



Ransler Farms

Gobles, Michigan

Ransler Farms includes 300 milk cows and 1,200 acres. The Ranslers grow wheat, alfalfa, corn and soybeans, much of which they feed to their animals. They also sell some crops to a neighbor or a local elevator, and they sell their milk to Michigan Milk Cooperative. Beverly Ransler and her son, Dan, a third generation farmer, are partners in the farm. A second son and four employees also work on the farm.

The challenge

The Ranslers depend on up-to-date weather information to plan their work and on the latest market information to keep their business thriving.

The solution

More than a decade ago, the Ranslers started using DTN for weather and market information. In August 2006, they updated to DTN Dairy Professional.

The results

The first thing the Ranslers do in the morning is check market information on DTN Dairy. "We contract soybean meal, so we watch that market closely," said Beverly. "DTN Dairy enables us to watch the markets more closely than we could otherwise. It has market information through December for a year or two out." The Ranslers depend on the market information to gauge the level of risk they want to take. "We use it to figure out, do we dare or don't we dare to contract at a certain price?"

Because they experience lake effect snow, watching the weather is very important, especially in the winter months when they need to get the barns cleaned out and the animals inside. They also use the weather information that DTN Dairy provides to plan herd treatments. "You don't want to be giving shots to cattle when you know the weather is going to be bad."

When bad weather is imminent, they know they can count on DTN Dairy. "We can look at the DTN and know just about how long it's going to take to get here so we can decide whether we want to cut hay or do something else. Because the weather information is so localized, it gives us a little more edge so we can figure out what to focus on."

When the men are out combining and bad weather threatens, they depend on information from DTN Dairy to know how long they have to complete the job. "The boys will call me in the office and say 'how is the DTN looking? How close is the rain?' so they can get the job done before it hits."

Because farmers today compete in a global marketplace, Ransler believes information is key. "The more information you can get the better off you are. I think that DTN Dairy helps us a lot. You have to keep following market prices everywhere."

From a user friendliness standpoint, Beverly finds DTN Dairy simple to operate. "It's easy to use. I like that you can zoom in on specific locations to check the weather." DTN Dairy has become critical to their operations. "We've become so used to using it, especially for marketing and contracting in feed commodities."

The client's view

"We use DTN Dairy to watch weather activity around the globe because it's going to affect us. If it's dry in South America or Australia or someplace else and they can get a good price for their soybeans, it's going to cut into our prices. It's going to cost us more if we have to buy soybean meal. We're not an individual country anymore, we live in a global community."

Beverly Ransler, Gobles, Michigan