

# Progressive FARMER

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**DTN**

JANUARY | 2026

## IN THIS ISSUE



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McGehee, Arkansas

**LUCAS AND DANA DULL**  
Thorntown, Indiana

**D.J. AND CHELSEA HLADKY**  
Ainsworth, Nebraska

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# Progressive FARMER

## EAR ROTS ARE SPREADING IS YOUR FUNGICIDE PLAN READY?

A disease-filled year like we experienced in 2025 can wreak havoc during the growing season—and beyond. Last year ear molds were a challenge throughout the Corn Belt, damaging yields and reducing potential earnings at the grain elevator.

From hybrid selection to fungicide planning, there are several steps growers can take to protect their crops from ear molds and other diseases. Turn the page to find out how Miravis® Neo, the only premium corn fungicide with *Fusarium* and *Gibberella* ear rots on its label, gives growers the upper hand against disease threats.



LEARN MORE  
**INSIDE** ➔

 **Miravis® Neo**

syngenta.

# EAR ROTS ARE SPREADING IS YOUR FUNGICIDE PLAN READY?

A disease-filled year like we experienced in 2025 can wreak havoc during the growing season—and beyond. In addition to battling yield-robbing in-season threats such as Southern rust, tar spot, Northern corn leaf blight and gray leaf spot, many corn growers found their profits further threatened by ear molds which can cause mycotoxins. And, similar to the patterns we've observed with foliar diseases, ear molds are on the move. While they were initially more intense in the eastern Corn Belt, they're now showing up farther west as well.

Two mycotoxin-causing threats — *Fusarium* ear rot and *Gibberella* ear rot — made the list for biggest yield-robbing diseases in 2024. *Fusarium* ear rot caused the loss of an estimated 53.5 million bushels last year, while *Gibberella* resulted in the loss of an estimated 19.1 million bushels<sup>1</sup>. The mycotoxins caused by each disease, Fumonison and Deoxynivalenol respectively, can also result in additional losses at the grain elevator if levels are high.

To protect yields from costly ear rots in 2026, there are several steps growers can take. First, be sure to select appropriate hybrids that correspond to local threats. Hybrids differ in tolerance and resistance to various diseases, so it's best to have a few ears tested each year to see which specific ear rots may have been present. Most land-grant universities offer testing services through their plant disease and diagnostic labs.

Additionally, because you cannot cure ear rot infections, growers should plan ahead for a fungicide application rather than waiting to see how much disease pressure occurs. Weather patterns and disease spikes can be unpredictable, and being ready with a proven fungicide like Miravis<sup>®</sup> Neo fungicide from Syngenta can make all the difference. Miravis Neo, which contains the powerhouse SDHI molecule ADEPIDYN<sup>®</sup> technology, fights all key diseases and is the only premium corn fungicide that has *Fusarium* and *Gibberella* ear rots on its label.



**Miravis Neo 13.7 fl oz/A**



**Untreated**

Baraboo, WI; 2025 Miravis Neo applied at R1 on 8.5.25.  
Pictures taken on 9.26.25 – 52 days after application.

Growers can rest assured that even in drier years, Miravis Neo is still a good investment, protecting plants from stress through unrivaled plant-health benefits. Data across six years and over 700 strip trials show that the Cleaner & Greener fungicide portfolio, which includes Miravis Neo, were profitable 80% of the time.<sup>2</sup>

Don't be caught off guard by costly ear molds. Act now to reserve Miravis Neo from your retailer to close the ear rot gap and protect your fields from all major yield-robbing diseases as well as stress this season.

<sup>1</sup> <https://loss.cropprotectionnetwork.org/crops/corn-diseases>

<sup>2</sup> Based on application + product cost and corn price \$6.00/bu. Data from 709 on-farm grower/strip trials from 2016-2022; AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, MN, MO, NE, NY, OH, SD, WI. Trivapro and Miravis Neo at 13.7 oz/A

Product performance assumes disease presence.

Performance assessments are based upon results or analysis of public information, field observations and/or internal Syngenta evaluations.

Trials reflect treatment rates and mixing partners commonly recommended in the marketplace.

No claim is being made herein about the environmental attributes of any product. References to "cleaner and greener" indicate plant-health benefits (e.g., less disease and increased crop efficiency and productivity) from foliar fungicides and the visible color of the plants.

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# *Progressive* **FARMER**

## LEVEL UP

### YOUR PROTECTION STRATEGY TO BOOST PROFITS

Growers make a substantial investment to secure the best hybrids and trait packages for their corn and soybean fields. To get the most value back from those investments, it's important to support them with a full-season crop protection program that takes into account pest and disease management as well as stress protection. That means applying a high-performing fungicide to all your fields, not just the ones that may appear to have the most yield potential.

Turn the page to find out how Miravis® Top and Trivapro® fungicides help boost yields and protect ROI even in low disease pressure situations.

 **Miravis® Top**

**syngenta®**

 **Trivapro®**

**syngenta®**

# LEVEL UP

## YOUR PROTECTION STRATEGY TO BOOST PROFITS

Growers make a substantial investment to secure the best hybrids and trait packages for their corn and soybean fields. To get the most value back from those investments, it's important to support them with a full-season crop protection program that takes into account pest and disease management as well as stress protection.

Sarah Gehant, Syngenta agronomy service representative, says Southern growers have shifted their management strategies. She explains,

“Soybeans are taken much more seriously now as far as the variety selection, seeding rate, seed treatments, and then managing the crop season long. We grow indeterminant beans, which means the better they're growing, the more pods they put on and the more potential yield a grower has.”

A proactive fungicide program is one way to help crops grow strong and efficiently. Disease pressure can be unpredictable, and if it strikes, it can quickly wreak havoc on yields. And even in a low disease pressure year, crops can still suffer from abiotic stress.

While there was a time when fungicide applications were reserved for a grower's best fields, Gehant says this thinking has evolved. She says,

“Stress mitigation year in and year out through managing heat stress, managing water stress, and managing disease really can level out yields year to year and maximize them over time.”

There are several proven fungicides available to growers. In soybeans, Miravis<sup>®</sup> Top fungicide combines two active ingredients – including ADEPIDYN<sup>®</sup> technology and difenoconazole – to provide broad-spectrum disease

control against the toughest soybean diseases, including strobilurin-resistant pathogens. In corn, Trivapro<sup>®</sup> fungicide delivers preventive and curative control of diseases through three active ingredients and unique modes of action: SOLATENOL<sup>®</sup> technology, propiconazole and azoxystrobin.

Additionally, research shows Miravis Top and Trivapro are still good investments even in years without heavy disease pressure, protecting plants from stress through unrivaled plant-health benefits. Syngenta Technical Product Lead Tyler Harp explains,

“In addition to protecting your yield from biotic stress caused by fungal diseases, Miravis Top and Trivapro protect the plant against some of the abiotic stress that might be in the field, such as drought or hot weather.”

Both Miravis Top and Trivapro are part of Syngenta's Cleaner & Greener fungicide portfolio, which provides growers with this combination of disease control and plant-health benefits. In heavy or low disease pressure, Cleaner & Greener fungicides are the best yield preservation investment available. Data across six years and over 700 strip trials show that Cleaner & Greener fungicides were profitable 80% of the time.<sup>1</sup> Harp says,

“Quality fungicides are really the most important tool out there for preservation of yield potential. By that point in the development stage you have most of your investment tied up in that crop so why wouldn't you want to use the best tools out there to preserve yield potential and protect that investment?”



<sup>1</sup>Based on application + product cost and corn price \$6.00/bu. Data from 709 on-farm grower/strip trials from 2016-2022; AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, MN, MO, NE, NY, OH, SD, WI. Trivapro and Miravis Neo at 13.7 oz/A applied at VT-R1 corn.

Product performance assumes disease presence.

Performance assessments are based upon results or analysis of public information, field observations and/or internal Syngenta evaluations.

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*Serving Our Readers Since 1886*



### ON THE COVER

Layne Miles, McGehee, Arkansas, is an honoree in our 2026 America's Best Young Farmers and Ranchers program.

PHOTO BY JOEL REICHENBERGER

**Congratulations  
to the 16th class  
of America's Best  
Young Farmers  
and Ranchers.**

**Profiles begin  
on page 16.**

Watch the Video



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12



## 2026 AMERICA'S BEST YOUNG FARMERS AND RANCHERS

- 16 LAYNE AND RYANE MILES**  
The Weight of Legacy
- 20 LUCAS AND DANA DULL**  
Make Memories on the Farm
- 26 D.J. AND CHELSEA HLADKY**  
The Right Balance
- 31 LILLIE BERINGER-CROCK  
BRIAN CROCK**  
Growing the Family Tree
- 34 HOUSTON AND KATY  
HOWLETT**  
Choosing Reason Above Emotion

- 12 STEWARDSHIP**  
Built To Last
- 37 FAMILY BUSINESS MATTERS**  
Set Your Farm Up  
For Long-Term Success
- 38 CATTLELINK**  
Aim High
- 42 HIGH-VALUE ENTERPRISE**  
Fruits and Nuts Forever



## IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 WE'D LIKE TO MENTION**
- 6 FIRST LOOK**
- 45 RECIPES: COMFORT FOOD**
- 48 CORNERSTONES: YOUTH**

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# INSIDE THE NEW ERA OF RESIDUAL WEED CONTROL

## How Innovations Are Simplifying Corn Management

Managing weeds in corn can be complex, with farmers facing resistance challenges, unpredictable weather and the constant threat of escapes. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive weed control program needs to combine several key factors:

- A unique combination of chemistries with multiple modes and sites of action to manage tough weeds
- Long-lasting residual activity to prevent weed escapes after the initial application and keep rows clean until canopy
- Flexibility in application timing, knowing that early season rains or in-season changes to herbicide programs can happen

Surtain® herbicide by BASF simplifies weed control, with all of these characteristics in one product.

"The power of Surtain herbicide really comes from these three things," says Josh Putman, BASF Corn Herbicides Technical Marketing Manager. "It brings a unique chemistry combination with multiple modes of action, residual endurance and application flexibility through a multi-use pattern."

### Unique Chemistry Combination

Surtain herbicide helps control or suppress 79 broadleaf and grass weeds, with a convenient premix of Group 14 and Group 15 chemistry. This powerful combination provides outstanding control on weeds and grasses proven resistant to ALS-inhibitors, glyphosate, ACCase and triazines.

"Surtain herbicide has also proven to be particularly effective on pigweed species," says Putman.

### The power of Surtain herbicide really comes from three things:



A unique chemistry combination with multiple modes of action



Residual endurance



Application flexibility through a multi-use pattern

### Two-pass Program Brings Powerful Weed Control

University Cooperator – Ashland Bottoms, KS  
Primary weeds: Palmer amaranth, velvetleaf, morning glory



PRE Only: Surtain® Herbicide at 14 fl oz



PRE: Surtain® Herbicide at 14 fl oz  
POST: Status® Herbicide at 5 oz  
+ Zidua® SC Herbicide at 2.5 fl oz

Photos by: Katie Strathman, 6/5/2023.

30 fl oz Roundup® Powermax 3 herbicide + AMS 8.5#/100 gal + NIS 0.25% v/v added to POST treatment.  
BASF sponsored research, 2023.

### Residual Endurance

Surtain herbicide offers powerful residual activity for up to eight weeks of broad-spectrum control, up to two weeks longer than other Group 15 herbicides.

"It's important to overlap residual chemistries to keep weeds under control," says Putman.

"The best time to manage weeds is before they emerge, and consistent residual activity doesn't give weeds a chance to get started."

### Application Flexibility

Surtain herbicide brings flexible application timing from pre- through early post-application. The only post-applied PPO in corn, Surtain herbicide stays active to keep weeds in check for longer.

"The Group 14 active ingredient in Surtain herbicide is solid encapsulated, which allows us to use a PPO-inhibiting herbicide pre all the way up to V3 post without injuring the corn," says Putman.

This solid encapsulation technology is a first-of-its-kind formulation that protects the active ingredient in a solid form until water hits the chemical and activates it. This allows Surtain herbicide to be activated by rain or irrigation water, allowing for full availability of its active ingredients.

### Recommended Program

Putman recommends a two-pass program in corn, with a smart pre-emerge application early, followed by a powerful post application.

"My recommended program would be Surtain herbicide at 14 ounces followed by a post application of Status® herbicide with Zidua® SC herbicide, plus glyphosate and the appropriate adjuvants," says Putman.

Head into 2026 equipped with the right weed control tools to help you fight back against tough-to-manage weeds. Talk to your local retailer or BASF representative to learn more about Surtain herbicide, or visit [Surtain-Herbicide.us](https://Surtain-Herbicide.us) ■

**Surtain®** Herbicide      **Status®** Herbicide

**BASF**  
We create chemistry

# Called to the Corn Field

Not everyone has a calling, and those who do don't always realize it.

I'm one of the lucky ones. I've known since my freshman year of high school that I wanted to be a journalist, which to me means telling the stories that bring us together, spark new ideas or perform a service.

More than 20 years after I found my calling, the work I do looks nothing like what my younger self had envisioned. It's infinitely superior.

I grew up in Rockton, Illinois, surrounded by corn fields, yet I knew nothing about agriculture or the thriving sector of journalism serving the industry. My father worked in banking and brokerage, my mother in marketing. He came from an immigrant family in Chicago; she was adopted. And, to my knowledge, no one on either side farmed.

My curiosity started when former President George W. Bush signed the Renewable Fuel Standard into law. I was about to begin a high-level reporting class at University of Missouri's journalism school and needed a project. I wondered: "What would this law mean for Missouri?"

That question turned my career in an entirely unexpected direction. That story eventually landed me an internship at DTN and set me on a career path covering agriculture, commodity markets and the dynamics of family business.

Before that internship, two of my professors confessed they thought I was headed to graduate school and toward a different career. I'd grown cynical about the business of newspapers and the struggles adapting to a digital environment. I didn't want to write clickbait. I wanted to write something that mattered to the reader.

Finding agriculture was like walking out of city smog and into fresh air. I'd found a place

where journalism had a purpose, where my words could provide a service.

DTN sent me to farms, crop tours, field days and conferences, putting me in a position to learn about agriculture from those who practice it. I'm humbled by how honestly everyone I've met through the years has answered my questions, especially when I admitted my nonfarm background and a desire to get it right. My view of agriculture has been formed by every farmer, rancher, commodity organization, government official,

banker, broker, educator and business operator I've interviewed during the last 15 years. I wouldn't be writing on this page without all the wisdom they shared with me.

Farming is one of the hardest jobs out there but also one of the most important—feeding, fueling and clothing our rapidly changing world. Whether they recognize it or not, most farmers I've met express that farming is a calling, one that gives them a deep sense of purpose,

identity and connection to something greater than themselves.

That's certainly true of the 16th class of America's Best Young Farmers & Ranchers, who are profiled on the pages of this issue. I had the pleasure of meeting them at a workshop in Texas, and I left impressed by how the calling can be similar yet the paths so different.

It's a bright reminder that while there will always be challenges in agriculture and in life, creative, purpose-driven people will always find a way. I hope you enjoy their stories and the stories yet to come. ///

*Katie Dehlinger*

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WE'D LIKE  
TO MENTION

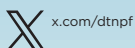


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# Cash Versus Accrual Accounting

*Before starting, I wanted to correct a few items in my One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) Part 2 column from the November 2025 issue. (Shout out to reader Tom for pointing out the errors.) 1.) Personal exemptions were repealed under OBBBA. 2.) Sixty-five and over isn't an exemption, it's a \$6,000 deduction subject to phaseout. 3.) The child tax credit increased to \$2,200 with the refundable portion maximum amount of \$1,700 both indexed for inflation and subject to phaseout. 4.) The enhanced premium tax credits were not extended, and starting in 2026, individuals will have to repay ALL excess advance premium tax credits. I also wanted to clarify my comment on 199A: The new Section 168(n), which allows for 100% expensing of certain nonresidential real property used in a qualified production activity, is included in the 2.5% unadjusted basis of assets, which is a benefit. Now, back to this month's column.*

**I recently toured a large generational farm** that is transitioning to outside management—that is, the owners will no longer actively manage the farm. As a cash basis taxpayer, my first thought was this: Would the transition someday require a change in accounting?

In February of 2017, the IRS issued an Action and Decision letter in response to losing the case *Burnett Ranches LTD. vs. United States* in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Under the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), a farm or ranch is deemed to be a “farming syndicate” if more than 35% of losses are allocated to limited partners or limited entrepreneurs. Simply put, over 65% ownership in a farming entity (partnership or S corporation) needs to be held by active farmers. In *Burnett*, the court ruled that an active ranch manager who held her interest in the farming operation through an intermediary S corporation was still an active farmer. The intermediary S corporation did not break the chain of active farming by the individual. The court recognized that farmers may use structures that involve S corporations, trusts and limited-liability entities for a variety of reasons, including succession planning. In the Action and Decision letter, the IRS said it would not follow the ruling in *Burnett* on a nationwide basis, though it will apply the ruling to cases within the Fifth Circuit’s jurisdiction (Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas). That means owning a farming entity through an intermediary S

corporation could result in the farming entity being deemed a farming syndicate. Although there has been a push to change the IRS position, there has not yet been any resolution.

What do farm syndications have to do with the method of accounting? Farm syndicates are barred from using the cash method of accounting. And, as you can see from *Burnett*, switching to third-party management or even restructuring could result in a farm being deemed a syndicate.

The cash method allows you to recognize income when collected and expenses when paid. It provides several advantages for farmers. Income and expenses are readily determinable at any point of the year (no uncertainties because of beginning and ending innovatory adjustments). Because of the certainty of determining profit/loss, the farmer can participate in tax planning throughout the year.

The accrual method does not follow cash transactions; it follows the economic events of a farm. That is, when the crop is raised or grown, the farmer would recognize income regardless of selling the agricultural commodity. Likewise, you would not recognize the expense when you buy seed or chemicals. You would recognize expenses when you use them. Therefore, income and expense associated with raising or growing agricultural commodities are recognized in the same year. The benefit of the accrual method is the farmer typically has a more accurate reflection of profit/loss. The disadvantage is that there is a lot less flexibility for tax planning.

Farmers have a greater ability to use the cash method than other industries do. The definition of farming includes livestock, dairy, poultry, fruit plantations, ranches, orchards and land used in farming operations. Farming does not include raised/grown fish or the resale of agricultural products. If there is significant participation in the raising or growing of agricultural products, the business activity can extend into processing. Therefore, it’s possible for processors to meet the farming definition and use the cash method.

Although most farmers can use the cash method, there are some exceptions that require the accrual method. If your farm is a farming syndicate or a C corporation, have a discussion with your certified public accountant to make sure you are using the right method of accounting. //



**Rod Mauszycki**

*DTN Tax Columnist Rod Mauszycki, J.D., MBT, is a tax principal with CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen) in Minneapolis, Minnesota.*

► Read Rod’s “Ask the Taxman” column at **ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/TAX**

► You may email Rod at **taxman@dtm.com**



➤ A recent episode takes a deep dive into what's behind the price instability in the cattle market. Host Sarah Mock sits down with DTN Livestock Analyst ShayLe

Stewart to discuss the short- and long-term implications for beef prices.

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➤ **Urban C. Lehner**  
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# Government Shutdown Showed How Markets Value Information

When the government shut down in the early-morning hours of Oct. 1, 2025, USDA ceased publication of several weekly and monthly reports that have become an integral part of price discovery within row-crop markets. Of course, futures markets continued to trade through the record-long 43-day shutdown. Traders relied on the few uninterrupted USDA reports, such as export inspections, as well as other factors, such as Midwest basis levels, futures spreads and, of course, the never-ending rumor mill to formulate price opinions during arguably

the most significant yearly event for grain and oilseed markets: the fall harvest of U.S. corn and soybean crops.

Some firmly believe that USDA reports are unnecessary to the function of markets. There are some compelling arguments to support that position. But,

I personally tend to be a defender of USDA's estimates as a valuable—and, most importantly, public—reference point in the market's never-ending search for the equilibrium price that brings together buyers and sellers. The 2025 USDA funding lapse may be the closest real-life experiment possible in gauging the true value of USDA data in the eyes of the market. Since Eugene Fama first published his Efficient Markets Hypothesis (EMH) in the mid- to late-1960s and theorized that all available market information is accounted for in current prices, the idea of how markets deal with new information has been a highly studied subject, with several subsequent papers arguing that the value of a new piece of information is reflected in the price reaction. Simply put, if information aids traders in price discovery, then that new market information was valuable.

Consider the soybean rally during the government funding lapse, which amounted to \$1.08 from the Sept. 30 close to the Nov. 12 close on the March 2026 futures contract. The lack of weekly export sales updates from USDA likely aided the rally,

with negotiations, headlines and rumors of increased buying by China being the leading reason for the price premium, with no daily or weekly reporting to say for certain. The eventually released listing of reportable sales that occurred through the six-week shutdown showed much lower volumes than traders had been pricing into the market, leading to a \$0.20-plus loss the day of that USDA announcement. This loss was eventually regained in the very next session following positive China-related comments from President Donald Trump, a testament to the nonstop market absorption of news, enhanced by advancements in information flow and algorithmic trading.

Markets are complex organisms. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to explaining what traders were thinking a month ago, let alone trying to predict what may be driving prices a month into the future. However, each market event, whether it be a WASDE report or a social media post, offers insights into how the market is valuing given pieces of information, which can better inform participants when making market decisions. ///



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**Rhett Montgomery**

Lead Analyst

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**MARKETS**

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## TOOLS FROM THE PAST



*No, it's not a magic wand. What is it?*

**Answer:**

*This is a soldering iron used to seal canned goods. The rod was placed in a hole on the lid, and the operator turned the wooden handle to rotate the heated fitted copper piece around the lip of the lid to seal it. The hole was soldered shut when finished.*



# Grain Marketing Resolutions to Make It Through “Weird” Years

Andrew Mages says half of his job as a commodities broker with Progressive Ag is being a psychiatrist, helping farmers navigate the emotions of grain marketing and the fear of missing out.

“Farmers actually have very good instincts,” he says. “Sometimes, they just need an extra push.”

As far as grain marketing goes, 2025 was a weird year. Corn and soybean prices hit their highs in February, bucking seasonal trends for late-spring or early-summer rallies, leaving many farmers with more unpriced grain than they’d like as they head into a new calendar year.

Compounding the problem is that post-COVID price spikes rewarded laissez-faire marketers, and farmers have struggled to get back into a disciplined grain sales strategy as the market shifted.

“Those tops last for seconds, but the bottoms last for years,” says Mages, who also runs the family farm in Minnesota.

As we turn the calendar to a new year and tally the bushels in inventory, it’s a great time to reevaluate your grain marketing strategy.

► **Have a plan.** “There’s no one-size-fits-all marketing plan,” says AgMarket.Net CFO Tyler Schau, who taught grain marketing for 12 years.

The first step is to determine your price and time action points based on your operation’s cost of production and cash-flow needs. Then, you need to have an idea of what tools—cash contracts, futures or options—you’ll use to secure your price.

“You can make a marketing plan really complicated, or you can keep it pretty simple,” Schau explains.

► **Stick to it.** Sticking to the plan is the hard part. By the time a price target rolls around, market sentiment has usually changed, and farmers wonder if they set their sights too low. “Second-guessing is where farmers struggle the most,” he says.

Mages says the first sale is always the toughest, because most farmers are hoping for something better. “Take a small win on your first sale, and it’ll make your marketing plan a lot easier for the rest of the year,” he



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suggests. “You want to hit a lot of singles and doubles when you’re marketing.”

► **Ask for help.** Both Mages and Schau agree having a trusted adviser can be a very helpful resource to guide you in both sticking to your plan and adapting it as the market changes.

“Everybody’s got an agronomist,” Mages says. “So, why don’t most farmers do that with a marketing plan? Farmers love growing a crop, but they hate marketing. So, get some help.”

► **Don’t fear futures and options.** Schau and Mages say they’re valuable tools in an oversupplied grain market like this one. Even if you need to sell physical grain below your target price to meet your cash-flow needs, re-owning those bushels through futures or options can create an opportunity to improve that price in the future.

Mages says farmers may have been burned by margin calls or options expiring worthless in the past, but these tools give them more control than marketing alternatives from their local elevator, such as free delayed-price contracts. Those allow farmers to deliver the bushels but set the price at some point in the future.

“When you have a futures and options account, it opens up a lot more strategies to help you remove risk,” Schau says. ///

## All We Need Is Love

BY Tiffany Dowell Lashmet



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**I always wonder what I will hear at school parent/teacher** conferences. My children are, in general, smart and well-behaved ... but like their mother, they like to talk. We have had to have more than one conversation about how there are some things, such as the details of artificially inseminating a cow, that are not playground-appropriate conversation.

This year, however, it was not the recounting of one of my children's wild barnyard tales that took my breath away during the meeting. It was this comment made by one of my daughter's teachers:

"Your kids come to school to learn because they are loved at home. Some kids come to school to be loved."

The statement stopped me in my tracks. Weeks later, I was still thinking about it. What a perceptive teacher to see that need in her students and to act accordingly. What a difference this approach must make in her students' lives.

But, I can't help but wonder if there is a lesson for all of us in this sentiment? When we interact with others, is there a more important purpose than is outwardly apparent or commonly understood?

Can we flip the narrative and do a better job of showing someone they are loved and valued in ordinary situations, too? Is there a way to recast my reaction to the annoying person who will not get their truck out of the way at the only diesel pump at the gas station or the lady in line at the grocery store who insists on making everything more complicated than it should be?

What if we looked at everyone we see—the kids at church, the employee at the feed store, the secretary at the doctor's office—as someone yearning to be acknowledged or loved. In doing so, could we change their life and ours? ///



Tiffany Dowell Lashmet juggles family, farming, writing, livestock and a career in ag law from the Texas Panhandle. Follow her blog at [alwaysafarmkid.com](http://alwaysafarmkid.com), on Instagram [alwaysafarmkid](https://www.instagram.com/alwaysafarmkid) and on X [@TiffDowell](https://twitter.com/TiffDowell).

## My Green Thumb Heads Indoors

BY Katie Pratt

**The week of the first forecast hard frost I start the big** move, bringing a few dozen houseplants into our garage from the front porch and back deck. I spend a few days repotting, washing pots and trimming summer overgrowth.

Finally, the real work begins—finding a home for each plant somewhere in the house.

The window seats in the living room lose their cushions and become home to a dozen pots. Windowsills in south facing rooms hold several more. The potted trees crowd into corners. Home decor is stored, so plants can have their space on shelves and side tables.

My plant collection has grown a lot in the last few years. This winter I've added humidifiers and grow lights in a new attempt to propagate and keep several ferns alive.

Each plant has a story. My collection of aloe vera started with a clearance buy at Walmart. The Christmas cactus, which has never bloomed on my watch, belonged to my great grandmother. The asparagus fern was an experiment to see if I could keep it alive all winter. I did, and now I have several.

The family has made more than one comment about greenhouse living. My daughter has even wondered if I'm merely replacing kids with plants. I am, after all, entering a new life phase with an "empty nest" and a different schedule.

But isn't caretaking what farmers do?

Growing up, I cared for orphaned calves and pigs. I witnessed my mom, the teacher, and my grandmother, the nurse, in constant care mode. I have always treasured time in the garden. Caring for these plants seems a natural progression of all those lessons in compassion.


After all, what better way to spend the wintry months than in a jungle of living things trying to keep the green thumb busy until spring. ///



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Katie Pratt writes and shares her love of agriculture, family and plants from a north-central Illinois farm. Visit [theillinoisfarmgirl.com](http://theillinoisfarmgirl.com) to follow her writing blog.



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# Built To Last





Ed and Britton Blair, and other family members used EQIP funds to help maximize grass production on their South Dakota home ranch, which overlooks Bear Butte in the background.

## ***Ranching family embraces conservation practices and a value-added business plan to grow their cattle business.***

**O**n a ridge overlooking a large portion of this 38,000-acre South Dakota ranch, you can see on the plain below the remains of what was a settler's cabin. The dwelling might be a mile away, but it's difficult to tell in this seemingly limitless horizon.

"The cabin was built about 1908 by members of the Kinghorn family, who established this ranch," says Chad Blair, who now owns and manages the property as part of Blair Bros. Angus Ranch. Blair, along with wife, Mary, and daughter, Clara, have been driving around the rolling grasslands and sometimes rocky hills in the northwest part of the state, north of Belle Fourche.

"I've been down on the flat at that cabin when it's been baking in 100°F heat," Mary says. "There's a rock cellar that's probably full of snakes and bugs, and I wondered what in the world in this remote location would make you want to stop and settle right here."

### **> GRASS HAVEN**

The sentiment is understandable, especially when you consider the hardships involved nearly 120 years ago. But, the short answer then is really the same answer now: lots of grass and plenty of space.

Blair Bros. Angus Ranch, a premiere cow/calf, stocker and feedlot operation, purchased more than 17,000 acres of what's known as Two Top Ranch from the Kinghorn family in 2014. Eventually, the 17,000 acres became 38,000 acres with a later purchase of 6,000 acres and multi-thousand-acre leases from the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the state.

Chad, Mary and their three children moved from Blair Bros. home ranch—7,000 acres located an hour southeast, near Vale—to upgrade and manage the new purchase. The business is owned and managed by two brothers, Ed and Rich Blair, and their sons and wives, Chad and Mary, and Britton and Amanda, respectively.

Blair family members have been ranching in the region for 120 years, but the current iteration of their ranch was begun in 1954 near Vale. Today's two managing generations have expanded practices begun prior to them—rotational grazing and water conservation—while adding artificial insemination (AI) to refine the genetics and time the supply of their cattle going forward. They've also specifically planned their operation to optimize wildlife habitat.

For their work, the Blairs were presented the Leopold Conservation Award for South Dakota in 2020 given by the Sand County Foundation and the American Farmland Trust. They also won the 2021 Environmental Stewardship ➤

**“We’re in this for the long haul, even doing grass management on leased acres.”**

—Chad Blair



Award (established by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association) for their region.

The family has used Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding to put in place conservation practices designed to maximize grass production, including crossfencing, livestock watering wells, pumps, pipelines, tanks, shelterbelts and fabricated windbreaks.

## > ALL ABOUT WATER

The addition of 38,000 acres to Blair Bros. Angus a decade ago offered them a chance to put to work everything they’d learned for decades about pasture and water management with cattle. The average annual rainfall in the Belle Fourche region is 14 to 16 inches. The key word is “average.” They can get more but have certainly gotten less.

The former Two Top Ranch already featured a dam and pond system that facilitated water distribution. However, that wasn’t going to be enough to ensure a regular water supply distributed over numerous fenced rotational-grazing pastures.

The Blairs sunk a 3,800-foot-deep well at a high point on the property—not far from Chad and Mary’s house—and have run more than 25 miles of pipeline around the ranch to supply 80 water tanks. The distribution system, other than a pump halfway up the well, is gravity driven. More water pipeline and water supply tanks for the cattle are in the works.

Also near the well are underground water storage tanks capable of holding 30,000 gallons. They plan to eventually build more water storage.

“The system works really well,” Chad explains. “The pipeline is designed with three big loops that interconnect. We can shut off water to one part of the ranch and still have water flowing to everywhere else we need it to be.”

*Mary and Chad Blair are implementing grazing and cattle production practices they hope will encourage the next generation, such as daughter, Clara, to continue ranching.*

## > VALUABLE HABITAT

The Blairs are part of a multistate effort—the Sage Grouse Initiative—to protect the habitat of the once-endangered bird famous for its early-morning mating dance. Working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the nonprofit Working Lands for Wildlife, they’ve used funding from EQIP to plan and implement measures like prescribed grazing, removal of invasive conifers and restoration of wet meadows.

These voluntary efforts helped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine 10 years ago that protections for the sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act were not warranted.

Among the things the Blairs and others have done is avoid putting fencing near sage grouse mating grounds—they tend to perform in the same locations each year. Fencing features reflectors that warn away birds, and fence gates don’t have high poles that would offer a higher vantage point for hawks to more easily hunt sage grouse.

The family also doesn’t install any water pipes during the sage grouse mating and nesting season. The Blairs plan even more crossfencing to, among other things, better bunch cattle at times when they are going to receive AI.

## > THE HERD

At one time, Ed and Rich's grandfather, Enos, and his brothers had one of the largest registered Hereford herds in the U.S. Enos and brothers split up the ranch in the late 1940s to accommodate the return of several cousins from World War II, including Ed and Rich's father, Veldon. Veldon raised straight-bred Herefords until the 1970s.

To fill in an empty pasture one year, the Blairs purchased some Angus and Black Baldy calves. "We had 15 or 20 of them," Ed says. "Those animals outperformed everything else we had at the time." That was the beginning of the complete shift to Angus.

Around the same time, they began to use AI to keep their replacements out of their first-calf heifers. The Blairs haven't looked back.

The operation runs cows in herds of 300 to 400 head to better manage pastures. The herd size also helps them better identify animals that can compete in the harsh plains' environment. Their heifers are synchronized and bred via AI. Only heifers that conceive through AI are kept for replacements.

Cows are bred AI for two cycles then exposed to Blair Bros. bulls. The bulls are sold as yearlings via private treaty nearly year-round. Many are four to eight generations of AI sires stacked for calving ease, carcass weight, docility, marbling and rib eye. The operation began selling bulls in 1993.

In recent years, 98 to 100% of their steers and open heifers have graded Choice or higher. Prime and Certified Angus Beef designations have run 40 to 75% and 85 to 95%, respectively. Daily weight gains range from 4 to 5.7 pounds per day.

Between cow/calf pairs, yearlings, bulls and heifers, the entire 45,000-acre ranch might have up to 3,000 animals at a given time.

## > VALUE-ADDED EFFORTS

Britton Blair, who spends much of his day on herd health, feed procurement and the marketing of

*A dam and water system using underground pipe supplies 80 tanks across the ranch.*



bred heifers they buy back from bull customers, says the idea of having their own beef brand has been discussed.

"I sell 20 to 25 head right now without really trying to family and friends mostly," he says. "But, we've found we really don't have the time to focus on that as a business. The beef industry is pretty efficient, and if you start doing small numbers—say, driving three head 100 miles to a plant for processing—that's pretty inefficient in terms of time, fuel, etc."

As it is, Blair Bros. works with customers around the country who buy their bulls and customers from as far away as Arkansas, Kansas and Texas who purchase bred heifers by private treaty.

The Blairs were among the founding members of U.S. Premium Beef (USPB), the vertically integrated, producer-owned cooperative-turned-LLC created to help ranchers better capture premiums for higher-quality beef.

"Before that, pretty much all cattle brought about the same price, and we were looking for a way to differentiate our herd," partner Rich Blair says. When they began with USPB (late 1990s), they weren't necessarily hitting the top end of quality when their carcasses were graded.

"This narrowed our focus," Rich explains. "We started to select for characteristics like marbling in our bulls and cattle, and it gave us a target to shoot for. It's been incredible."

The first steers they processed with USPB brought a \$15-per-head premium. "That's nothing today," Rich says, "but at the time, we thought, 'This is kind of neat.'" Their cattle graded about 65% Choice then and now grade about 75% Prime. Back then, one lot of animals might grade out to a \$200-per-head difference "top to bottom. Now, you have cattle with a \$1,500-per-head difference top to bottom. The premiums have increased that much, not that the discounts have increased," he adds.

The attention paid to developing their herd, the marketing of it, along with the care of the land that includes benefits for wildlife signal an operation looking to the future. After all, there are five grandchildren coming up the ranks.

"You spend all your life putting together a business and hope that the next generation—if they enjoy it—will want to take it over," Ed explains.

"We want to be ranching for the next generations," Britton adds, "and that means leaving the land in a sustainable condition."

The Blairs are in a position to offer that opportunity, and that's required growth. "In the 1980s, you could make it with 100 cows," Rich says. "Then, it was 200 cows in the '90s, and by today, we have to have 600 to 1,000 cows to make it viable." ///



**LAYNE AND RYANE MILES**  
Miles Farms  
McGehee, Arkansas

By Dan Miller, @DMillerPF  
Photos By Joel Reichenberger, @JReichPF

# The Weight of Legacy



*Standing next to a torn-down semi, Ryane and Layne Miles talk over the day. In addition to crops, the business operates other enterprises, such as trucks, to diversify income. Layne and Ryane (right) with their sons, Owen and Luke*

A thick blanket of heat and humidity smothers the southeast Arkansas Delta long before sunrise. The National Weather Service issued an extreme heat warning for this July day, the heat index expected to touch 114°F. And, it does. The corn harvest is a point or two of moisture away from starting. On Miles Farms, just outside McGehee, Arkansas, four John Deere combines crawl through a newly opened field of soybeans.

Layne Miles, 30, a fifth-generation farmer born and raised on this land, steps into the shade of a lone tree to escape the heat. He bow hunts, golfs, cooks and is working toward his pilot's license. But, he did not see "farming" as a line on his resume. "It's not something I really thought I would do," he says.

By age 21, there he was, farming and learning farming alongside his dad, Matt. All those summers laying poly pipe and clearing blockages in untold numbers of irrigated furrows had paid off. Destiny had caught up with him.

"As far as my expectations for Layne, the ability to work side by side and him truly be my best friend is the biggest blessing a father could ask for," Matt says. "Losing my father at a younger age, I knew the importance of teaching him all I could as early as I could. In his younger years, I took him into every meeting I had. I wanted him to learn all the good and bad of the business side, as well as the in-depth

agronomy I was short on. He continues to amaze me on a daily basis with his unique abilities. He is a better farmer at 30 than I was at 50. He is my rock star."

As operations manager today, Layne coordinates logistics, monitors the crops, manages inputs and resources, and works closely with employees. His wife, Ryane, says Layne "farms outside the box. He loves all things technology."

Layne credits his employees. "We've got a fantastic group of people that work with us. I consider them family, our family. We have our trials, but in the end, this is a fulfilling."

## > CULTURE SHOCK

Layne is married 10 years now to Ryane, a nonfarming girl. She grew up in Crossett, Arkansas, about an hour south of Layne. She played second base on the Crossett High School softball team and was a cheerleader at Friday night football games. The couple has two young boys, Luke, 8 (hangs with dad, early inklings about a farming career), and Owen, 5 (hangs with mom, class clown). One or both sons will grow into a sixth generation to one day manage Miles Farms. They are already learning, spending after-school hours with Ryane at the farm. "They get to see what our guys do," she says.

Ryane's dad was director of operations at Georgia-Pacific. He worked Monday through Friday. He grew tomatoes in a pot. When she met Layne's dad, he was on a cotton picker. "That was just a culture shock, a very different way of life," she remembers.

Miles Farms is 16,000 acres—cotton, corn, soybeans, all of which is furrow-irrigated, and wheat—with up to 2,500 acres of rice, all spread across four counties. "Rice is fun to grow," Layne says. "But,





# This couple looks at a future of their diversified farm that will be won or lost in the grocery-store aisle.

when it gets ready to harvest, it's one of the hardest crops to harvest. If a good storm comes down, people think that cutting down wheat is bad; cutting down rice is three times worse."

Irrigation water is pumped from wells or from bald cypress bayous. There is much water around, but water management is critical. "We know that water restrictions are coming," Layne says. "While preparing for that, we work with the EQIP [Environmental Quality Incentives Program] and build reservoirs. We try to capture all the water runoff possible." He says they use EQIP to build water-recovery systems and improve land by way of pipes and land forming. "We manage as many acres as possible, reusing all the runoff we can."

## > DIVERSIFYING THE RISKS

Farming is one arm of a diversified business. Production agriculture runs in tandem with Advanced Ag Products (chemical retail), Alpha Engines (diesel repair) and the 16 semitrucks of Big Daddy Farms trucking business.

"We try to keep our toes in a few different buckets so we're not solely dependent on just the farm," Layne says.

Ryane works across all the businesses. "I do the payroll, accounts receivable and payables. We just hired a trucking manager, so he was able to take a lot of the trucking tasks off me so I can start to learn more of the farm side. I hope to move forward with doing more with the farm."

Layne's mother, Sherrie Kay, mentors Ryane. "Sherrie Kay, your mom, is the top-tier farm wife," Ryane says with a nod toward Layne. "She knows all the ins and outs, and she's been teaching me, from chemicals to planting to harvest. It blows my mind every single year just how she wraps her mind around all this."

## > MARRIED PARTNERS

Layne and Ryane are well-matched in their support for each other. "We've been together since I was 16 and you were 15," she says looking over at Layne. "And, I've watched him grow up. I mean, as a kid who's working here, he was low man on the totem pole and doing everything that they tell him to do. And, now it's totally opposite. He has earned their respect, and he treats them with respect. He's taught me how to treat people when things are hard, to go through life with this positive attitude. You won't see him in a bad attitude. Most people don't. If they do, then it's been a pretty rough day."

Adds Layne: "Whether it's work, or it's personal, no matter what, she's always right there with me. She is going to bat for me. I try to remember her in my working relationship with my guys. I'm not the only one in town with an idea. I need to be encouraging, be there for that person. That's her personality. I may come home just wired and really mad about today. And, she's like, 'Babe, you got tomorrow.' Same with my guys. We got tomorrow. We can fix it tomorrow."

## > GUIDED BY LEGACIES AND MENTORS

The legacy of Miles Farms weighs heavy on Layne. But, he has had the blessings of good people around him.

First, his father. Matt's mantra is "productive consistency."

Matt is a founding member of XtremeAg ([xtremeag.farm](http://xtremeag.farm)), a membership-based organization managed by Matt and a half-dozen other farmer-partners who share their practices, successes, failures, advice and agronomic strategies. ➤



## LAYNE AND RYANE MILES

Miles Farms  
McGehee, Arkansas

Matt has brought to Miles Farms a reputation for soybean and corn production. He has notched 100-bushel-plus soybean yield state records several times. Matt also owns several state National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) National Corn Yield Contest wins.

### > TRIO OF MENTORS

“My dad is ultimately my best friend,” Layne says. “I get to work side by side with him every day. He guides me to be a better farmer but also a better husband and a better dad. My love for farming came from him, and I hope to instill this in my boys.”

Mike McGregor, who runs a large business delivering chicken litter to farms across the Delta, is Layne’s sons’ “Godpaw.” “He teaches me time and time again the values a person should have. He’s one of the most business-minded people I know. I call him often when I have work-

Watch the Video



<https://bcove.video/444elks>

DTN



□ Fifth-generation farmer Layne Miles (above) and his father, Matt, work through this year’s cotton harvest. Layne (below left) loads out corn for river markets.

related problems and when I have spiritual problems. He is truly a man who loves God. I am grateful he treats me like his own son.”

Billy Garner was the premier farm manager at Miles Farms and knew farming, managed the work and was the well-known jokester just to keep things light. “I mean, he would pull a prank on somebody ... throw

firecrackers inside the bathroom. He made sure work was fun.”

Garner died in an accident in 2019. “He was my dad’s best friend, as well as mine,” Layne says. “I was just beginning to figure out how to manage the farm. I spent hours with him in the truck learning to do what he did. I owe a lot of what I know to him.”

The day Billy died, Layne’s life changed. “I was a glorified tractor operator the day he died,” Layne says. “I had about 12 hours to grieve, and then the next morning, I had to wake up and be a different person.”

### > QUESTIONS IN THE FIELD

Layne grapples with many questions, seeking answers. He’s highly concerned about the future. “It’s my biggest question,” he says. “We’ve had a big turnover in farming, and you don’t want to be that person [who doesn’t make it]. You want to be the person who at least gets to push through and fight another year. We hope to fight another year.”

The struggle is in the field. Layne and his father focus on in-field research to improve yields, on drainage and tailwater recovery, on irrigation projects and reduced tillage. They have been integrating cover-crop systems into the operation. “We take pride in making sure every acre is tended to in the same manner,” Layne says.

### > STRUGGLE IN THE GROCERY AISLE

The struggle is in the grocery aisle, as well. In fact, Layne thinks it is his and farming’s biggest oncoming challenge. “The suburban mom wants to know where her food comes from, not just that it is organic or non-GMO. They want to be able to go to the box of cereal and see the picture of a farmer on it. A QR code tells them about the farmer, that there is actually a person behind it, growing it.”

It’s not an unreasonable request. Layne and Ryane raise their boys the same way. “They know where their food comes from,” Ryane says. “Daddy grows corn, and it goes to a chicken, and then we eat the chicken. That’s what consumers want to know. They want to know the guy who grows the chicken. They want to know what’s going on.” ///

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# CHAMPION — RARITIES —



**LUCAS AND DANA DULL**  
Dull's Tree Farm  
Thorntown, Indiana

# Make Memories On the Farm

**W**hen Lucas Dull left his family's Thorntown, Indiana, farm for Purdue University, he did not intend to return four years later. Lucas graduated with an agricultural engineering degree and met his future wife at the university.

Dana, who grew up on a corn, soybean and livestock farm two hours east of the Dulls, earned a degree in math education. They both graduated in May 2012 and were married one month later.

Lucas had a short run with a nine-to-five job but soon knew a desk was not where he wanted to spend his professional life. He was hearing the call of the farm, at that time predominately a corn and soybean operation, but also one with a growing Christmas tree business operated by his father and mother, Tom and Kerry.

"Pretty early on dating Lucas, I knew he had the mindset of agritourism and a vision and mission of adding pumpkins to his family farm," Dana says.

Lucas came home with a proposal. His father remembers that conversation. "We were surprised," Tom says. "Lucas never gave us any indication he wanted to come back. And, our first thought was, 'How are we going to afford to bring him on?'"

Lucas had already been mulling that over. "Well," he told his parents, "let's grow pumpkins."

Lucas and Dana soon settled near the Dull family farm where today they are raising four children, Eden, Kinsley, Macie and Solomon.

Lucas' and Dana's first pumpkin harvest was in 2014. Only five years later, the 20-day fall season

anchored by pumpkins began to outperform the four-week Christmas tree season. Income from the two enterprises together allowed the Dulls to make a major transition.

"The fall agritourism and Christmas tree business became large enough that we were able to get out of traditional row-crop farming in 2019 and fully focus our time and energy on the agritourism," Lucas says. The family's row-crop enterprise is leased to Tom's nephew.

Dull's Tree Farm has become a powerful agricultural and retail draw just north of Indianapolis, drawing 80,000 visitors a year. Visitors tell the Dulls they browse the farm's offerings for up to four hours during each visit. Dull's Tree Farm was voted the 2018 Best Christmas Tree Farm in Indiana by *Good Housekeeping*.

## > CREATE FARM MEMORIES

"Even if a visitor doesn't leave with a tree, we want them to experience the farm and create memories," Dana says.

Dull's Tree Farm tends 65,000 Christmas trees, selling 6,000 trees annually. Eight acres grow 40 varieties of pumpkins and squash. Whether trees or pumpkins, guests also wind their way through 45 down-on-the-farm activities. The corn maze last year celebrated



## From firs to stroopwafels, this family brings farm life to thousands.



50 years of “Wheel of Fortune” (no spinning required). Guests cuddle up with friendly farm animals or next to a firepit with marshmallows. There’s face-painting, pumpkin-decorating and a barrel ride.

A giant slide races down one hillside. A farm equipment playground is anchored by a faded-green John Deere 3300 combine—with a slide. Over by a pair of gravity wagons, basketball hoops turn old harvest gear into a jump-shot challenge.

Feeling crafty? Join the “Pine and Wine” wreath-making class. Just outside, paintballs. And, if you hear a thud, don’t worry—it’s just someone launching a pumpkin from the cannon.

Dull’s Tree Farm’s 2,400-square-foot Trading Post is a busy retail hub selling ornaments, wreathes and branded apparel. Locally produced wares, such as honey, are prominently displayed throughout the store. The Dulls make their own fudge to sell.

### ➤ BUILD A UNIQUE FOOD MENU

Lucas and Dana have discovered great demand for unique, seasonal foods. The “super slushy”—an apple cider slushy with whipped topping and a farm-made apple cider donut on top—is a top food item. The Dulls recently added stroopwafels, a popular Dutch cookie made of two thin, circular waffles sandwiched together. Food sales make up about 20 to 25% of their total income.

“We’re focused,” Dana says, “on sustainability and diversification, and look for new ways to get people out to the farm and connect them to agriculture.” One way is to expand seasons. The Dulls have added a spring adult Easter egg hunt paired with a local brewery, and a “Christmas in July” event, drawing 100 vendors and an appearance from Santa.

“My growth plan is an expansion of tree season focused on atmosphere, food and entertainment,” Lucas says. ➤



*Dull’s Tree Farm is home to an agritourism operation that draws upwards of 80,000 people a year, primarily during its fall pumpkin and Christmas tree season. The business features trees, pumpkins, a corn maze and more than 40 other activities. It has a large retail outlet and sells a variety of seasonal foods. The Dull family includes Solomon, Dana, Lucas (back row from left) and Marcie, Kinsley and Eden.*

# CROPLAN SEED HELPS GROW ROI ON YOUR ACRE

## CROPLAN®



**ANSWER PLOT RESEARCH TEAMED WITH LOCALIZED TOP GENETICS  
HELPS BOOST FARMERS' RETURN ON INVESTMENT AND PROFITS.**

**R**eflecting on a season of tight margins across the Corn Belt, farmers are seeking answers to make every dollar count in 2026.

For Randy Mette, CROPLAN Regional Seed Product Manager in Effingham, Illinois, the answer comes down to precision input knowledge from an astute advisor.

"In today's challenging commodity market, it's critical to invest in the right places," Mette says. "Every hybrid and variety choice, every input, every acre has to be managed for the best return on investment (ROI)."

Across the Corn Belt, CROPLAN advisors continue to help growers do just that—turning a mountain of field and plot data into actionable, local insights that drive profitability. "Local CROPLAN seed experts work

with individual farmers to know their fields and agronomic goals to optimize a seed and input strategy," Mette says.

Taking a blanket approach—using the same seed, population, fertility and fungicides across fields and farms—is no longer the best recipe for spreading risk and optimizing every acre.

"We're definitely seeing farmers spread as much risk as they possibly can, maybe through hybrid selection with different traits and germplasm offerings," Mette says. "That's where working with a CROPLAN advisor can help match germplasm and traits from across the industry to the correct acres with the right inputs and in-season adjustments to drive ROI success."

### CROPLAN SEED ADVANTAGE

It all starts with the solid, tested traits and germplasm that earn their way into a CROPLAN seed bag. "We work with leading genetic and trait suppliers," Mette says. "Our job is to select the right experimental combinations that bring agronomic strength and high yield potential that fit specific areas."

Mette and six other CROPLAN seed product managers from across the U.S. spend the summer and fall walking experimental corn and soybean plots with genetic suppliers. Winter months are spent deciding which of these hybrids and varieties to test in Answer Plot locations.

"We test these experimentals for one to two years across our Answer Plot system, looking to bring certain agronomic benefits, certain traits that we need in specific geographies," Mette says. "Those hybrids and varieties that survive our strict criteria will advance into a CROPLAN seed bag."

### ANSWER PLOT VALUE

While yield remains king for seed selection, more growers want to know the backstory on hybrid and variety responses to their local environment and input use to improve ROI.

Replicated, independent genetics and agronomic input testing by CROPLAN and WinField United in over 90 Answer Plot locations annually has delivered valuable, localized product backstories for more than 20 years.



“For example, Answer Plot research examines experimental and current CROPLAN corn and soybean varieties for yield, disease, fertility and soil type,” Mette says. “This helps us develop national and local recommendations since we understand how each hybrid responds to different soil types, fungicides, nitrogen levels, plant population and yield environments.”

## RESPONSE-TO INPUT ADVANTAGE

Spending money on the right inputs, like reducing Southern rust that invaded corn last year, depends on planning, quality data and a good in-season advisor and scout.

While it’s important to know hybrid disease ratings, CROPLAN seed raises the bar by testing hybrids for Response-to fungicides (RTF). Over the past decade, they’ve seen a 13 bushel per acre fungicide advantage across hybrids, with individual responses ranging from 0.2 to 38 bushels.

Nitrogen is another critical input that can help growers maximize ROI potential by not leaving bushels on the table. “We use Response-to nitrogen (RTN) trials to judge hybrids that can increase yields if pushed,” Mette says. “Over 14 years of hybrid trials, our RTN averages

an additional 68.7 bushels per acre, with a range of 40- to 130-bushel increase.”

Such RTN data not only helps hybrid and input buying decisions, it also provides insight into which hybrids would benefit most from added nitrogen when shortfalls occur.

Response-to population (RTP) is another critical metric that CROPLAN tests across hybrids for growers interested in pushing populations or evaluating replant scenarios. Mette says their research across hybrids has shown a range from a minus 1.2 bushels per acre to a 22.5 bushels per acre increase.

“When CROPLAN and WinField United Answer Plot research can identify such powerful insights by hybrid and by acre, growers have more confidence to work with advisors and put their dollars exactly where they’ll see the optimal ROI potential,” Mette says.

## SHARED RISK, SHARED REWARD

One of CROPLAN’s innovative tools to advance farmer ROI is the Advanced Acre Rx Program. It’s designed to assist growers who might be hesitant to try a different practice.

“For example, our advisors might recommend adding a nitrogen stabilizer to a sidedress application or adding MasterLock adjuvant to a fungicide application,” Mette says. “If such practices do not return a positive ROI, we help offset the cost. It’s a way for farmers to try new practices without taking on all the risk.”

To complement agronomic precision, CROPLAN and WinField United continue to offer their popular SECURE financing, helping farmers manage cash flow and reinvest in the right inputs.

Since 2016, the SECURE line of credit has offered low interest



and flexible repayment terms that can extend beyond one crop season. Farmers can streamline all seed, crop protection and fertilizer purchases, free from ties to a single product manufacturer, while taking advantage of early-purchasing programs. And since your local retailer, not bankers, backs the program, it’s designed to help farmers support their operational goals.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Despite commodity market pressures, Mette remains confident about the road ahead. “Every year is a new opportunity to start with a clean slate. And we have the tools to help growers improve on their profit goals,” he says.

Seed selection is the most critical decision a grower makes. “Everything after that—population, fertility, fungicide—is about maximizing the potential of that seed. That’s why CROPLAN and our retail advisors focus on the acre, not the average,” Mette adds. ■



To learn more about seed and program details or find a CROPLAN retailer, visit **CROPLAN.com**





## LUCAS AND DANA DULL

Dull's Tree Farm  
Thorntown, Indiana



Watch the Video



"I would love to find a big, trackless train to add a train experience as part of the Christmas season."

### > EARN THEIR BUSINESS

The Dulls nurture the loyalty of their customers. Facebook posts and emails drawn from a list of 18,000 names feature the Dulls planting trees, shearing branches or adding new activities. But, they find word-of-mouth is their best advertisement. "We believe there is strong value in a friend telling you about a great experience they had at our farm."

Dull's Tree Farm grows four varieties of Christmas trees. Concolor fir (slow growers, longer needles, strong branches, citrus lemon and orange scent); Scotch pine (Dull's first pines, grows in almost any soil condition, high degree of pest susceptibility); white pine (long, soft needles, popular for traditional tree trimming—ornament balls, tinsel—weaker branches can't hold heavy ornaments); Canaan fir (most popular tree, shorter-needed fir tree, fragrant, strong branches).

Tree farming has similarities to row crops. Weed and insect control are important. The Dulls fertilize trees annually. Applications are nitrogen mostly, but also phosphorus and potassium, and some sulfur and micronutrients.

What is different from a typical Midwest row crop is the eight-year rotation for trees and long days of laborious care—shaping every tree every year is only one

*The Dulls tend 65,000 Christmas trees, but food sales make up a quarter of the income. Kinsley and Eden (below) manage one of the on-site food stands.*



chore. The Christmas tree market can hold great risk with a changing consumer preference for trees.

"You can't make changes to your supply quickly," Lucas says. "We try to make sure we have a comfortable supply for whatever [business] growth we might see between now and eight years from now."

### > FARM IN TRANSITION

What will certainly change over the course of the next eight years is governorship of Dull's Tree Farm. This is a business in transition.

Lucas and Dana have become majority owners. He is general manager. She is operations manager with 115 seasonal employees reporting to her. Tom and Kerry have pulled back some from the business but retain an important advisory role. Tom is busy among the trees. Kerry maintains the books. "They also give us a lot of good counsel wisdom," Lucas says.

The family has taken on the services of a business coach and a financial planner to help manage the transition. The coach helps the Dulls create structure and organization. The financial planner helps with financial structure and succession planning.

"Over how many years, this just worked," Lucas says. "Then all of a sudden, our staff grew. We would bring in 15 people to help shake and bale

trees. Now, we have 115 people, and that comes with roles and responsibilities and job development. A coach helps you see what these changes mean and what you need to think about."

"The coach gave us ideas that I don't think we would have ever come up with," Dana says. "She helped us recognize each of our skill sets and how to organize an organizational chart to help the business function better. She also gave us tools for communication and how best to implement roles and responsibilities."

### > TIME CONSCIOUS

Important to the family's transition has been time. "We've been taking it incrementally," Lucas says. "It's not just a one big step."

For Tom and Kerry, it is learning to let go. "You have to learn as patriarch and matriarch that there comes a time when you have to hand over the reins," Tom says. "They're not going to learn without us doing it."

Lucas and Dana believe they have proven their value. Over two years, they earned their way into the business, not as managers first but as paid employees. "We wanted to make sure this was something he really wanted to do," Tom says. "They proved to us that they were serious about it. Lucas and Dana are doing an admirable job." ///

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**D.J. AND CHELSEA HLADKY**  
D.J. & Chelsea Hladky Farms  
Ainsworth, Nebraska

By Susan Payne, @jpusan  
Photos By Joel Reichenberger, @JReichPF

# The Right Balance



**B**alancing a family and farm life in the Sandhills of north-central Nebraska doesn't come easy for farmers D.J. and Chelsea Hladky. Yet, they have created a family-oriented operation near Ainsworth in which every family member—down to the youngest—plays a part. “Together” is a word the family values as they navigate the restless pace of each season on their 5,000-plus-acre operation spread across Rock and Brown counties.

## > EARLY DAYS

Coming from a long line of farmers, D.J. was introduced to farming when his father, Dan, who was born and raised in the Kansas City metropolitan area, thought the Sandhills would provide a better life for his growing family. They started farming near Long Pine, Nebraska, about 10 miles east of Ainsworth. Eventually, Dan was able to secure his own operation.

Throughout his childhood, D.J. saw his father pour everything into farming: long summers, constant management and countless hours of work. After high school, D.J. enrolled at Northeast Community College, in Norfolk, Nebraska, to study business and finance. In a first-semester English class, he met his future bride, Chelsea.

Despite the challenges of row cropping in Nebraska's Sandhills, D.J. Hladky feels blessed to farm with his family at his side. Gus, 3, and D.J. (left) share time during the harvest.

She eventually moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, to pursue a degree in nursing in 2006. A few months later, D.J. followed with his business degree and a job working for a financial institution. But, the momentum for a desk job was short-lived. “It didn't take me long to realize that a desk job was not for me,” he says.

Instead, he joined the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, working eight days on and six days off between Lincoln, Nebraska, and Gillette, Wyoming, a nearly 650-mile highway stretch.

While he enjoyed the railroad, D.J. began to change his outlook on the farm. A year later, he started farming on the side with his dad.

“The railroad made me realize that life on the farm wasn't so bad,” he says. “I would work eight days in Wyoming, come back to the farm in Long Pine and go back to see Chelsea in Lincoln for two days.”

## > TIME TO FARM

D.J. rented his first acres in the spring of 2008 on a 130-acre tract shared 50-50 with his father. The more



**This farming couple seeks symmetry between working the farm and nurturing their family.**



Chelsea Hladky (left) and daughter, Adeline, 12, team up to drive the grain cart during this past fall's harvest. Adeline has driven tractor and cart since she was 10.

time he spent farming, the clearer his path became. As Chelsea finished nursing school, D.J. recognized that he wanted to commit to full-time farming.

In the spring of 2010, the two bought a house and moved to Ainsworth. Chelsea had taken a job locally, and more of their future fell into place.

Aug. 30, 2010, was D.J.'s last day on the railroad. Ten days later, the two married. For the next nine years, D.J. farmed full time with his father in separate operations, sharing equipment and labor.

In 2019, D.J. and Chelsea made the decision to branch out on their own: D.J. & Chelsea Hladky Farms was official. The split from his dad's operation was amicable—the two were moving at different paces.

"My dad had done nothing but worked solid for 35 years; he was ready to slow down and enjoy life a little bit more. I was on the ramp-up mode trying to expand acres. We had a lot of decisions to make," D.J. explains.

Starting out, D.J. and Chelsea owned one semitruck, one tractor and other equipment. The couple rapidly secured more acres and even turned some down because of equipment capacity.

"We weren't where we needed to be to farm the acres we were able to pick up," D.J. points out. "We had to obtain our own equipment line, and for the first few years, most of the work was done by Chelsea and myself, along with some seasonal help."

Luckily, interest rates were lower before the COVID-19 pandemic, and they had the backing of a supportive financial officer. "It would be a lot more challenging if it were to happen today," he says.

## > SANDHILLS CHALLENGES

The Sandhills' sandy, fragile soil presents challenges raising corn and soybean crops, often resulting in widely variable yields. Monitoring for weather changes, the Hladkys also keep a close eye on their irrigation systems, as the Sandhills sit atop the massive Ogallala Aquifer.

"It's very normal for us to make 16 rounds with our irrigation systems every year," D.J. explains. "We have farm ground that can get an inch of rain, and we are already starting to apply water the next day in the heat of the summer. Around here, [our soils can produce, but] we have to spoon-feed our crops and make nitrogen applications throughout the season."

With soil variability spread across two counties, the Hladkys use full tillage, minimum tillage and no-till practices, depending on the field.

"We have to do everything we can to make each acre as productive as possible," he says. "Changing our management practices to individualize each acre changed everything for us. Variable-rate irrigation, fertilizer and planting are some of the things we do in addition to fertility and grid-sampling overlaid with production maps." ➤

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**“Liberty ULTRA herbicide isn't just another herbicide; it's a game-changer,” says Matt Malone, Liberty ULTRA Herbicide Product Manager.**

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Generic Glufosinate



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**“Liberty ULTRA herbicide brings unparalleled value to farmers, making it essential to their weed management strategies,” notes Malone.**



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“I’ve heard from the people who try to skimp by and use knockoff, generic Liberty® [herbicide]. It’s not the same class of compound as Liberty ULTRA herbicide. It’s a deal where you get what you pay for, so if you’re making a pass, to me, an extra few dollars is definitely worth using the good product.”

### MATT ZELLE

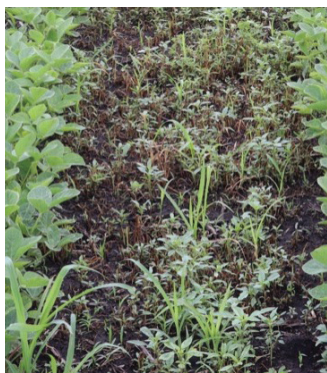
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<sup>1</sup> BASF sponsored field research trials 2022-2023, 52 trials, nationwide

<sup>2</sup> Stratus Farmer survey 2021-2023

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## D.J. AND CHELSEA HLADKY

D.J. & Chelsea Hladky Farms  
Ainsworth, Nebraska

Cover crops such as rye, radishes and turnips help the farm maintain and improve organic matter, prevent wind erosion and suppress weeds in the sandy region.

### > FARM-FAMILY BALANCE

The couple welcomed their first child, daughter Adeline, to the farm in 2013. Briggs was born in 2015, Emery in 2018 and Gus in 2022.

Like most farmers, the Hladkys see farm-family balance as a challenge. Despite the challenges of row-crop farming in the Sandhills, D.J. says he feels blessed to farm. However, he readily admits it takes away from a vibrant family life, something he struggles with.

“The greatest challenge in my life is that I’m always busy and always in a hurry. I don’t take the time to sit back and enjoy things the way I’d like to,” D.J. adds. “It’s almost like—at certain times of the year—Chelsea is raising children by herself, and that’s difficult.”

To help deal with his time challenge, D.J. and Chelsea do things together—both farming and leisure—when possible. During slower winter seasons, the family takes vacations to “make up for lost time,” D.J. says. “I miss out on a lot of time with my family.”

Currently, Chelsea works one day a week as a nurse at Ainsworth Community Schools, which allows D.J. and his children to spend time together. When D.J. is watching the kids, their time is often coupled with work, but they enjoy it.

“I love mostly watching my dad drive the combine,” Emery says. “I feel like he does good.”

“I love riding in the big tractors,” Gus adds.

“Our kids come with us a lot while we are working the farm,” D.J. explains. “I have pictures of Adeline running a 1,300-bushel grain cart and driving a

380-horsepower tractor at age 10. Our children love irrigating and riding on the Ranger while we check systems.”

While the kids get a healthy dose of agriculture, they also see the dedication

Watch the Video



<https://bcove.video/4peuyxt>  
DTN



D.J. and Chelsea Hladky are raising four children on the family's farm: Adeline, 12, Briggs, 10, Emery, 7, and Gus, 3.

their parents have to the farm. At the same time, they may see the downsides: financial burdens, stress and time away from the family, Chelsea says.

### > PUMPKIN BUSINESS

By accident, the family stumbled into a new business. One fall after finishing carving pumpkins, they dumped the pulp and seeds in a field. The following year, the plants sprouted and grew, so they decided to start selling pumpkins through a business called 4HF. The acronym stands for the four Hladky children, and HF for Hladky Farms.

Supplying the area with locally grown carver and decorative pumpkins, the business teaches the kids entrepreneurship and good business practices. From planting and harvest to marketing, the children are strategic, save their earnings and evaluate best practices at the end of each season.

Led mostly by the oldest, Adeline, everyone has a part in 4HF. “I’m learning how to set goals and achieve them. How to run a business. Entrepreneurship. I learn a lot,” she says. “I love selling pumpkins. I love spending time with my brothers; my mom helps a lot, my dad does, too.”

It’s definitely a family affair. D.J. tills the ground. Adeline and Chelsea poke the holes in the dirt. Briggs drops the seeds in. Emery covers them, and Gus stomps on the soil.

“The community has been very supportive of it,” Chelsea points out. “The kids have learned the ups and downs of the business—some years you get a good yield; some years you don’t.”

And, then there’s the other side to the business. “When we get to carve pumpkins, it’s really fun,” Briggs says. ///

Adeline helps manage and load the annual 4HF pumpkin harvest.





**LILLIE BERINGER-CROCK**  
**BRIAN CROCK**  
Beringer Family Farms  
Cascade, Iowa

By Susan Payne, @jpusan  
Photos By Joel Reichenberger, @JReichPF

# Growing the Family Tree

**G**rowing up in Cascade, Iowa, Lillie Beringer-Crock favored a tree that stood “forever” near a sand dune on her grandfather’s farm. William (Bill) Beringer purchased the farm in 1958 to raise cattle and hogs. Helping with chores, loading and hauling manure, and going to cattle sales with her “hero” were some of her favorite pastimes—memories she holds close to her heart.

Never afraid to try something new, her grandfather’s operation was diverse and sustainable for more than half a century. Bill died in 2014, leaving her parents, John and Sheila Beringer, to run the business ahead of a dramatic downward shift in cattle markets in 2015, which led to significant financial losses for Iowa cattle feeders who had paid high prices for cattle.

“The very first group of cattle they ever fed, we lost money on,” Lillie recalls.

*Brian and Lillie Beringer-Crock with their children, Tripp, 2, and 3-month-old Lila, on the family farm.*

While struggling to restart the business on a positive path, John and Sheila didn’t have a viable full-time position for Lillie when


she graduated from Iowa State University in 2018. Soon after, the family was faced with the death of Bill’s wife, Lillie’s grandmother, Imelda.

One thing was certain: Losing her grandfather’s ground—the memories, long hours from dusk to dawn, the sentimental value of the farm—was not an option. Farming full time and purchasing the land became Lillie’s five-year plan.

## > DUAL ROLES

To make ends meet and continue farming, Lillie started a full-time career with Purina Animal Nutrition while working on the farm. With an end goal to farm full time, Lillie had to bring something to the operation for her parents to afford and affirm her position in the family business.

“In order to do that, I had to create my own path and bring something to the table that would secure my position on the farm and get me farming full time,” Lillie explains. “If what we’re doing is not working, what can we do to change and switch it?” >



The seed to carry on her grandfather’s legacy was planted long ago for this Iowa farmer.



**LILLIE BERINGER-CROCK**

**BRIAN CROCK**  
Beringer Family Farms  
Cascade, Iowa



□ *Brian Crock (above) sprays cattle as they enter another pasture.*

*Lillie Beringer-Crock (below) prepares mineral spirits for her cows.*

## ➤ SOCIAL MEDIA

In late 2019, Lillie opened her social media pages after a few nudges from friends who said her deep involvement in the farm was unique.

“I figured if I could share what I’m doing and teach one

person about agriculture, and show them what we’re doing, that we’re not the bad guys out in the world trying to harm you, then it would be worth my time. Sharing our farm-to-plate story, connecting consumers to the farmers, showing the daily ins and outs, and teaching others,” Lillie explains.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media users surged as emergency protocols were put into place nationwide. More people at home, more people on social media and more people yearning for authentic storytelling and glimpses of farm life.

Lillie’s followers began to grow. While showcasing her farm life, her followers started to ask: “How can we purchase your beef?”

“At the time, I didn’t have a way. I had never sold it outright anywhere else,” Lillie says. “I was also figuring out how I was going to buy a farm at 23 years old.”

## ➤ ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO BACK

With her background as an animal nutritionist for Purina, Lillie was familiar with other farm-to-consumer beef programs. Her interest peaked when she realized selling meat direct to customers could help her reach her ultimate goals.

“I started a beef program with the hope of, if I brought in my own stream of income, it would help me farm full time. I had to create my own path,” Lillie says.

She launched the business in 2021. Today, Lillie offers dry-aged, homegrown Iowa beef from birth to butcher through individual cuts shipping to all 50 states.

Her business proved successful but wasn’t generating enough income to secure a loan to buy her grandfather’s land. She received three loan rejection letters. “That was the hardest part of my life, we’re going to lose everything we always had our whole life,” she feared. Lillie reevaluated her business plan. She needed guaranteed income.

“I couldn’t buy the farm, put the fence in, put the water in and buy the extra cows all at once. So, we did a custom-lease with a farmer who owned cows, and we did a cash share, which, in the end, is how I got loans approved; we had the cash-flow,” she points out.

## ➤ GROWING BUSINESS AND FAMILY

During the pandemic, Lillie met her now-husband, Brian Crock, who owned an established small-scale feedlot in Tipton and farmed with his family. Meshing some assets together through marriage, Beringer Family Farms was growing at a comfortable pace.





Lillie Beringer-Crock and husband, Brian Crock (above left), discuss plans for the cattle on the pasture.

Lillie (above right) prepares dinner for the family assisted by son, Tripp, 2, and newborn daughter, Lila.

Lillie (below right) shows the variety of products sold at her farm store in Cascade, Iowa.

Since meeting Brian, the couple has welcomed two children to the family farm. In addition, Lillie opened a farm store in Cascade that features farm-fresh beef, pork, chicken, eggs, baked goods, homemade bread, seasonal produce, dairy products and beef tallow skin-care products.

“Opening our farm store in March of 2024 has been a great addition

to the community to offer local, fresh food that tells a story and isn’t just a label,” Lillie states. “We have added and hope to continue adding more agritourism events that bring the community out to the farm and give consumers a full farm-to-table experience about where their food comes from and how it was raised.”

Inside the farm store is the logo Lillie created for Beringer Family Farms featuring the tree she saw every day growing up—the tree that represents her core values of faith, family and farming.

Now that she owns her grandfather’s land—and her family picture is more complete—Beringer Family Farms has become a treasured space for Lillie to share her passion and love for land and cattle with the community, something instilled in her from a young age.

Lillie is one of 26 grandchildren and one of five in her immediate family who are taking over the family farm. “All the hard work and long days I put in are to give back to what my grandpa has started for me ... I am proud to say I am the one carrying on my grandpa’s legacy,” Lillie says.

## > BERINGER FAMILY FARMS

Lillie’s original five-year goal to farm full time was achieved in four years. Today, Beringer Family Farms grows corn, soybeans and hay on more than 1,000

acres, operates a 1,500-head feedlot and raises 300 Angus cows on pastureland, in addition to its direct-to-consumer beef business and farm store.

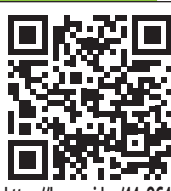
Lillie’s parents are still active in the operation but stepping more into their grandparent role and letting Lillie take the reins.

“My mom and dad are a huge part of why I’m able to do what I am here. My dad’s main role is to haul all the manure from the cattle that are in the yard. That’s one of the main things he still does. Mom and Dad help whenever needed,” Lillie explains.

John’s brother Billy is mainly retired but helps with beef runs and errands, and Sheila’s brother Roger has taken on a mechanic role on the farm and helps cut and bale hay. Brian’s mom and brother are involved on the crops and hog side of the operation.

“We are very much a family-oriented farm, and we couldn’t operate without everyone involved,” Lillie says. ///

Watch the Video



<https://bcove.video/44z0G4l>

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**HOUSTON AND KATY HOWLETT**  
Camp Nevin Farms  
Glendale, Kentucky

By Dan Miller, @DMillerPF  
Photos By Joel Reichenberger, @JReichPF

# Choosing Reason Above Emotion



**T**wo and a half years ago, Houston and Katy Howlett stood on the subfloor of the house they were building, frame open to the sky, construction clutter all around. Word had it that a neighboring farm might be up for sale. They looked out over patchworks of woodlots and cropland, and talked through possibilities.

“We have all rented land. The biggest risk to our operation is land availability,” Katy explains. “We talked about the strategic pieces of land that may be coming up for availability, how we were going to save for it. That was our dream.”

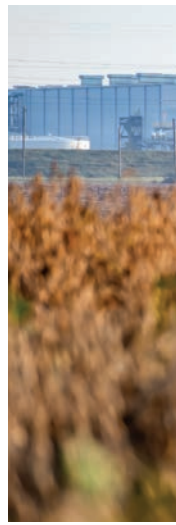
But, in 2022, the ground beneath the Howletts crumbled with the announcement of BlueOval SK, a \$5.6-billion joint venture between Ford Motor Co. and SK On, a South Korean electric vehicle battery manufacturer at Glendale, Kentucky. It’s the largest-ever industrial investment in the state. The first of two buildings is producing batteries for Ford’s all-electric F-150 Lightning. The second building is not yet operating.

The buildings are immense, 96 acres each, their tall, white sides shimmering in the summer heat, visible from the Howletts’ front porch. The factory’s high-wattage lights burn so brightly at night they dim the stars. Country roads are being reshaped, new water and sewer lines buried alongside. An occasional red fire hydrant squeezes up to rows of green corn—an omen of change to come.

## > EVERYTHING CHANGES

“This is personal. This is the house I built in the country forever, and now my country has two huge battery plants on it,” says Katy, who, with Houston, is raising two young children, ages 5 and 2.

BlueOval has flipped the land market. Within a few days of the announcement, the



# Camp Nevin Farms operates on the edict that it must stand on its own.

Watch the Video



<https://bcove.video/4pn1FiQ>

DTN

Howlett farm lost acreage to the greater financial promise of commercial and residential development. Land prices sprang up from \$15,000 an acre for good ground to \$100,000, even \$200,000. It is difficult to see where this land market tops off.

“We just don’t have any expectation of consistency from year to year,” Houston adds. “I’ve honed my financial analysis of what we farm, but now, there’s no way to lock anything in, investing in infrastructure like grain bins



Camp Nevin Farms sits in the shadow of Kentucky’s largest-ever industrial investment, BlueOval SK (below). Construction of the battery plant raised local land prices by 10 times. Far left are the Howletts: Katy, Hiram, Audrey and Houston.

and a shop, or making decisions about labor and equipment purchases—to even grow.”

Houston and Katy both grew up on farms in Kentucky. Houston’s dad, Paul, raised feeder cattle and farms 300 acres today. Katy grew up on a cow/calf operation. Her father, Lanny, and grandfather, Bob, also have a Belgian draft horse breeding operation.

Houston is a University of Kentucky graduate with a degree in ag economics and worked as an agronomist at Peterson Farms, in New Hope, Kentucky. Katy graduated from the University of Louisville with a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and a master’s degree from the University of Mississippi. She is a project manager for Altec, responsible for managing several engineering and software projects for the company, which provides products and services for the electric utility, telecommunications, tree care, lights and signs, and contractor markets.

## ➤ EARLY DAYS

On their first date in 2016, Houston showed Katy his first 40 acres of soybeans. He had drained his \$20,000 in savings to buy his first piece of equipment. “On our second date, I helped him move equipment,” Katy says. “From there on, I knew what I was getting into.” They were married in March 2018.

The Howletts call their business Camp Nevin Farms, named for the Civil War-era Union Army camp once ensconced there along tree-lined creeks. Today, their farm is 1,500 acres, a large portion of it gained from Don Summers, a longtime farmer who Houston had come to know.

“There are few people in this world that have had as profound of an impact on my life than Don Summers,” Houston says.

In February 2016, Houston’s farming career had reached a crossroads. He was looking for new ➤





## HOUSTON AND KATY HOWLETT

Camp Nevin Farms  
Glendale, Kentucky

opportunities. One rainy day, he ventured over to Round Top Farms and knocked on Summers' door. "Mr. Summers, my name is Houston Howlett," Houston began. "I wanted you to know that I am available for any help you might need on the farm." Summers stood there in the doorway, nodded his head as Houston made his pitch to him, and said, "OK," then closed the door. "I returned to my truck thinking, 'Welp, at least I tried.'"

### > DON SUMMERS' FARM

Later that summer, to his surprise, Houston received a call from Summers. "He was looking for someone to help him during corn harvest, someone who knew their way around a combine," Houston explains. "We struck a deal, and as they say, the rest was history."

It was an arrangement that would last for several years. "One fall day, I climbed up into the combine to ride around with him. He looked at me and said, 'I'm done.'" Houston asked, "Don, what does that mean?" "He said, 'This is the last year I'm going to farm.'" He offered Houston his entire farm on a lease.

"That was such a significant change and a big blessing that was presented to me, a big opportunity that allowed us to really push forward," Houston explains.

Summers died this past summer. Camp Nevin Farms now faces new uncertainty.

The Howletts have hard work ahead of them. "I would say there's not a day that goes by that we don't have some sort of business-oriented conversation, whether

It was an exceptional offer by a retiring farmer, Don Summers (below), that gave Camp Nevin Farms a big boost forward.



it's tactical, how we're going to get things done, or about our overall strategy," Katy says. "We're very fortunate that we have very similarly analytical personalities but different backgrounds."

Katy and Houston Howlett run their operation by close analysis and honest conversation. Their biggest challenge is land. They lease all they farm.

### > ONE RULE

Camp Nevin Farms works by one ironclad rule: "We agreed early on that the business should stand on its own financially," Katy says. "It's driven us to make more unemotional decisions, because an emotional decision could mean the end of the business."

The couple values outside mentors. One is Jordan Shockley, Extension professor, farm management and poultry specialist and Extension coordinator at the University of Kentucky. "He is extremely risk averse," Houston says. "But, he is the type of person I look for, people who disagree with me. He has taught me how to be objective in evaluating costs such as interest, depreciation and equipment."

Similarly, the Howletts are clients of Farm Credit Mid-America. They participate in its Growing Forward program, which provides access to farm loans and offers educational opportunities, such as setting financial goals. The Howletts were runners-up in that program's 2024 Forward Thinker Award competition that recognizes farmers who pursue innovative practices that push their operations forward.

"Farm Credit Mid-America has stood with us through the growth of our operation," Katy says. "I think a lot of that is because we did analysis and had breakevens and worst cases before we walked into their office. We had clearly thought through our decisions and really understood our financial position."

"We focus heavily on agronomic analysis and business financial management," Houston adds. "I have detailed budgets. I've already done my purchasing with suppliers before we really start rolling in the season."

Houston admires Katy for her financial perception. "Sometimes, I can spend a whole day working on a spreadsheet, trying to put something together and analyze something. She will look at it, read it, understand it and give me feedback on it. It really blows my mind that she's capable of understanding it, to the level that I need her to, that quickly." ///

# Set Your Farm Up For Long-Term Success

**W**hen we consider success in family farms and ranches, we tend to focus on certain financial outcomes such as profitability or growth in one's net worth. Or, we might identify benchmarks that suggest success, like the amount of land farmed or owned, the size of the business, the number of livestock or the number of employees.

Whatever metric you pick, however, doesn't offer much insight into the approach, structure, culture or principles that led to success. If you are at the early stages of your farming or ranching career, you use what you know or have observed, you learn through trial and error, you talk to neighbors and advisers, all in a long-term effort to build a successful business.

After consulting for decades with family farms and ranches, I've identified 10 areas to consider when "setting up" for long-term business success. We'll cover the first five this month.

**Know your own definition of success.** Measuring success in acres, dollars or head count is not the same as feeling successful. I know financially successful business owners who are unhappy, unsatisfied and unhealthy. The business is successful, but the family is failing. Consider metrics beyond money when identifying what success looks like. Consider your relationships, your health, your opportunities to learn and grow, your passion for the work, your experiences off the farm, the community in which you live and your spiritual growth.

**Know where you want to take the business.** Vision and goals help pull you into the future and offer a sense of direction. It also helps to know if you want to become a "professional" business, where systems, policies and processes are integral. As your business grows, you do less of the work and more of the management. However, very few people get into farming or ranching to manage people or navigate the bureaucracy of a larger business. Learning to manage is different than

learning to farm or ranch, so be intentional about your desire to operate at the next level.

## **Know your ownership and management principles.**

Identify the key ideas that guide your strategies. For example, in a family business, should in-laws be included in discussions? Will adult children who left the farm inherit the business? Do your children have to work somewhere else before returning or achieve a certain level of education? What are the enduring principles that guide your management of land? What is most important when dealing with employees? Knowing your principles will help you navigate the many options and opportunities that arise over the course of decades in business.

**Be strategic with your entity structure.** There are several different kinds of entities you can use to operate your business. General partnerships, limited-liability companies and different types of corporations are just a few, but each has implications regarding liability protection, taxes, flexibility, Farm Service Agency programs and estate planning.

## **Be deliberate in your decision-making process.**

Benefits of a family business are speed and flexibility in making decisions. You know and trust your family members. You can communicate informally and make assumptions about how people will react to decisions. But, as the business grows and adds in-laws, adult children, siblings or key employees, it is important to slow down, have more meetings and present information so that others are "bought in" to your approach. Make time for meetings where people understand the information and decisions important to the business.

An old proverb says, "Methods are many, principles are few. Methods always change, principles never do." Knowing the foundational elements of your approach to business will serve you well. Be sure to read this column next month for a few more suggestions. //



Email Lance Woodbury at [lance.woodbury@pinionglobal.com](mailto:lance.woodbury@pinionglobal.com)



# Aim High

***A North Carolina producer uses value-added programs for even greater profits.***

**Y**ep, prices for 750-pound feeder calves are already unbelievable. While you're collecting hefty checks, though, you might as well reach for the top. For Jamie Dail, that comes in the form of third-party-verified programs.

The Wallace, North Carolina, producer has his herd enrolled in Global Animal Partnership 4 (G.A.P.) through EarthClaims, as well as Non-Hormone Treated Cattle (NHTC) and Verified Natural Beef (VNB) through IMI Global. His reasoning is simple: "It is hard

to say with the prices as crazy as they are today, but you do get a premium over commodity-type cattle. I believe it's 10 cents a pound."

Mindi Birkeland, IMI Global regional manager and business development, agrees. "Our first-quarter data shows premiums of around \$74 a head for load lots of cattle sold with IMI-verified certifications."

## ➤ **MARKETING JOURNEY**

For Dail, who raises Angus and SimAngus cattle with his wife, Maria, son, Cody, and daughter-in-law, Grace, the verified programs are part of a marketing progression. First, he sold truckload lots of preconditioned calves through a video sales company. Next, he retained ownership for two years. "I wanted to get carcass data back. It cost me. We fed everything that were good cattle, and I thought we would make a little extra money, but that was the year COVID got us. My calves wound up staying in the yard an extra 30 days because we couldn't get them on the kill floor, but they still had yardage and feed, and weren't gaining all that much. It hurt."

The last four years he circled back to video sales, this time with Mid-Atlantic Cattle Sales (MACS), Richfield, North Carolina. "They have the best buyer base on the East Coast, and they come out, video and take all the information," Dail explains. That's also when he enrolled in the value-added programs.

Brooke Harward, MACS office and sales manager, not only encourages producers to participate in value-added programs but helps them choose between the confusing selection, as well as navigate the paperwork and prepare for the audits. "The value-added programs are very valuable tools and a way to get more dollars per head," she stresses. "Four to five years ago, at its peak, there was up to a 25 cents per pound premium for G.A.P. cattle versus commodity cattle. Now, it is closer to 5 cents to 15 cents, depending on the weight class, genetics, weaning and health program."

Harward emphasizes the programs are not one-size-fits-all. Feeders in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia prefer G.A.P.-enrolled cattle since cattle can't be hauled more than 16 hours and still meet G.A.P. standards. MACS customers in east Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina fit the requirements.

Harward adds, "The verified natural and NHTC are a different set of buyers. Currently, the most marketability and demand we have is for G.A.P., but we have buyers that demand both."

Since most producers who market through MACS also have Angus-based herds, Harward says the American Angus Association's AngusLink is a good choice, too. IMI partners with the Angus Association to verify AngusLink cattle and can also offer Care, their sustainability program, as well as Verified Natural, NHTC and Age and Source Verified. Harward says, "With IMI, AngusLink is a great addition to get out in front of more buyers."

IMI Global also partners with other breeds with similar programs including Hereford Advantage, CharAdvantage, Red Angus Feeder Calf Certification Program, Gelbvieh and Balancer Edge, and Brangus Vigor. For beef on dairy, they partner with ABS for its Beef InFocus program.

## > CHECK PROGRAMS' ECONOMICS

Brian Beer, Clemson University livestock and forages agent, says programs like G.A.P. and IMI can pay, but they may not be economical for smaller operations.



Jamie Dail

With G.A.P., Harward says fees are typically around \$1,900 for the producers who market through MACS, with the travel expenses of the auditor added on.

Malissa Lucas, director of certification services for EarthClaims, the company that handles G.A.P. certifications, says, "Producers can choose to apply for G.A.P. as a stand-alone certification or bundle it with several other programs including Source and

Age Verified, NHTC, Verified Natural Beef, Vegetarian Fed and Grass Fed. Bundling multiple certifications into a single trip offers additional cost savings."

IMI Global's Birkeland says its fees average around \$10 to \$12 a head for a 200-cow herd. Like G.A.P., they can bundle their Care program with other certifications including Age and Source Verified, NHTC, Verified Natural Beef, Verified Grass Fed, Non-GMO, Vegetarian Fed and Organic. ➤

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*Jamie, Maria, Grace and Cody Dail add value to their cattle by enrolling them in third-party verified programs.*

To hold down costs, Beer says smaller producers in his area who market through MACS, including the 60-cow herd he runs with his father, Allen, go with producer-signed affidavits stating no added hormones, antibiotics or ionophores have been given to the cattle. The affidavits are typically supplied at no cost to the producers by the buyers, who range from large food companies to smaller farmer-feeders who market their own beef.

He notes, “Producers may or may not see premiums from that. Third-party-verified programs have a little more creditability, and buyers tend to pay a little more.” However, “They cost the same whether you have 15 to 20 head or a larger herd,” he adds.

The value-added programs may also come with the hidden costs of loss of production from leaving off growth-promoting implants and ionophores. Dail doesn’t see it. “I’ve always done implants, but once we quit using them, I couldn’t tell a difference.”

His weaning and shipping weights have actually increased and now average around 640 pounds for steers and heifers. They ship at around 750 pounds. “All of the data on implants is older, but our genetics have improved so much, I’d love to see some new data to see if there’s still a gain,” he points out. “The genetics available now are superior to what we had 10 or 15 years ago.”

Dail also says they haven’t been burdened by the recordkeeping required for the value-added programs. “We’ve always kept records,” he stresses. “My wife’s got records forever. We were in the registered business for a couple of years, and we started keeping individual animal information then, and we still do that today.”

The other producers who market through MACS agree. Harward says 75% of the load lots sold through

MACS are affidavit-signed or verified by a third party. Of that 75%, at least half or more are verified.

If you decide you do want to tackle a verified program, Harward says to go in with a plan. “The people with the third-party-verified programs are very good to work with, and they can help you find a marketing company,” she says. “Experience with the programs is very valuable. We try to work as the middleman to bridge the gap.”

Dail says it is worth the effort. “The premiums will offset the expense of it by far.” ///

## Value-Added Calf Programs

### ➤ Global Animal Partnership: Animal Welfare Food-Labeling Program

[www.globalanimalpartnership.org](http://www.globalanimalpartnership.org)

### ➤ EarthClaims LLC

[www.earthclaims.com](http://www.earthclaims.com)

To enroll, contact:

Seth Diehm, 541-286-3205, EXT. 1

Malissa Lucas, 541-286-3205, EXT. 713

### ➤ Mid-Atlantic Cattle Sales

[www.macsvideo.com](http://www.macsvideo.com)

Brooke Harward

704-322-9770

### ➤ IMI Global

[www.imiglobal.com](http://www.imiglobal.com)

[wfcfCARE.com](http://wfcfCARE.com)

To enroll, contact:

Doug Stanton, 620-260-7210

Mindi Birkeland, 605-210-0789

### ➤ To enroll in **AngusLink**, go through

[www.imiglobal.com](http://www.imiglobal.com)



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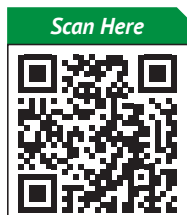
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# FRUITS AND NUTS FOREVER

*Specialty-crop operation faces the same problems of any farm, just over a much longer crop life.*

**P**each harvest has been underway for several weeks at Georgia's Southern Orchards, and dozens of laborers, nearly all of them migrant H-2A employees, are working quickly, checking individual fruit on the trees for the right color and firmness to pick or not to pick.

Fruit from each tree will be harvested two to four times over 10 to 12 days to pick the majority of it at the optimum time. Different varieties in the orchard—more than 30—will provide ripened peaches from mid-May until August. Southern Orchards is the largest combined peach and pecan producer in the state, with 6,000 acres of pecan groves and 5,000 acres of peach orchards.

"There is an art to being as efficient as possible with peaches," says Mark Sanchez, Southern Orchards' CEO. "You want to make as few trips through the orchard as possible." Sanchez and Jeff Wainwright, president of farming operations, provide a tour of the wholesale operation and retail store at Fort Valley, Georgia.

Today's Southern Orchards is a combination of two longtime family operations in the area, Lane Southern

Orchards and Taylor Family Orchards. The Lane operation was purchased a decade ago by Raleigh, North Carolina-based International Farming Corp.

(IFC). Several years ago, IFC purchased Taylor Family Orchards. IFC invests in farms and ag technology companies, both as partners and as outright owners. Overall, the company owns and/or manages farms growing 80 different crops (domestically and abroad) on 500,000 acres.

Peaches and pecans are high-value crops, which generally means there is a lot of risk to go along with



□ Southern Orchards CEO Mark Sanchez (left) stands with Jeff Wainwright, director of farming operations.



potential high rewards. Though owned by a large investment corporation, Southern Orchards does what any farmer executes on an annual basis: It tries to control input, labor, equipment and time costs while leveraging technology.

## > THESE ARE NOT YOUR FATHER'S PEACHES

As with corn, soybeans or cotton, the seeds being planted today aren't necessarily the same as those planted a few decades ago or even 10 years ago. Peaches are no different. When asked, Sanchez makes it clear that a changing climate—in a warming sense—has transformed the peach varieties they grow.

"The peaches grown here 25 to 30 years ago required 850 to 1,000 chill hours, that is hours of temperatures of 45°F or lower during their dormant stage in the winter," Sanchez explains. "We're not accumulating that many hours anymore."

The chill hours, or exposure to cold, are crucial for peach trees to properly break dormancy and initiate flowering and fruiting in the spring. Southern Orchards now uses varieties that need fewer, closer to 650 chill hours annually.

This shift is a double-edged sword, Sanchez says, particularly in a year like 2023, when warm temperatures in February "fooled" the peach trees into developing blooms, which determine fruit production. That was followed by several brutally cold days at the end of March/beginning of April.

"Those temperatures killed the blooms and any fruit production," he adds. "It wiped out 90% of our crop." Like any other farmer, Southern Orchards was able to utilize crop insurance to mitigate the losses to be able to move on to the next year.

## > INTERCROPPING—PECAN STYLE

The peaches and pecans are 100% irrigated. "It's a safeguard," Sanchez says. "And, pretty much a necessity." It costs about \$6,000 per acre to establish peach trees, and they'll grow for three years before fruit is harvested.

Once grown, peach trees have 12 to 15 years of commercial fruit production. Southern Orchards will replant orchards to new peach trees. Whether they plant peaches again a third time around on the same land depends on soil quality.

On its 11,000 acres, the company has been shifting land it owns to pecan groves, because mechanization in pecans greatly reduces labor costs, and the trees produce for 50-plus years.

The company owns about half the land it works, leasing the other half. It takes five years before you can harvest nuts and nearly 10 years before pecan trees hit peak production, somewhere north of 1,500 pounds per acre.

The company has begun planting pecan trees amid some of its peach orchards. There might be some pecan trees planted in every other row of a peach orchard as replacements.

"We lose, of course, some peach tree spaces," Sanchez explains. "But, by the time peach production starts to decline, the pecan trees are already producing."

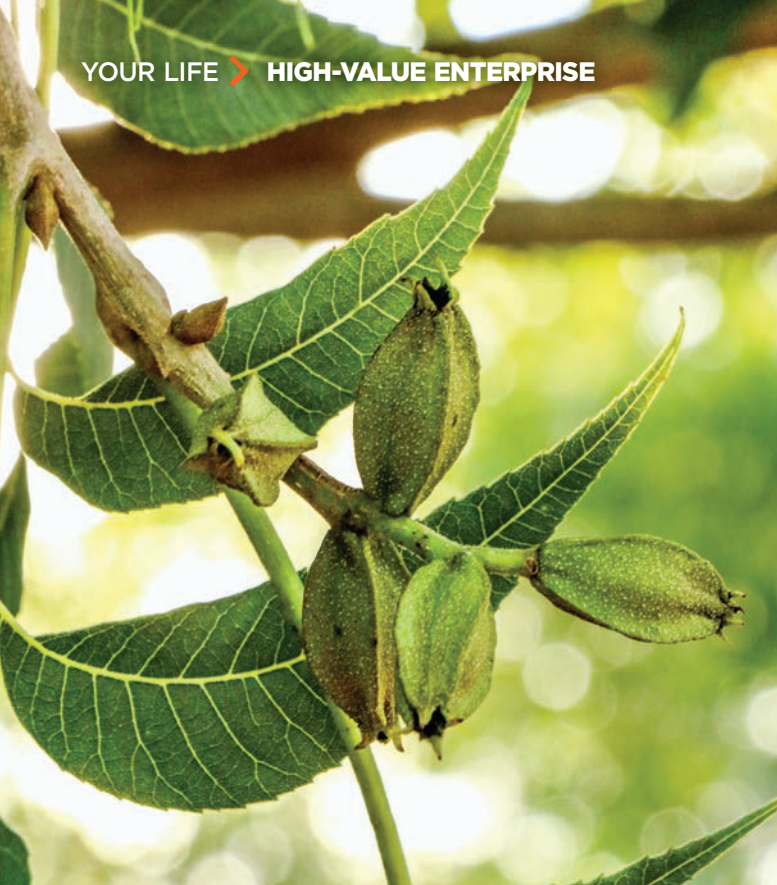
## > LABOR COSTS

The season for peaches is more compressed than pecans, about 55 days from bloom until the first harvest, he continues. Trees are pruned beginning in February to clean out old wood then selectively pruned in March and April to optimize peach size.

Often, more than half the developing peaches are pruned off the tree when they are marble-sized, Sanchez says. Otherwise, each tree would produce a big crop "of golf-ball-sized peaches," an unmarketable fruit.

The large number of varieties planted ensures there will be fruit maturing from May to August. "The varieties overlap each other so there are no gaps in the supply," he says. At Southern Orchards' production facility, fruit is packaged for several private labels, depending on size and quality.

There is also a difference in labor needs between peaches and pecans. ➤



“It takes 400 people to work 5,000 acres of peaches,” Sanchez says. “And, we work pecan harvest on 6,000 acres with 40 people.” Pecans are much more mechanized, using “shakers” that cause the nuts to fall onto the ground or into a type of catch basin that are then scooped into carts. Pecan harvest begins in October and is usually done by the holidays but can continue until January.

□ *These nuts are currently developing on a pecan tree, which can have a productive life of 75 years.*

## > THE LITTLE THINGS

In terms of cost-cutting, Southern Orchards also relies on technology. Fungicide sprayers use optical sensors that automatically shut off if passing a peach tree that has died.

The operation also used to mow the rows between trees every week during the growing season. Now, they use “weed wipers” in the pecan orchard that utilize saturated applicators to contact the taller weeds while not affecting the shorter, more desirable grass below.

“You’re hitting the tall weeds, which die back,” Sanchez explains, “while leaving the grass growing, which is fine. We can do one application in the spring and don’t have to mow the pecan orchards again in season. It saves a lot of money.”

Certainly ownership by IFC has allowed Southern Orchards to make investments in the business, such as optical scanner graders and sorters in the packing house that can “pick out” the best peaches automatically by size and quality.

IFC was founded in 2008 in Raleigh, North Carolina, by Charlie McNairy, a banking and investment fund veteran whose family has had farm businesses in the state going back to the 1820s. The company controls more than \$1.5 billion in assets, which are managed on behalf of investors. Its investments range from Lane Southern Orchards to orchards in Washington to a large organic farm in Nebraska.

“International Farming has multiple business lines,” says Martin Vogel, partner, Integrated Food Strategies at IFC. “One of those lines is partnering and investing in businesses that we consider generational assets. Southern Orchards fits that because what it’s doing is it’s allowing people to have a better product.”

Southern Orchards’ Sanchez reiterates that while there can be good profit with peaches and pecans, weather, as in 2023, can change everything.

“If you have a freeze and lose 30% of your peach crop, you still have to care for all the acres regardless,” he says. If peach trees have pretty long productive life, pecans can produce for decades, up to 75 years or more.

“When people ask me what the commercial life of a pecan tree is, I always tell them, ‘We’ll let you know,’” he says. “You have to be a visionary to plant a pecan grove.” ///



# Comfort Food at its Finest

## TWICE-BAKED LOADED POTATOES

*Full of cheesy goodness, this dish is the perfect side to any weeknight meal.*

TOTAL TIME: 30 MINUTES  
MAKES: 8 SERVINGS

4 large russet potatoes	1 teaspoon garlic powder
8 slices thick-cut bacon	1 teaspoon onion powder
Cooking spray	1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
Dash of salt	3 green onions, chopped (white and green parts separated)
Dash of pepper	
1 cup sour cream	
½ cup whole milk	
4 tablespoons unsalted butter	

1. Use a fork to make vent holes in potatoes. Microwave potatoes at Power Level 8 (or 80% power) for 6 to 8 minutes or until cooked through. Use a fork to test the doneness of the potatoes. Set potatoes aside to cool.
2. In a skillet, lay each piece of bacon so that no sides overlap. Cook over medium heat 5 minutes per side or until evenly browned to your liking. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate; cool. Chop or crumble bacon into small pieces.
3. Once potatoes are cool enough to handle, slice in half lengthwise; gently scoop out the flesh with a spoon and transfer to a large bowl. Place the skins on a foil-lined baking sheet; coat with cooking spray and season with salt and pepper.
4. Add sour cream, milk, butter, garlic powder, onion powder, half of the cheese and the white parts of the green onions to the large bowl containing the potato insides. Season with salt and pepper; mix until creamy.
5. Preheat oven to 400°F. Scoop potato mixture into potato skins, taking care not to break the “cups” of the potato; top with the remaining cheese.
6. Bake until cheese is melted and edges are golden (about 10 to 15 minutes).
7. Top with remaining green onions and crumbled bacon. Serve with more sour cream, if desired. ///

## PARMESAN-CRUSTED PORK CHOPS

*Dive into this hearty dish—it's easy to prepare and full of crunch and flavor.*

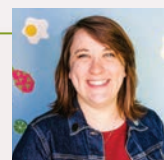
TOTAL TIME: 30 MINUTES  
MAKES: 4 SERVINGS

¼ cup all-purpose flour	2 large eggs, beaten
1½ teaspoons seasoning salt	4 (½-inch-thick) center-cut boneless pork loin chops
1 cup grated (not shredded) Parmesan cheese	½ cup vegetable oil (for frying)
1 cup panko breadcrumbs	

1. To set up dredging station: In a shallow bowl, combine flour and ½ teaspoon seasoning salt; whisk well. In another shallow bowl, combine ½ cup Parmesan cheese, breadcrumbs and ½ teaspoon seasoning salt; whisk well. In a third shallow bowl, combine eggs, remaining ½ cup Parmesan and remaining seasoning salt; whisk well.
2. Pat pork chops dry with paper towels. Working with one at a time, coat both sides of the pork chop in seasoned flour, then the egg mixture and then the breadcrumb mixture, pressing gently to make sure breadcrumbs stick to pork chop.
3. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Test the heat of the oil by dropping in a breadcrumb. The breadcrumb should start frying gently. If it spits and sputters, the oil is too hot. If it sinks to the bottom, the oil is not hot enough.
4. Gently lay in two pork chops at a time; fry until browned on both sides (about 5 minutes per side). Transfer pork chops to a wire rack or paper-towel-lined plate. Season with salt. Repeat with the remaining pork chops.



Recipes and Photos By  
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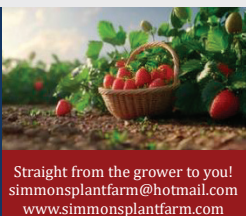
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**January • February**



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**February • March**

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# Youth



*“You are never too old to become younger!”*

—Mae West

PROGRESSIVE FARMER ARCHIVES, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY, ca. 1930

I live in that solitude which is painful in youth, but delicious in the years of maturity.

**ALBERT EINSTEIN**

Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die.

**HERBERT HOOVER**

There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age.

**SOPHIA LOREN**

Youth has no age.

**PABLO PICASSO**

Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.

**FRANZ KAFKA**

The duty of youth is to challenge corruption.

**KURT COBAIN**

The failure to invest in youth reflects a lack of compassion and a colossal failure of common sense.

**CORETTA SCOTT KING**

After all, life hasn't much to offer except youth, and I suppose for older people, the love of youth in others.

**F. SCOTT FITZGERALD**

Forty is the old age of youth; fifty the youth of old age.

**VICTOR HUGO**

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

**1 TIMOTHY 4:12 (KJV)**

The surest way to corrupt a youth is to instruct him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike than those who think differently.

**FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**

If youth knew; if age could.

**SIGMUND FREUD**

To be left alone on the tightrope of youthful unknowing is to experience the excruciating beauty of full freedom and the threat of eternal indecision.

**MAYA ANGELOU**

In youth, the days are short and the years are long. In old age, the years are short and days long.

**POPE PAUL VI**

I gave my beauty and my youth to men. I am going to give my wisdom and experience to animals.

**BRIGITTE BARDOT**

Youth is easily deceived because it is quick to hope.

**ARISTOTLE**

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