

Weighing Your Options: Resources to Help with Transition and Stress



Despite the work being done to restore balance to the dairy markets, many analysts predict that the average dairy could lose \$1,000 per cow in equity in 2009. Each dairy farm family has to make a very personal decision as to what level of equity loss they can tolerate; and to evaluate in what ways their business must adjust to manage the lost equity. Whether you decide to change your business model to pursue niche markets, adjust your model for improved efficiencies, or transition out of the dairy business, making this decision requires a carefully considered process based on good information.

Here are resources in the industry that could help:

- The Center for Farm Transitions (www.iplantofarm.com; Toll Free at 877-475-2686) has several programs that are free and confidential available to farmers weighing their options and considering a change:
 - ⇒ “Twelve questions to ask and answer about planning your future in agriculture” deals with career decision-making regarding both entering and exiting farming;
 - ⇒ “Questions to ask about managing change” is a reflective guide generating answers to questions to help frame decisions;
 - ⇒ “Autumn Quest” which is designed to assist farmers and farm families to enter retirement. It deals with personal (family) planning about how to invest oneself now that there is extra time in life and financial planning;
 - ⇒ “Is it time to pass on the farm?” which deals with effective decision-making for farm transfer;
 - ⇒ “Passing on the farm to our children” deals with effective decision-making for generational farm transfer;
 - ⇒ “Questions to answer before investing in renewable, sustainable, “green” energy” assists in farm financial planning to reduce input costs or provide for an additional profit center for the operation.
- Brad Hilty from **Penn State Dairy Alliance** has published an article offering his insights on factors to consider when evaluating the options. The article is published at: <http://www.das.psu.edu/dairy-alliance/pdf/exitingdairybusiness.pdf>.
 - ⇒ Penn State also has other resources available that focus on this area. For more information, call Brad Hilty at (717) 948-6612.

Producers dealing with negative profit margins may also be challenged by overwhelming levels of stress. For those producers who are looking for assistance in this area, here is a good resource:

- The **University of Maine Cooperative Extension** recently published a Web site to provide “Resources for Farmers Under Stress.” The Web site lists a variety of resources available to help farmers and families under stress. The Web address is: <http://www.extension.umaine.edu/FarmersUnderStress/default.htm>.
- The **University of Maine** is also hosting a Webinar with Dr. Robert Fetsch, Extension Specialist and Professor of Human Development with the Colorado State University. The Webinar is designed to help farm families recognize the signs of stress and know what to do next. The Webinar will be on Thursday, September 3, from 2 - 4 p.m. Any ag service provider or farmer can attend. More information is available at: <http://www.extension.umaine.edu/FarmersUnderStress/default.htm>.

Those who do not have computer access or who want to learn more about these resources can call the Center for Dairy Excellence at 717-346-0849. We will help you find the resources you need to help you with your situation. All inquiries will be kept confidential.