

## People &amp; Places

## Dairy scientist brings passion to job

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

JEROME, Idaho — Dairy foods research scientist Venkateswarlu Sunkesula is new to Idaho's dairy industry. But he's been around cows since he was a boy, growing up on a small, integrated farm in India that was surrounded by many small dairies.

He's also known for quite some time he wanted to do dairy research, and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in dairy science from a renowned dairy university in India.

"Dairy has always been my passion," he said.

After receiving his degrees in India, he had planned to come to the U.S. to get a Ph.D. in dairy science. But family commitments delayed that plan, and he worked for food and dairy manufacturing companies in India for 15 years.

His long-term goal, however, is in sight. He started at South Dakota State University in 2016, working with well-known Professor Lloyd Metzger.

"Better late than never. I am fortunate to work with him because he's very knowledgeable," he said.

He could have pursued his Ph.D. in India, but dairy research in the U.S. is more advanced, he said.

All his research work is done, and he's working on his thesis and will probably finish it this summer.

His research interest is in dairy chemistry and processing, novel processing technologies and functional dairy ingredients. His research focus at SDSU was developing new value-added ingredients from dairy co-products.

While doing research at the university, he was part of a team of dairy science students that entered the new product development competition sponsored by the Idaho Milk Processors Association.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

**Venkateswarlu Sunkesula, senior research and development scientist at Idaho Milk Products, in the company's laboratory in Jerome, Idaho.**

That brought him and the team to Idaho to present their product and research at IMPA's annual convention in 2018. There, he became acquainted with officials from Idaho Milk Products. Not long after, they offered him a position and he started at the dairy ingredient company last summer.

His main role at the company is threefold and involves research to improve the functionality of milk protein concentrates and developing production processes using new technology to commercialize products for scale-up.

He is also setting up the company's new research-and-development pilot plant.

"The goal is to work with customers to develop new products using our

ingredients," he said.

Consumer demand keeps changing, as does customer demand for dairy ingredients to fortify other foods, he said.

"They want high protein. High protein is the main trend," he said.

He'll be working on developing high-protein foods — such as ice cream and beverages — for the company's customers. His position at Idaho Milk Products allows him to do exactly the type of research and development he desires, he said.

"It's a good platform to work on what I want to do. I like my work here," he said.

His goal is to contribute to and add value to the dairy industry through his research ideas and innovation techniques, he said.

## Western Innovator

### VENKATESWARLU SUNKESULA

Age: 42

Company: Idaho Milk Products

Position: Senior research and development scientist

Education: Master's degree, dairy technology, National Dairy Research Institute, India; bachelor's degree, dairy technology, Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University, India

Awards and scholarships: Daisy Brand travel award, 2019; Dairy Product Innovation Competition, Idaho Milk Processors Association 2018, 3rd place; Dairy Recognition and Education Foundation Scholarship, International Dairy Foods Association, 2018 and 2017.

Other honors: Served as volunteer judge at Eastern South Dakota Science and Engineering Fair, 2018; National History Day in South Dakota, 2019; Gamma Sigma Delta Honor Society of Agriculture, graduate poster competition, 2018.

Professional membership: American Dairy Science Association, U.S., 2017-present; Institute of Food Technologists, U.S., 2018-present; Institute of Brewing and Distilling, UK, 2010-2014

Family: Wife, Jyothi; daughters Veda Shree, Jenya Shree.



## CALENDAR

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### WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY, JAN. 15-17

#### Northwest Agricultural Show

9 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday. Oregon State Fair and Expo Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. The 50th edition of the Northwest Ag Show will feature over 120 exhibitors and partners and seminars and workshops covering a variety of topics important to farmers and ranchers. Admission on Wednesday and Thursday is \$5 for adults, \$3 for seniors, and free for children 12 and under. Admission on Friday is free, courtesy of the Oregon Ag in the Classroom Foundation. Contact: 503-364-4431 <http://northwestagshow.com>

### THURSDAY, JAN. 16

**WSU Soil Health Workshop:** 8 a.m., Courtyard by Marriott, 1295 NE North Fairway Road, Pullman, Wash. This day-long WSU workshop will focus on increased soil acidity in the Palouse, what happens when taking action, affordable options and what happens if farmers don't. Website: <https://bit.ly/2MJRkwy> Contact: 509-335-4389, haiying.tao@wsu.edu

**Oregon Seed Association Mid-Winter Meeting:** 8 a.m., Boulder Falls Inn, 505 Mullins Drive, Lebanon. The OSA Mid-Winter Meeting is held every January in Oregon's Willamette Valley region. The one-day event consists of committee and general session member meetings, workshops, and includes lunch. Scholarship awards are presented to eligible applicants. The day concludes with an early evening reception to honor past OSA association presidents. See website for more information and registration form. Angie Smith, smith@pacwestcom.com, 503-685-7555. [www.oregonseed.org/events/winter-meeting/](https://www.oregonseed.org/events/winter-meeting/)

### FRIDAY, JAN. 17

**SAIF Agri-Business Banquet:** 6 p.m. Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. The SAIF Agri-Business Banquet is a celebration of the agricultural community and its impact on the mid-Willamette Valley. This year, Jim Bernard of Willamette Valley Vineyards is the featured speaker. <https://salemchamber.org/events/saif-agribusiness-banquet/>

### SATURDAY, JAN. 18

**Oregon Dairy Princess Ambassador Contest:** 5:30 p.m. Salem

Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. Join the excitement as the county dairy princess ambassadors demonstrate their dairy knowledge and public speaking and communications skills. Online: <https://oregondairywomen.com/events/>

### FRIDAY-WEDNESDAY, JAN. 17-22

**American Farm Bureau Annual Convention and Trade Show:** Austin Convention Center, 500 E. Cesar Chavez St., Austin, Texas. This is your opportunity to help set the agenda for the leading voice of agriculture. Participate in educational workshops to advance your leadership skills, expand your business acumen and gain deep insight into the trends and realities impacting food production. Contact: <https://annualconvention.fb.org/>

### SUNDAY-TUESDAY, JAN. 19-21

**NFU Women's Conference:** Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa, 3999 Mission Blvd., San Diego, Calif. This conference will not only prepare attendees for success in agriculture, but it will also provide them with their own network of women farmers and ranchers they can reach out to throughout the year. Contact: Hannah Packman, hpackman@nfudc.org, 202-554-1600. <https://nfu.org/womensconference/>

### WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22

**Idaho Potato Conference:** 8 a.m., Idaho State University Pond Student Union, 1065 Cesar Chavez Ave., Pocatello, Idaho. Topics include a 2019 season recap, potato conditions in storage, pest and disease management, irrigation and other field practices. Website: [www.uidaho.edu/cals/potatoes/news/idaho-potato-conference](http://www.uidaho.edu/cals/potatoes/news/idaho-potato-conference)

### WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY, JAN. 22-24

**American Hop Convention:** Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront, 1401 SW Naito Parkway, Portland. The Oregon Hop Growers Association and its members welcome hop growers and industry members to Oregon for the 64th annual American Hop Convention. Hop Growers of America, 509-453-4749. <http://www.usahops.org/convention/>

### TUESDAY, JAN. 28

#### FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food Course

8 a.m.-5 p.m., TBD, Twin Falls. The Food Safety Modernization Act regulations require every food processing facility to have a "Preventive Controls Qualified Individual" (PCQI) who has completed a specialized training course, such as this one, and who will oversee the implementation of the facility's food safety plan. Janna Hamlett, [jannahamlett@techhelp.org](mailto:jannahamlett@techhelp.org), (208) 736-3610. \$750. <https://techhelp.org/events/pcqitwin2020/>

#### 4-Part Workshop On Small-Scale Backyard Dairy Management

5:30-8 p.m., Linn County Extension Office, 33630 McFarland Road, Tangent, Ore. This four-class series is for those interested in owning a dairy animal to provide milk for home use. This class will not cover rules and regulations for selling milk or milk products. Nutrition and Feeding (Jan. 28), Facilities and Manure Management (Feb. 4), Milking and Milk Handling Procedures (Feb. 11) and Health and Reproduction (Feb. 18) Teagan Moran, [teagan.moran@oregonstate.edu](mailto:teagan.moran@oregonstate.edu), 541-713-5011. \$60 for series. A partner can be added for a discounted \$35. <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/smallfarms/events/>

#### Miller Research Potato Pest Management Seminar

8:30 a.m. Historic Wilson Theatre, 610 Fremont St., Rupert, Idaho. Includes the presentation of results of research funded by Northwest Potato Research Consortium and other publicly funded research. Pest management, pesticide application credits available. Website: <https://bit.ly/39qbKvS>

### MONDAY, FEB. 3

#### Oregon Blueberry Conference

8 a.m. Salem Convention Center, 200 Commercial St. SE, Salem, Ore. This is the Oregon blueberry industry's annual meeting and features a variety of presentations and other informational sessions. Contact: <http://oregonblueberry.com> 503-364-2944

### TUESDAY, FEB. 4

#### Create a FSMA Compliant Food Safety Plan

1-4 p.m., Idaho Falls. The IFSC is a free program that helps small food processors (500 employees or less) create a FSMA compliant food safety plan during six afternoon sessions spread over 2 months. Idaho Falls course takes place 1-4 p.m. on Feb. 4 and 18, March 3, 17 and 31 and April 14. Janna Hamlett, [jannahamlett@techhelp.org](mailto:jannahamlett@techhelp.org), (208) 731-9363.

Submit upcoming ag-related events on [www.capitalpress.com](http://www.capitalpress.com) or by email to [newsroom@capitalpress.com](mailto:newsroom@capitalpress.com).

### MONDAY, JAN. 13

#### Rice Grower Meeting:

8:30 a.m., Evangelical Church, 5219 Church St., Richvale, Calif. This is part of a series of rice grower meetings sponsored by UC Extension. <http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/?newsitem=82541>

#### Rice Grower Meeting:

1:30 p.m., Glenn County Office of Education, 311 S. Villa Ave., Wil-lows, Calif. This is part of a series of rice grower meetings sponsored by UC Extension. <http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/?newsitem=82541>

### TUESDAY, JAN. 14

#### Introduction to Food Safety & HACCP Workshop

8 a.m. U of I Food Technology Center, 1902 E Chicago St., Caldwell, Idaho. This is a one-day overview course designed for line workers, QC personnel, sanitation professionals, supervisors, and other employees of food processing operations. Participants will spend part of the day learning about food safety prerequisite programs, which are used to ensure food products are free from nonhazardous objectionable contaminants. Cost: \$355 Website: <https://bit.ly/2DJSOSP>

#### Rice Grower Meeting:

8:30 a.m., Colusa Casino Resort, 3770 Highway 45, Colusa, Calif. This is part of a series of rice grower meetings sponsored by UC Extension. <http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/?newsitem=82541>

#### Rice Grower Meeting:

1:30 p.m., Veterans Hall, 1425 Veterans Memorial Circle, Yuba City, Calif. This is part of a series of meetings sponsored by UC Cooperative Extension. <http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/?newsitem=82541>

### WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15

#### Farm and Ranch Succession Planning Workshop Series:

1-4 p.m. Multnomah Grange No. 71, 30639 SE Bluff Road, Gresham, Ore. Register now for this free series of workshops on farm and ranch succession. Workshops are held every other Wednesday from Jan. 15 to Feb. 26. In addition to these courses, no-cost, confidential, one-on-one business counseling is provided free by an experienced Farm and Ranch Small Business Development Center adviser. Let us help you identify issues and evaluate options

in passing your farm and business on to the next generation. A complimentary light lunch is provided at 12:30 p.m. There is room for 50 people. Presented by: Clackamas Small Business Development Center and the East Multnomah & Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Questions? Call Diana Tourney at 503-594-0732.

**Irrigation Workshop:** 9 a.m.-noon, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Fairview Industrial Drive SE, Salem. Join us for a morning of experts discussing irrigation innovations, incentives and conservation of water. Participants in this no cost workshop will learn how to effectively utilize water with emerging technology, equipment upgrades or retrofits, and how to use data to irrigate agricultural grounds proficiently. Speakers: Troy Peters, Ulrike Mengelberg and Teri Hranac will provide engaging topics as well as answer your questions pertaining to irrigation and conservation. Marion SWCD, 503-391-9927. <http://www.marion-swcd.net>

**Rice Grower Meeting:** 1:30 p.m., Norton Hall, 70 Cottonwood St., Woodland, Calif. This is part of a series of rice grower meetings sponsored by UC Extension. <http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/?newsitem=82541>

**WSU Soil Health Workshop on Soil Microbiology:** 8 a.m., Courtyard by Marriott, 1295 NE North Fairway Road, Pullman, Wash. A day-long workshop devoted to soil health with a deep dive into micro-biology and functions of many micro-organisms in soil. <https://bit.ly/37qNbWw>

### WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY, JAN. 15-16

#### Introduction to Safe Quality Food

8:30 a.m. U of I Food Technology Center, 1902 E Chicago St., Caldwell, Idaho. Instructor Jana Hamlett will provide knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the SQF practitioner and how they ensure supplies are in compliance with an internationally recognized and accredited Food Safety Management System which will support compliance to the FSMA rules. Website: <https://bit.ly/2LmRLS3>

**Idaho Noxious Weed Conference:** 8 a.m. Riverside Hotel, 2900 W. Chinden Blvd., Boise, Idaho. The 2020 Idaho Noxious Weed Conference features a variety of topics dealing with vegetation management. Website:

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