

Forest County Success from the Field

Northwoods Family Farm Goes Organic



Background

Gerald “Ted” Medow Jr. owns and operates Medow Farms Organic LLC, on his family’s heritage farm near Wabeno, in southern Forest County, Wisconsin. Medow Farms produces USDA-certified organic beef, chickens, hay, small grains and honey on 400 acres, of which Ted owns 267. The cow-calf operation features Limousin genetics, including offspring of cattle that had been sold from the farm by Ted’s father and purchased and brought back to the farm by Ted.

Highlights

Ted has always had a love for the outdoors, studying forestry in Montana and living among the redwoods of Northern California. He started partnering with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2010, shortly after returning to Wisconsin and purchasing the Forest County farm. As a beginning farmer, seeking to explore all avenues of production and restore the land as a fully working farm, Ted entered into Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts in 2011, to install a high tunnel system and have a forest management plan developed. Ted began producing organic vegetables in the high tunnel system and completed a timber sale in accordance with his forest management plan. He also entered into Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts, to enhance 100 acres of forestland, add wildlife habitat on the farm, and install a flush bar on his haying equipment. With an expanding beef herd, Ted entered into additional EQIP contracts, in 2013, 2016 and 2020, to convert 30 acres of cropland to rotationally grazed pasture and to install an all-season stock water tank, to restrict livestock access to surface water.

“Medow Farms is a jewel of the Northwoods, with rolling pasture and hayfields at the base of a forested moraine in the adjoining Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest,” according to Michael Stinebrink, District Conservationist, for the USDA NRCS in Rhinelander. The farm is at the headwaters of both the East Branch of the Lily River, which is a tributary to the Wolf River and Range Line Creek, which is a tributary to the North Branch of the Oconto River. “There’s a rugged individualism in Forest County, to match the rugged landscape,” added Stinebrink. “It takes hardy souls to make a go of it, and Ted, like his parents and grandparents before him, is a tireless



Medow Farms is a certified organic farm producing beef, chickens, hay, vegetables and honey, with sound forestry and wildlife management in Forest County, Wisconsin.

worker and effective steward of the farm and forestland. He is also an effective communicator. He puts conservation on the ground and then graciously shares his experiences with his neighbors, advocating for conservation and often putting them in contact with NRCS, to consider projects for their land.”

Future Plans

Ted’s most recent EQIP contract will enhance foraging opportunities for honeybees, including the 18 hives kept at Medow Farms. Ted’s conservation plan includes frost-seeding alfalfa, alsike clover and white Ladino clover into long-term, grass hay fields and rotationally grazing the new pastures to ensure that some paddocks are allowed to go to flower for honeybee forage.

Ted feeds steeped barley to his cattle, using a family heirloom recipe, to augment the grass diet. He markets his organic beef to restaurants, organic markets, grocery stores and individual sales throughout northern and central Wisconsin. “If you’re cutting into a good steak in a fine restaurant in Wausau, there’s a good chance that it came from Medow Farms,” added Stinebrink. NRCS is happy to continue working with Ted on his conservation goals.

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