



Profiles of Successful Strategies for Small Farm Dairies

A project of the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program

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Recore Farm, Franklin County — Making Farming More Manageable

The Transition

Don and Sharon Recore sold their cropping equipment to concentrate on cows.

The Burke, NY, farm operated by Don and Sharon Recore has been in Sharon's family for more than 100 years. In 1973, the couple bought the farm from her parents.

After 24 years of doing it all – growing and harvesting crops, milking cows and raising replacements – the Recores made a huge change. In 1997, the couple was experiencing difficulty cash flowing all the equipment and labor that went into their dairy operation. They felt there had to be a better system for their farm.

Mechanics, Management & Resources

Working closely with an accountant and Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Recores created a business plan. That plan paved the way for their decision to downsize their operation to something more manageable. The couple sold all their field-crop equipment as they transitioned to paying a custom harvester for their hay and purchasing all of their corn silage. They also hired a custom grower to raise their heifers.

To downsize, the Recores didn't reduce the number of cows they milked but outsourced certain aspects of their dairy operation. The couple decided that they didn't want to manage the crops, youngstock and dairy. Rather, they wanted to just concentrate on what makes them the most money — the milking herd.

The transition accomplished several things for the Recores:

- It reduced the number of employees down to two.
- The Recores' milk production doubled after they made the transition and concentrated solely on their milking herd. Today, the couple milks 140 cows with a rolling herd average of 21,600 pounds, 3.8% butterfat and 3.2% protein.
- Cash flow improved immediately.
- Because the Recores' business plan made forecasts for retirement and the need to invest some money off the farm as well, they took steps to follow through on that.

During the transition, the Recores admit they had some doubts. But immediate improvements in cash flow helped ease their concerns. There were some bumpy times trying to find milkers for their dairy operation, but otherwise the transition was smooth, they say. The couple agrees that it was a good move for their dairy.

The Recores use a computerized accounting system and monthly cash-flow budgets to track their progress.

The Future

The Recores look forward to retiring in five years and moving to Florida.

Transition Tips

The Recores say they wouldn't change anything about their decision to outsource crops production and heifer raising – other than they should have done it sooner.

Their advice to others considering a change on their farm: Make sure the changes you want to make fit your particular operation and interests.

The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program

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