



DTN DAIRY®

Son-Bow Farms

Spring Valley, Wisconsin

Jay and Kristi Richardson operate Son-Bow Farms, Inc. in Spring Valley, Wisconsin. In 1995, when they were milking just 50 cows, they started a custom harvesting business with four customers and a couple hundred acres. Today, their harvesting business clears more than 2,500 acres of hay and over 2,000 acres of corn silage each year. The dairy operation that the Richardsons and their staff of 15 operate has grown to more than 800 cows. They also grow their own corn and hay, most of which they use for feed and some of which they sell to a local elevator. The milk is sold to Foremost Farms.

The challenge

The Richardsons and their staff need the latest weather and market information to maximize the profits of Son-Bow Farms.

The solution

Along with the Richardsons, Karmen Freund, who serves as secretary, and her husband, John Freund, the herd manager, depend on DTN Dairy Professional to effectively and profitably run Son-Bow Farms.

The results

The Richardsons already had DTN/*The Progressive Farmer* for four years, when they upgraded to DTN Dairy Professional in early 2006. They depend on the system for watching corn prices to see what the local elevators are offering. "We also check it to watch

futures for cattle, corn, and even milk," said Karmen. "Everyone stops in and looks at it during the day." Karmen finds a high level of accuracy in the weather information on the system. "It's pretty close. It's definitely closer than the local TV channels are to the actual weather."

The men who work in the custom hay business depend on the real-time weather information they find on the service. "The custom guys really watch the weather on the DTN to see if it is a good day to cut hay. They also use it to look at the weather three to four days ahead."

Before investing in DTN Dairy Professional, Jay had used the system at home. "He really liked it, so he thought, 'Let's invest in it for the farm'. It's one of the first things he looks at in the morning when he's in the office."

Karmen likes that the system is so user-friendly. "I think it's very easy to move around in and find out what you want. That's a big plus for me because I'm not a real technology person. I want something that I can easily understand and that takes me right to the information I want. DTN/*The Progressive Farmer* does that for me."



John uses the system weekly to track what cattle are doing as an indicator of where the market is heading. "I use that information to make good decisions about when to cull cows to maximize profitability."

John finds that the information DTN Dairy offers makes his job more manageable. "I think it helps from a stress standpoint just knowing where things are at." He also thinks it makes him a better employee. "From a financial perspective, the more information you have, the better decisions you can make."

The client's view

"It's pretty easy to use. I didn't have any training on it, and it's pretty easy to maneuver within DTN Dairy and work your way around the system to get the information that you need."

John Freund, Spring Valley, Wisconsin