway round the world to experience it.

You see, Applegate is a company obsessed with standards. For nearly 40 years, we've set a high bar for the use of antibiotics in livestock in our supply chain (none), animal welfare (no gestation crates, more space) and product integrity (more than 75 percent of our portfolio is free from the top nine allergens). And while standards are essential, they also can feel abstract and divorced from our everyday lives. The watering hole reminded me that standards change lives. The lives of the birds and the bugs and the cattle and lives of Annabel and Julian Von Bibra, whose family had run the ranch I was visiting for more than 100 years.

"Regenerative practices have the ability to deliver a more profitable and sustainable system, with much less risk," Julian told me. "Which is definitely the vision that Annabel and I have as family farmers."

As you'll see in this, our second Mission Report, Applegate's standards are having a real impact on people, animals and the planet. That success has helped us to expand our business, which in turn helps us to make it even bigger. It's a mission in action. And seeing is believing.

#### In solidarity,

#### Joe O'Connor

# **MISSION MATTERS**

### Applegate's mission has always been at the heart of our business.

Our founder, after all, was a reluctant carnivore, who couldn't resist delicious bacon (or ham or hot dogs). Nearly 40 years later, we're as determined as ever to produce meat Americans can feel good about eating and feeding their families.

How do we do it?

The most obvious example is our ever-growing portfolio of natural and organic meats with strict animalwelfare standards. This includes our new certified regenerative beef hot dogs that hit shelves this year!

But if there's one thing we've learned, it's that we can't make change alone. Applegate is committed to investing in and empowering farmers, ranchers, environmental and nutrition advocates and, of course, our employees.

Only by working together can we build the food system that serves and sustains us all.



# **CHANGING THE MEAT WE EAT®**



Applegate Farms founded "No Antibiotics Ever"

2002

Launches first widely available certified organic deli meat



2006

#### Introduces THE GREAT ORGANIC UNCURED BEEF HOT DOG<sup>™</sup> product made from 100%

arass-fed beef

Advocates for the removal of antibiotics in agriculture, five vears before FDA puts limits in place\*

2012

## IT NNI22

2016 2013 Launches the Sources 100% Signs on to Applegate awarded **DO GOOD DOG** 2025 of beef for its the Better Chicken the Good Chicken 2024 hot dog, Applegate's first all-beef hot dogs Commitment Transitions to 100% Award from product sourced from from certified grass-fed beef Compassion in beef raised on certified regenerative farms World Farming regenerative farms

> \*prnewswire.com/news-releases/applegate-praises-court-for-ordering-fda-toaddress-antibiotics-in-food-animal-production-144011656.html

# **OUR PROMISES**

At Applegate, we're always working to do better, but our commitment to high standards is always the same. We don't use artificial ingredients, and our meat comes from farms that meet the Applegate Humanely Raised\* standard.

What does this look like? All partner farms must be certified by a trusted third-party animal welfare organization. We also have an inhouse animal-science team that visits farms regularly. Our rules ban the use of antibiotics in our supply chain, forbid gestation crates and require more space and enrichments to allow animals to express their natural behaviors.

#### It's all part of our mission: Changing The Meat We Eat<sup>®</sup>.

\*Animals raised with space to engage in natural behaviors and promote natural growth.



NO ARTIFICIAL INGREDIENTS

## CHANGING THE MEAT WE EAT®

#### NO SYNTHETIC NITRATES OR NITRITES

VEGETARIAN OR 100% GRASS-FED DIETS



NO ANTIBIOTICS, HORMONES OR GROWTH PROMOTANTS



# **OUR IMPACT**



<sup>1</sup> NielsenIQ (Total US xAOC, 52 w/e 5/24/25)

<sup>2</sup> "High welfare" means the farms are audited for humane animal care that meets the standards set forth by the Global Animal Partnership or Certified Humane third-party humane animal standards

<sup>3</sup> Impact projected from Ecotone Analytics, 2025. See appendix for details.

<sup>4</sup> NielsenIQ data based on retail dollar sales for Applegate FY '24, the 52-week period ending 10/26/24

# OUR IMPACT

In March 2024, we set an ambitious goal to source 100% of the beef used in our award-winning beef hot dogs from certified regenerative\* farms by the end of 2025. Our hope: to help transition 6 million acres of farmland.

We did it and then some.

#### •

Applegate's role in converting 10 million acres to Regenerative Organic Certified® ranch land is a gamechanging milestone — accelerating the adoption of regenerative organic practices that benefit farmers, animals and ecosystems worldwide.

- Christopher Gergen, CEO Regenerative Organic Alliance

\*Livestock raised on farmland is verified for implementing regenerative practices and tracking ecological outcomes. applegate.com/regenerative-agriculture

## NEARLY **2X** THE ACREAGE IN HALF THE TIME

GOAL SET: MARCH 2024 6 MM ACRES

GOAL EXCEEDED: MARCH 2025 10.8MM ACRES\*\*

\*\*Acreage within the Applegate supply chain that is certified regenerative. Regenerative acreage may be utilized for various production practices, such as grazing or hay production, and conservation practices, such as creating habitat buffers around waterways and keeping acres out of production for restoration. Applegate purchases grass-fed beef trim from cattle that grazed on regenerative acres.



# WHERE WE'RE GOING

Our mission drives our business. In 2023, we set three-year goals for each of our four mission pillars: **People, Environmental Sustainability, Ingredient Integrity and Animal Welfare.**  Every decision, every day must help us meet these essential goals. Let's take a look at the progress we made so far.



Goal:

Foster inclusivity, respect and a celebration of diverse perspectives across our business.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL** SUSTAINABILITY

Goal: Reduce our climate impact and promote land health.

#### INGREDIENT INTEGRITY

Goal:

Increase our offerings of nutrientdense, allergen-conscious and simple-ingredient products.

#### ANIMAL WELFARE

Goal: Continue leadership with Applegate Humanely Raised\* standards.



\*applegate.com/mission/animal-welfare

PEOPLE

#### **GOAL:**

## FOSTER INCLUSIVITY, RESPECT, AND A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ACROSS OUR BUSINESS.

Our employees work at Applegate because they believe in our mission. We work hard to breathe life into it each day, ensuring that as we grow our business, all voices are heard and every employee has a pathway to success.

To serve their communities, every Applegate employee is granted one day of paid time off to volunteer per year. We also offer a quarterly mission speaker series, employee lunches and our Share the Love prize trip, which provides an opportunity for mission-driven employees to experience our animal-welfare standards at work.

## **APPLEGATE WORKFORCE**



# PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES 38% WITH 10+ YEARS

# ENVIRONMENTAL Sustainability

#### **GOAL**:

#### REDUCE OUR CLIMATE IMPACT AND PROMOTE LAND HEALTH.

We believe healthy soil is the foundation for a thriving ecosystem. And with regenerative\* grazing, animals can do their part to enrich the soil: helping to reduce erosion, boost biodiversity and, over time, sequester carbon.

As of March 2025, 100% of the beef for our APPLEGATE® beef hot dogs comes from certified regenerative farms, a commitment that helped to transition 10.8 million acres.

By helping to scale up regenerative agriculture, we're doing our part to make products we can all feel good about.

\*Livestock raised on farmland is verified for implementing regenerative practices and tracking ecological outcomes. applegate.com/regenerative-agriculture

## **POSITIVE IMPACT ONE BITE AT A TIME**\*\*





# ENVIRONMENTAL Sustainability

#### **GOAL**:

#### REDUCE OUR CLIMATE IMPACT AND PROMOTE LAND HEALTH.

It's a central tenet of good business that you can only manage what you measure. For the second year in a row, we've worked tirelessly to quantify our environmental impacts, especially on the soil. In partnership with Ecotone Analytics, we've estimated how our support of organic production has reduced the use of synthetic pesticides and nitrogen fertilizers, how grass-fed beef production has helped to reduce erosion.

## **POSITIVE CHANGE** STARTS AT THE GROUND LEVEL\*



\*This shows the estimated social, environmental, and economic benefits from Applegate's Humanely Raised, Animals raised with No Antibiotics Ever, Organic, and Grass-Fed Beef standards across Applegate's value chain. This analysis was undertaken to estimate these potential social benefits and to whom these benefits may accrue, based on the best available scientific evidence.

Disclaimer: The environmental assessment addresses the estimated impact measurement and management systems, practices and metrics employed by the impact assessment consultants. It does not address financial performance and is not a recommendation to invest in these practices.



# INGREDIENT INTEGRITY

#### GOAL:

#### INCREASE OUR OFFERINGS OF NUTRIENT-DENSE, ALLERGEN-CONSCIOUS, SIMPLE-INGREDIENT PRODUCTS.

Applegate has always aimed to feed the many, not the few. In 2024, we were bigger and better than ever, reaching more households with more organic and allergen-conscious products. We worked with our network of almost 1,000 dietitians to highlight how APPLEGATE<sup>®</sup> products can support a healthy lifestyle.

In 2024, we joined the Nutrient Density Alliance, which is working to ignite awareness of the nutritional benefits of regenerative agriculture. Applegate is also conducting a groundbreaking study of the impact of 100 percent grass-fed, regenerative organic beef on human health.

\*USDA Certified Organic and Non-GMO Project Verified.

35%+ OF PRODUCTS ORGANIC/ NON-GMO\*









#### 75%+ OF PRODUCTS FREE FROM THE TOP NINE ALLERGENS

# ANIMAL WELFARE

## GOAL:

## CONTINUE LEADERSHIP WITH APPLEGATE HUMANELY RAISED STANDARDS.

Applegate Humanely Raised helped to set the bar for high animal-welfare standards\*, and we are always learning.

Our new animal welfare steering committee, including the world-renowned Dr. Temple Grandin, advises Applegate on new research and provides guidance on implementing new technologies and practices to help improve animal health.

Today, 100% of Applegate's processing facilities are third-party audited for animal welfare, a significant milestone in building transparency and accountability. In 2024, Applegate was awarded the prestigious Good Chicken Award from Compassion in World Farming.

\*applegate.com/mission/animal-welfare

## **STEERING COMMITTEE**



DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN Professor of Animal Science, Colorado State University



DR. KURT VOGEL Director, Humane Handling Institute Professor - Animal Welfare and Behavior, University of Wisconsin River Falls



TIM TOLIVER Corporate Manager Fresh Meats QA & Animal Handling, Hormel Foods



DR. MICHELLE KROMM DVM, MPH, MAM, DIPLOMATE ACPV Principal at Food Forward, LLC

## OUR Partnerships

At Applegate, we bring people together, build coalitions, nurture communities and are always on the hunt for new ways to strengthen the food system.

That's why we **invest** in small livestock farmers who do things differently, and in research that illuminates how farming practices impact nutrition. It's why we support non-profits that are working to **preserve** the planet. It's why we work to **empower** a new generation of thoughtful eaters.

In 2024, we invested \$295,000 in non-profits, research and advocacy organizations to help build a better food system for all.

Learn more about them ... next.



## INVEST BRIGHTER FUTURE FUND

The American Farmland Trust's **Brighter Future Fund** is a program that grants farmers and ranchers up to \$5,000 each to create more resilient and regenerative systems on their farms.

In 2024, Applegate supported 10 ranchers across the United States, helping them make the investments and changes that were most important to them, whether that was transitioning from conventional to pastured livestock systems, serving Native American communities or teaching a new generation of farmers about regenerative practices.

# 9500+APPLICATIONSFROM ALL 50 STATESAD TWO FERRITORIES



## **PRESERVE** REGENERATIVE ORGANIC CERTIFIED®

# 10 MILLION MORE ACRES

**Regenerative Organic Certified® (ROC)** is a powerful certification that promotes soil health, animal welfare and social fairness. Applegate's commitment to regenerative grazing is helping to bring it to scale.

By sourcing all beef for our award-winning beef hot dogs from certified regenerative farms\*, we helped add **10 million more acres** to the ROC<sup>™</sup> program. Our efforts tripled the number of acres certified under ROC<sup>®</sup>.

PROVIDING FAIR CONDITIONS FOR ALL FARMERS, RANCHERS INCREASING WORKERS **BIODIVERS** Regenerative Organic **Certified** ENSURING THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS IN PASTURE-BASED

\*Livestock raised on farmland verified for implementing regenerative practices and tracking ecological outcomes.

\*\*regenorganic.org/roc-standard

## EMPOWER Foodcorps

What we eat has real, and sometimes surprising, impact on animals, the planet and human health. Consumers who know where food comes from, how it's grown and how it helps fuel our bodies are empowered to make change.

At Applegate, we invest in education through partners like **FoodCorps,** a national service organization that works in classrooms, gardens and cafeterias to teach students about the power of food. In 2024, we contributed \$50,000 to support FoodCorps in disadvantaged areas in Applegate's home state of New Jersey, including the cities of Newark and Camden. Our donation also supports FoodCorps' 2030 goal to provide America's 50 million students with access to food education and nourishing, free meals. SCHOOL GARDENS SUPPORTED BY FOODCORPS MEMBERS: 10



NUMBER OF TASTE TESTS DONE WITH STUDENTS TO HELP THEM TRY NOURISHING NEW FOODS: 566

TOTAL NUMBER OF NEW JERSEY STUDENTS REACHED BY FOODCORPS MEMBERS: 21,725



NUMBER OF HANDS-ON FOOD EDUCATION LESSONS TAUGHT TO NEW JERSEY STUDENTS: 1,132

## **EMPOWER** Fare

More than 33 million people in the U.S., including 1 in 13 children, live with food allergies. Applegate's partnership with **FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education)** reflects our deep commitment to transparency, inclusivity and better food for all. Applegate is a founding member of the FARE PACT Alliance, which works to ensure safe food, proper labeling and marketing for food allergy consumers.

In 2025, we're supporting FARE's efforts to raise awareness of Alphagal syndrome, a tick-borne allergy that causes an immune reaction to Alpha-gal, a sugar molecule found in red meat and mammalian products.

### EVERY 10 SECONDS IN THE U.S., FOOD ALLERGY SENDS A PATIENT TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM





OUR PARTNERSHIPS | MISSION REPORT '24–'25 \*

This appendix details the process used by Ecotone Analytics to estimate the social, environmental, and economic benefits from Applegate's estimated 100% Humanely Raised, No Antibiotics Ever, Organic, and Grass-Fed Beef production standards. The estimates are derived from Applegate's data combined with evidence from scientific studies, and they cover Applegate's beef, pork, chicken and turkey production volume in FY24. Estimates serve as a projection of Applegate's impact. Actual measurements of Applegate's impact were not conducted for this analysis, nor have they previously been conducted, because of the large expense and time investment that would be incurred.

#### Approach

Ecotone worked closely with a core team of Applegate stakeholders to build impact estimates. The process began with a comparison of the production standards implemented by Applegate and how those standards compare to conventional industry practices. This was paired with a literature review by Ecotone which explored available scientific evidence on each production standard for each animal species in scope. Eighteen resources were reviewed (see bibliography at end of appendix) for the extent Applegate production standards could be causally linked to measured changes. The quality of an impact estimation relies on the strength of the causal linkage between what Applegate production standards entail, the measured outcomes of those standards, and how those outcomes compare to conventional practices. To assess the strength of a causal study, Ecotone uses 7 levels of evidence of causality to rank the approach a study used to estimate causality, ranging from a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials (strongest level of evidence) to expert opinion (weakest level of evidence). Review of resources for non-causal statements (e.g. lbs of nitrogen applied per acre) utilizes other factors to determine the reputability of the source: credentials of the authors, whether a peer-review process took place, publishing institutions and/or funders of the analysis, geography of focus, acknowledgement of potentially differing results in other resources, and date of publication.

Impact estimates were first developed per unit (i.e. per animal, per pound of meat, per acre, etc.). To scale the per unit impacts estimated for Applegate's FY24 product volume, it was necessary to estimate the number of acres in feed/grazing production, typical pesticide and fertilizer application rates of conventional production, average antibiotic dosage given to animals, each disaggregated by the appropriate Applegate production standard(s). Estimates for these figures were built in collaboration with Applegate, leveraging both internal data and external literature.

The analysis was conservative in all calculations to reduce risk of overstating impact and ensure there was no "double-counting" of impact. Ecotone built estimates only for those impacts with sufficient evidence. Those without sufficient evidence were excluded.

#### Assumptions

To develop a suitable model for the impact analysis, and to isolate the impact of Applegate's production standards relative to conventional industry practices, a series of assumptions were relied upon. These included:

- 1. Producers would otherwise be raising animals and growing feed using conventional industry standard practices;
- 2. Land being used for grass-fed beef production would not otherwise be in a pasture or perennial forage that is rotationally grazed, instead being either in row crop production or fallow;
- 3. Impacts are estimated over 1 year, although in some cases it may take longer for the benefits to be realized.

20 \* 👾 MISSION REPORT '24—'25 | APPENDIX

#### Estimation details of each impact

Value chain tier	Impacts quantified	Estimation process and sources used
Farm growing animal feed	245,000 lbs of reduced pesticide used from organic feed production	Change in pesticide use from organic crop production compared to conventional production multiplied by the estimated number of acres of organic feed production for animals raised to Applegate standards in FY24.
		Sources: Benbrook, C., Kegley, S., & Baker, B. (2021); Cornelius and Schnitkey, 2023; Applegate proprietary data
	421,000 lbs of nitrogen fertilizer no longer lost to water because of organic feed production	Pounds of nitrogen lost per acre of pasture, corn, and soybean production per year multiplied by the reduction in rate of nitrogen loss from organic pasture and crop production compared to conventional production multiplied by the estimated acres of organic feed production for animals raised to Applegate's standards in FY24.
		Note on Nitrogen Avoidance YOY Data: The estimated pounds of nitrogen loss avoided per acre from organic feed production went from 4.95 pounds per acre in FY23 to 3.3 pounds per acre in FY24. This reflects a change in how Ecotone estimated the impact per acre. In FY23 we estimated the average impact per acre for corn, soy, and pasture regardless of how many acres there were of each. However, in FY24 we switched from a straight average impact per acre to a weighted average impact per acre to reflect that the bulk of organic acres were in pasture. This lowered the impact per acre because pasture is unlikely to lose as much nitrogen per acre as corn and soy acres. To provide a YOY number, we applied the new 3.3 pounds per acre number to 2023 to create an apples-to-apples comparison.
		Sources: The Nature Conservancy, 2016; USDA, 2022; Mondelaers et al., 2009; Cornelius and Schnitkey, 2023; Applegate proprietary data
	22,000 tons of soil erosion from organic feed production practices	Reduced rate of erosion per acre from organic feed production systems (including cover cropping) compared to conventional feed production multiplied by the estimated acres of organic feed production for animals raised to Applegate's standards in FY24.
		Sources: Seitz et al., 2019; Daryanto et al., 2018; SARE, 2019; Applegate proprietary data
Farm where animals are raised	79,000 tons of soil erosion avoided from grass-fed beef production	Reduced rate of erosion from perennial forage compared to row cropping or fallow land multiplied by the average rate of erosion for the relevant geography of production multiplied by the estimated acres of grazing land for animals raised to Applegate's standards in FY24.
		Sources: Francesconi et al., 2015; NSW Environmental Protection Authority; Teng et al., 2016; Cornelius and Schnitkey, 2023; Applegate proprietary data
	11 tons of antibiotics avoided from antibiotic restrictions	Intensity of antibiotics given per kg of animal per year multiplied by the weight of meat purchased (by species) by Applegate in FY24 Sources: Wallinga, (2022); Applegate proprietary data

#### Sources

Levels	Levels of Evidence of Causality (1 is highest, 7 is lowest)			
1	Evidence from a systematic review or meta-analysis of all relevant RCTs (randomized controlled trials) or evidence-based clinical practice guidelines based on systematic reviews of RCTs or three or more RCTs of good quality that have similar results.			
2	Evidence obtained from at least one well-designed RCT (e.g. large multi-site RCT).			
3	Evidence obtained from well-designed controlled trials without randomization (i.e. quasi- experimental).			
4	Evidence from well-designed case-control or cohort studies.			
5	Evidence from systematic reviews of descriptive and qualitative studies (meta-synthesis)			
6	Evidence from a single descriptive or qualitative study.			
7	Evidence from the opinion of authorities and/or reports of expert committees.			
N/A	Information provided in the source does not make causal claims. This includes basic statistics and/or other facts.			

Evidence Level	Citation	
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2	Seitz, S., Goebes, P., Puerta, V. L., Pereira, E. I. P., Wittwer, R., Six, J., & Scholten, T. (2019). Conservation tillage and organic farming reduce soil erosion. Agronomy for Sustainable Development, 39, 1-10.	
3	Daryanto, Stefani & Fu, Bo-Jie & Wang, Lixin & Jacinthe, Pierre-André & Zhao, Wenwu. (2018). Quantitative synthesis on the ecosystem services of cover crops. Earth-Science Reviews. 185. 10.1016/j.earscirev.2018.06.013.	
4	Benbrook, C., Kegley, S., & Baker, B. (2021). Organic Farming Lessens Reliance on Pesticides and Promotes Public Health by Lowering Dietary Risks. Agronomy, 11(7), 1266. MDPI AG. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/agronomy11071266	
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4	The Nature Conservancy. (2016). reThink Soil: A Roadmap for U.S. Soil Health. https:// www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/rethink-soil-external- paper-103116.pdf
5	Cornelius, M., & Schnitkey, G. (2023). An Estimate of Farmland Acreage Change from Plant-Based Food. farmdoc daily, 13(109).
5	Kaestner, J., Lloyd, S., Nardi, A.M., Paine, L., & Schriefer, G. (2022). A Consumer's Guide to Grassfed Beef. Grasslands 2.0.
5	Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. (2019). Cover Crop Economics Opportunities to Improve Your Bottom Line in Row Crops. SARE Ag Innovations Series Technical Bulletin.
N/A	National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). (2022). 2021 Agricultural chemical use survey: Corn. United States Department of Agriculture. https://www.nass.usda.gov/ Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Chemical_Use/2021_Field_Crops/chemhighlights- corn.pdf
N/A	NSW Environmental Protection Authority. (n.d.). State of the Environment. https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2003/chapter4/chp_4.2.htm

N/A	USDA. (2023). Daily National Broiler Market at a Glance. USDA Economics, Statistics and Market Information System.
N/A	USDA. (2022). Minnesota Ag News – Chemical Use Corn: Fall 2021. https://www.nass. usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Minnesota/Publications/Other_Press_Releases/2022/MN- Ag-Chem-Corn-2022.pdf
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#### Disclaimer

This assessment addresses the estimated impact measurement and management systems, practices, and metrics employed by the impact assessment consultants. It does not address financial performance and is not a recommendation to invest in these practices. The estimated social benefits of these estimated social impacts are drawn from an impact analysis calculated by Ecotone Analytics and are not guaranteed.





Applegate is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hormel Foods. To learn more about our parent company's sustainability goals, visit https://www.hormelfoods.com/global-impact.