

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Steve Richards, NY FarmNet/NY FarmLink, 607-255-9854

Successful Small Dairy Profiles Feature Two Franklin County Farms

Two Franklin County families will be featured in “Profiles of Successful Strategies for Small Dairy Farms,” a publication project of the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program. Don and Sharon Recore of Burke and Randy and Elizabeth Ooms of Constable have shared information about how to profitably operate a family-sized dairy farm.

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, 192 of Franklin County’s 204 dairy farms have fewer than 200 cows. About 30 percent of the 4,572 dairy farms across the six-county Northern New York region have 200 or fewer dairy cows (2002 Census of Agriculture).

After 24 years of doing everything from growing and harvesting crops to milking cows and raising replacements, Don and Sharon Recore created a downsizing business plan that led to a more manageable farm operation for milking 140 cows. They sold their field crop equipment, and hired a custom harvester for their hay crop and a custom grower to raise their heifers.

“The changes have allowed us to concentrate on what makes us the most money – our milking herd,” Don says. “We have doubled our production since the transition.”

In 1992, Randy and Elizabeth Ooms left a dairy partnership with Randy’s parents and two brothers to start their own farm with 60 cows. Today, they milk 90 of their 180 Holsteins and have improved their crop production so they can sell excess forage. The Ooms’ sons, Joshua and Justin, both work on the farm and the Ooms employ one full-time and one part-time employee.

“Over the thirteen years we have been on our own, we have improved our production, herd health and genetics, and have brought about 50% of our farmland into top production by adding tile drainage and a fertility management program,” Randy says.

The Profiles of Successful Strategies for Small Dairy Farms publication will feature two farms in each of Northern New York’s six counties: Essex, Clinton, Franklin, Lewis, St. Lawrence, and Jefferson. Other strategies profiled include partnering and sharing equipment and manpower; selling farmstead cheese, and using computerized production technology.

“These case studies will be most useful for farm owners who are considering making changes to their operations and are searching for ideas, information and inspiration for increasing profitability and success from their fellow farmers working in Northern New York,” says Steve Richards, project coordinator. The small dairy owners profiled say that they measure the success by gains in both financial terms and family satisfaction. The new publication will be available at Cornell Cooperative Extension offices in May.

The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program is a farmer-driven research and education program specific to New York state’s six northernmost counties. For more details, visit www.nnyagdev.org or contact Board Chairs Jon Greenwood, Canton, 315-386-3231, or Joe Giroux, Plattsburgh, 518-563-7523, or call Dave Smith at Cornell University, 607-255-7286.