

Minnesota Dairy Farms, Then & Now:

Innovation, Conservation & Dedication



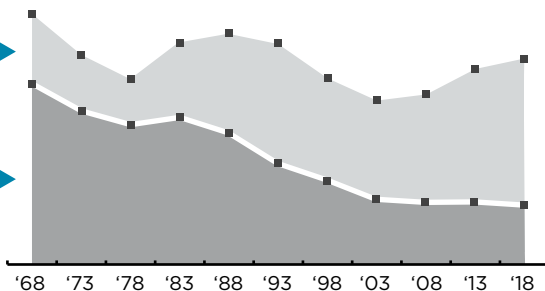
From the

1960s... to today,

dairy farmers have become more sustainable, with advances in cow care, nutrition, genetics and technology. Milk production in the U.S. has nearly doubled despite fewer cows.¹

MN Dairy Production
(Millions of pounds of milk)

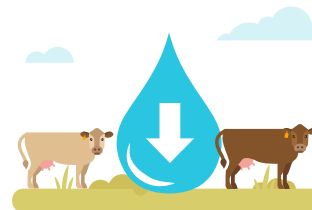
MN Cow Population
(Number of cows)



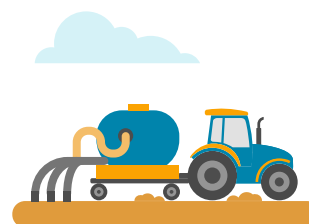
As part of a stewardship pledge to consumers, the dairy industry is pursuing a voluntary goal to cut GHG emissions for milk by 25% from 2007–2008 levels.²



80% of dairy cows' diets comes from **plant fibers and feedstuffs that they can digest** but humans can't, and would otherwise go to landfills ³



The U.S. dairy industry has **decreased its water use by 65+%** over the past decades⁴



Most dairy farm manure is incorporated into fields as natural fertilizer, **increasing soil's water-holding capacity by 20%** ⁵

Made in communities across the country, dairy foods contribute 3% of the U.S. gross domestic product.⁶



95% of dairy farms are family owned and operated ⁷



Dairy totaled \$25.7 billion

in economic impact (direct and indirect) in MN, 2018 ⁶



Dairy led to 104,797 jobs

(direct and indirect) in MN, 2018 ⁶

Discover Local Dairy: Always Real, Forever Good

Trailside Holsteins | Fountain, Minn.

Ask Minnesotans about Fillmore County, and they'll regale you with stories of the Root River State Trail, a picturesque paved pathway cutting through 60 miles of the state's southeastern region. But ask those versed in agriculture, and you may also learn of the area's fertile soil and steady supply of water, which has allowed farmers, including dairy farmers growing their own feed, to rarely irrigate or tile (drain) their fields.

Trailside Holsteins is where these two scenes literally intersect. During peak times in the summer, hundreds of bicyclists zoom by the trail that separates the farm's dairy barns from its cropland. Sometimes they simply see a momentary "dairy blur." Other times, they hit the brakes to ask about the fancy technology they see cows wearing or the comfortable sand beds or water misters the animals relax with.



“But I love the dairy community, and wanted to raise a family in a rural setting where I can see my children regularly.”

Margaret Johnson, alongside her husband, Michael, and four kids, have the unique responsibility of being sudden and year-round ambassadors for dairy and the devotion they provide for cows, the environment, and the health and well-being of the community. “We’ve tried to embrace it as an opportunity to spontaneously share and connect with others,” said Margaret. “And the trail has helped galvanize the community, too. For example, we’ve hosted a ‘Milk Fund Run’ for our local school that raised nearly \$1,500 to help kids have school milk breaks.”

Little by little, the Johnsons are buying the 1,200-acre dairy and crop farm from Michael’s father, Jon, who purchased the original farm in 1978. Back then, the bike path was a railroad, and the farm was fewer than 200 acres with 40 dairy cows. Knowing he needed to adapt to a changing industry, Jon doubled down on dairy, investing in some new adaptation about every four years to expand the size of the farm, grow the herd, build barns, bring in new technology and more. The investments paid off when Michael decided to not only return home after graduating college to farm full time, but to marry Margaret — with their wedding reception located on the farm!

Now approaching their 10th year of marriage, Margaret and Michael have assumed primary oversight of their dairy herd. They tend to newborn calves and adult cows, communicate with veterinarians and animal nutritionists, sustainably manage manure, and watch semis haul the milk they produce from their 600 milk cows to the local co-op.

“I wasn’t sure growing up if I wanted to be a farmer, because I knew it was a tough livelihood,” Michael acknowledged. “But I love the dairy community, and wanted to raise a family in a rural setting where I can see my children regularly. Seeing the kids appreciate dairy as a natural part of their lives, visiting with them in the barn, or having a picnic together on the Haybine® is worth it all.”



Sources:

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