

From: Jennifer Medley <jennitasia@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 27, 2009 8:33 AM
To: ATR-Agricultural Workshops <agriculturalworkshops@usdoj.gov>
Subject: Our Dairy Farm Needs Help
Attach: dairy farm 1986.jpg; Dairy Farm 1986 2.jpg

Please, read my family's story.

I want to share my story, about my family's small dairy farm. This farm was first started in 1978 by my grandfather (Charles Bell) and my grandmother (Virble Bell). The farm was successful in every way. They even were awarded "Dairy Farmers Of The Year" in 1986. They graduated from Grade C milk to Grade A milk. As the years passed the farm was then left to my father (Everett Bell) in 1999. During the last decade, the prices for feed have increased, the prices for commodities have increased, and the prices being paid for milk production have dramatically decreased! This led my father to believe that he needed to build a barn that milked sixteen cows rather than the older barn that only milked five to six cows at a time. He also thought that the mixing the feed himself would help save cost on buying the feed or grains pre-mixed. With the price of milk per hundred pounds a decade ago, his plans for developing a bigger business would have worked, but the economy has changed and also the price of milk for producers. As the prices dropped and the commodity prices increased, this led my family into major debt issues. My grandparents, father, and my step-mother pulled out everything they had in savings, bonds, 401K, and retirement to put into the farm. My father also suffers from a major disease called Crone's disease, which led to even more debt issues. Besides all of this, my point is that dairy farmers today are not getting the price per hundred gallons that they deserve. And even if the price of milk for producers do increase, how will my family be saved from foreclosure. Their houses, vehicles, land, and everything they own is tied up into this huge amount of debt towards the farm. They do not have the income to hire labor help, which leaves only my seventy-one year old grandfather, my sixty-six year old grandmother, my father, and his son to run the entire farm. There is more to be done than just milk the cows. They must care for the calves, provide food and proper conditions for the cows, maintain the tractors and equipment needed to keep the dairy farm alive. Cows must be milked at least twice a day for seven days a week. I (daughter of Everett Bell and my mother-in-law) have been donating our time into helping with labor time on the farm for free. My heart lies into this farm, and the needs of my family. My father has suffered not only physically, but mentally with this issue. My step-mother is a full time student attending nursing school to become an RN to help better provide for the family and the farm. We have searched for charity, donations, and fought hard everyday to come up with a solution for saving the farm. The farm is now in it's fifth generation, and is on the verge of being foreclosed. What if any thing can I or my family do to save this farm. We desperately need assistance of some kind. I am asking with all of my heart that if you know or know someone that can help us achieve the goals of being debt free, and making our dairy farm a success, then please help! Please be aware that we are not the only dairy farmers suffering, but many have already been foreclosed or is on the verge of loosing everything they own as well. Within the last two years the dairy farms have decreased by 80 % the total there were in Arkansas. Can you help us to be able to leave the farm to the fifth generation son (Sidney Bell). We have received \$4,000 from the stimulus package from the government, but this is not enough to help our criteria needed to save our dairy farm. Is there any other source or way that we can achieve our goals for success?

Thank you for taking the time and the efforts in reading my story, and with hope and faith; may a miracle happen for my family and other dairy farmers around the world.

With Deep Regards,

Jennifer Danise Medley

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