

THE INGREDIENTS OF A HIGH INCOME DAIRY OPERATION

By Val Massey, Palmetto, Fla.

First—let me give you what our farm consists of: there are 450 acres in the dairy farm, proper. Another farm nearby, of 150 acres. This is where we raise our heifers to breeding age. Also, 75 acres are leased for heifer pasture, making a total of 675 acres. We can seep-irrigate about 340 acres— our main crop is pangola grass.

The milking herd of about 400 head, consists of all breeds with about 65 to 70% being Holstein, the balance being Guernsey, Jersey, Brown Swiss and Ayrshire. Then, there are about 400 heifers of all ages. We haven't bought any replacements for two years. In fact, we have had quite a few to sell.

We have a gate-type parlor of 8 stalls, with 8 machines. No feeding is done in the parlor. Two men can milk 400 cows in six hours.

The feeding is all done in the feed sheds where silage, green chop and the grain is all fed by groups, according to production. We use four groups most of the time.

Enough silage and hay has been put up to take care of all of our roughage needs, except for 1000 to 1500 bales of hay, to feed heifers. The silage is made from Pangola grass. We use direct cut and have always used stacks for storage. However, this year, we have built two bunker-type silos. This will save some silage and make the storage much easier. I feel that the silage has been our bread and butter.

Now—for what I think are the ingredients of a high-income dairy operation (if ours is such)——

First— a wife who is a real good milk hand, a first-rate bookkeeper, record keeper of all cows (as we keep our own), one who will tolerate a seven-day work week and lots of meetings, a good mother, cook, housekeeper, and a multitude of other things. And one who will make you think you are a hero when you get that down-and-out feeling. This is the kind of wife, I have.

Second: Financing

As you all know, we dairymen use lots of this. The right kind, amount and also, the use of financing, are most important. The dairyman should try to anticipate his needs for money and then let his banker know his needs. Show the banker how you can pay him back and make sure you do so. We have been fortunate over the years to have this kind of relationship with our banker, the Production Credit Association which has meant everything to us because we would never have been able to have financed our needs without PCA.

Third: Employees:

We have been very fortunate in having the best help there is. People who are interested in our welfare, as well as their own. People who know I have to make money before they can expect to have anything extra. All of our people are important to us, but I would say there are three who are the key ones.

The fellow in charge of the milking and breeding of the cows. I know the cows will be milked if he has to milk all of them himself.

Next, is the "Jack of all Trades", Mr. Fix-it, or Mr. Build-it. If it can be fixed or built, he can do it. He is the electrician, plumber, mechanic, welder, fence builder, you name it. He is most important in this day of mechanization.

Last, but probably, not least in our operation, is the young fellow raising the replacement cattle. This part of our program has meant very much to us. When you have a few hours, I will tell you how good this guy is.

Four: Extension Service and the University.

Over the years, I have called on these people for many things. I have always received the very best cooperation and lots and lots of help. We, in Florida, are really fortunate to have the kind of people that we have at all levels of the extension service and in the University. They have and do mean a lot to us in our operation.

Five: Growing Market

This probably has meant more to our success than we care to admit. Even though per-capita consumption has decreased, we have had the tremendous population growth, so that we have been able to grow each year. Let me add, I believe we could turn the per-capita consumption to an increase, if we would just put our efforts into it.

The price and supply of milk in Florida didn't just happen to be like it is. This has been done by hard work and foresight of some strong leaders, and co-operation among most of our dairy farmers, to bring about the strong marketing co-ops that we have in the state. These have been a big help to us, too.

With all these ingredients, it has been a challenge to make everything "work" and fall in place. They have kept me busy those seven days per week, but they have also been most satisfying and enjoybale. Thank you.