



George Foster, Jr. Foster Brothers Farm

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Foster Brothers Farm in Middlebury, Vermont is a diversified dairy farm where emphasis is on sustainability, stewardship of the land and incorporation of best practices throughout the enterprise. The farm was founded in the 1930's and has continued through the years and family generations, evolving with diversification and innovations to today, as the 6th generation is beginning to integrate into the business.

Now the dairy herd is managed in a climate-controlled “Cow Palace” that was completed in the spring of 2018, including robotic milkers and many features designed to provide cow comfort and worker efficiency. In the early 80's Foster Brothers Farm was the first in Vermont to have a methane digester and today the Foster family operates a commercial composting business, Vermont Natural Ag Products.



Jeremy Foster

Foster Brothers Farm encompasses 2200 acres and grows corn for silage, hay, soybeans and small grains on approximately 1600 tillable acres. All of the farm's cropping is managed by George Foster, Jr. and his son, Jeremy. They have collaborated with UVM Extension on many field trials

over the years, part of their ongoing efforts to determine best practices for healthy soils, crop productivity and farm sustainability. They use cover crops with their corn and soybeans and have systematically transitioned planting to no-till on essentially all planted acres. George reported good success using rye as a cover crop, and terminating it using a roller-crimper.



2019 UVM Extension field trial studying optimum spacing between rows of corn

When asked about farm risk, George spoke about the changes we have been experiencing in the intensity of weather events. He sees that no-till planting and cover cropping have helped to improve the soil, creating much greater resiliency to wet and dry extremes. George indicated that the greatest risk to the enterprise is the milk price. In recent years the milk market has been volatile and the price dairy producers are paid for milk has consistently been low, often below the cost of production. Foster Brothers Farm has crop insurance coverage for their corn and George emphasized the importance of prevented planting endorsements. This provides coverage when weather conditions prevent

farmers from getting out and planting their spring crops or having to replant due to damage or loss to the planted acres.

In 2019, Foster Brothers Farm was named by International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) as their 2019 Innovative Dairy Farmer of the Year. It would appear that the history of caring for the land, welcoming new ideas and approaches, and incorporating innovation will continue long into the future.



UVM Extension Agronomist Kristen Williams explains a field trial at Foster Brothers Farm to USDA RMA Specialist Mary Staak



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