Thinking Outside the Box: One Panhandle Farm’s Quest for Sustainability

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People that make this work...
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Our Location

- Jackson County
  - Marianna, FL
- #1 county for row crop production
- Currently 3 dairies in county
- Population: 49,746
- Close proximity to Tallahassee & Gulf Coast
Cindale Farms: The beginning

- Parents (Dale & Cindy Eade) have been in the dairy business for 37 years
- Parents are ‘first-generation’ farmers

  1994 ‘A New Beginning’
  - Parents were minority owners in large dairy operation until 1994
  - Leased small facility in Cottondale
  - Initially all work done by family

The beginning

- 1996
  - Moved to leased farm in Marianna
  - Grew herd & increased labor force

- 2003
  - Purchased land and built current facility
  - 467 acres of pasture, hardwood forest, timber & wetlands
The last 7 years

- Brad and I returned in late 2009
  - Spent many good years at UF

- Reinvigoration/fresh ideas
  - Focus more on grazing
  - Change genetic base of herd
  - Seasonal calving
  - Assist with goals of becoming more involved with local community

- Management transition
  - 2009-2014: management responsibilities shared w/Dale & Cindy
  - August 2014: management responsibilities transitioned to Brad & I
Farm Basics

- 467 acres
  - Hybrid rotational grazing operation
  - 75 acres under center pivot
- 550+ cattle
  - 300 milk cows (Jersey & Jersey-holstein crosses)
  - 250 youngstock
Cindale Farms

- Main barn
  - Double 12 parallel rapid exit parlor
  - Break room, storage, milk room & working facility
- Feed/cooling barn
  - External feed alleys
- Six bay commodity barn
- Two stage waste water management system
  - Partitioned concrete lined solid separator
  - Effluent lagoon
Hybrid grazer

- Feed a TMR
- Able to rotationally graze the majority of the year to offset some purchased forage inputs
- Purchase additional forages
Cindale Farms

- 75 acres under center pivot surrounding barns
  - Managed intensive rotational grazing
  - Perennial & annual pastures
  - Conservation tillage employed across farm
  - External fencing high tensile electric, cross fenced with polywire
  - Paddock sizes are varied depending upon forage availability
Reproduction

○ Utilize both A.I. and natural service
  ▪ A.I. on natural heats for month of January
  ▪ Bulls in February-March

○ Seasonal
  ▪ Main breeding season from January 1st to April 1st (calves kept)
  ▪ Second season July 1st to Sept 1st (all calves sold)
Cindale Farms

- **Calf raising**
  - Seasonal (End of Sept-beginning January)
  - Housed in groups on grass paddocks based on age
  - Start in a ‘training pen’
    - Tattooed and paste dehorned
    - 2-3 days
  - Constant access acidified milk
    - Receive 1.5-2 gallons milk/day
    - Acidify to pH 4.2-4.8
  - Wean at 8 weeks
    - Gradual weaning beginning at 6 weeks

53rd Florida Dairy Production Conference
Gainesville, FL, April 20, 2017
Cindale Farms

- A vision for the future
  - Enhancing sustainability
    - Ability to support additional family units
    - Optimizing land use while enhancing environment
    - Establishing connection to local consumers/economy
  - Diversification
    - Preferred over linear expansion of dairy
    - Fit our goals/ideas for the future

- The birth of a new business: ‘Thinking outside the box’
Southern Craft Creamery

The beginning

- 2010-2011
  - Early brainstorming began

- 2012
  - Lauren began perfecting our ‘base’ recipe
  - Marketing ideas came to fruition
  - Construction

- 2013
  - First sales began in February

The last 4 years

- 2013
  - Establishing a viable market
    - Building relationships
    - Wholesale to independent grocers & chef-owned restaurants
  - Selected as Overall Winner for Garden & Gun magazine’s ‘Fourth Annual Made in the South Awards’
  - Shipping headaches
Southern Craft Creamery

The last 4 years

- 2014
  - Expand market
  - Expand production facility (twice)
  - Management transition
  - Recognized by the Florida Cabinet
  - Jackson County Agricultural Innovators
  - Featured in Food & Wine’s blog
    - Top 7 holiday ice creams

The last 4 years

- 2015-2016
  - Continued to expand market while maintaining quality
  - Purposeful slow growth
  - Featured in Southern Living Magazine
    - 2015 Food Award Winner
    - 2016 Food Award Winner
Southern Craft Creamery

What's in store for 2017...
- Doubling production capacity
- Continued expansion of market
- Expansion into retail

Southern Craft Creamery

Creamery basics
- Handcrafted, artisanal ice cream
- Small batch
- Non-homogenized
- Local sourced ingredients from producers
- Sales in over 38 locations

Handcrafted ICE CREAM
Marianna, FL
Southern Craft Creamery
Cindale Farms & Southern Craft Creamery

- A vision for the future
  - Cindale Farms
    - Continued diversification
    - Enhanced utilization of fresh, local milk
  - Southern Craft Creamery
    - Continued market expansion while staying true to vision
    - Product diversification
    - Venture into retail

- A vision for the future
  - Enhancing sustainability
    - Continue to support additional family units
    - Optimize land use while enhancing/preserving environment
    - Enhancing connection to local consumers/economy
Looking back to when we were looking ahead

- Six years ago our family had a serious conversation about our future
- Agreed that ‘small farms’ would be obsolete in 10 years
  - This seems to have been fast-forwarded
- Our vision had to fit our goals and desires as both a family unit and profitable business enterprise

We must all challenge ourselves to think ‘outside the box’ if we want to continue to dairy

- We are obviously all very good at producing high volumes of milk, but if we continue to do so in the face of decreasing demand, where will the majority of us be in 20, 10 or even 5 years?
Dairy Industry: Opportunities & Challenges

- We don’t farm like we did 30 years ago, so why do we continue to sell milk the same way?
  - “The art of life is a constant readjustment to our surroundings.” – Kakuzo Okakura
  - “The price of doing the same old thing is far higher than the price of change.” – Bill Clinton
  - “Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature’s inexorable imperative.” – H.G. Wells

- We have to be innovative and continue to challenge the ‘norm’ on the dairy aisle and on the dairy farm
  - Beginning to see progress in this area...need more
  - Opportunity for farms of all sizes

- We need to get out of our ‘comfort’ zone

- How do we accomplish?
  - By thinking ‘outside the box’
  - By having meaningful, open, transparent conversations with consumers
Dairy Industry: Opportunities & Challenges

Today's consumer (for the most part) wants to know where their food comes from, how it is produced & why ‘we’ do what ‘we’ do.

- Let’s use this to our advantage!

Don’t be afraid to try something new...