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Nature’s Circle Farm

Dick and Meg York
New Limerick, Maine

Dick York grew up working on a family farm and knew instinctively that agriculture was his calling. He and his son Jamie originally founded Nature’s Circle Farm planting two acres of organic vegetables in northern Maine. The York family farm has evolved with the growth of organics in the region, and in 2004 daughter and now co-owner of the farm, Meg York, was called back to the land to manage marketing and bookkeeping for the family business.

As the demand for organic produce increases, the York family continues to diversify and evolve their offering of commercial-scale produce crops which currently include 16 varieties of double-certified Maine organic seed potato and fields of turnips, rutabaga, beets, cabbage, parsnips, squash and grain. The York family works with 16 dedicated employees managed by farm manager Nick Fitzpatrick to keep this boat afloat.

Nature’s Circle Farm recently invested in a new multi-department controlled environment storage facility which offers customers a longer availability of crops. Both farm and packing facility are GAP certified.

Meet Meg York in the following clip and learn about the York family’s excitement about Aroostook County’s expanding agricultural sector!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sV1r5xCxmDM>

Marquis Farms

Wayne, Alice & Nathan Marquis
Van Buren, Maine

Marquis Farms has grown to be the largest organic potato grower and packer in Maine. In fact, they’re the largest organic potato grower and packer east of the Mississippi River.

Getting to this point did not happen overnight. Wayne Marquis persevered in his desire to farm through some of the toughest times a farmer can endure. When Wayne and his siblings were

young, their dad passed away. “Our farm stayed idle for quite a few years. When I was old enough, I took over the work.”

When Wayne and Alice’s son, Nathan, came into his own on the farm, they knew something needed to be done to secure a future for their son on the farm. They looked to organics for the answer and started exploring how to grow their potatoes organically.

Since 2005, that’s what they’ve been doing on the roughly 2,500 acres the family works, much of it in the beautiful St. John River Valley. The river bottom land is their secret sauce. Because it’s softer and nearly stone-free, they can grow thinner-skinned red and yellow potatoes.

“The first year I grew 10 acres of organic potatoes,” Wayne says. “Nearly 50 percent of the land we farm is in organic production now. My dream is that I’m able to leave my family a successful farming operation that’s in better condition for future generations. That has been my goal and I think that promise is going to come true.”

In the last couple years, the Marquis family started to invest in their organic grain operations to capture more value for their rotation crops. Their ability to diversify is what has kept Marquis Farms afloat and able to fulfill their multi-generational legacy. Both farm and packing facility are GAP certified.

LaJoie Growers, LLC

LaJoie Growers, LLC is based in the St. John River Valley in Van Buren, Maine. The farm business is run by two brothers Dominic & Gilbert LaJoie along with Gilbert’s son Jay LaJoie and cousin Lucas Lajoie. For five generations the LaJoie family has been producing an abundant crop of potatoes and other vegetables that are sold for chipping, processing, seed and fresh markets. Currently the farm consists of 600 acres of specialty produce and 700 acres of small grains.

The LaJoie family’s innovative spirit has awarded them grants to diversify their operations, including the installation of a state-of-the-art, 5 million-lb cold storage facility. They’ve also incorporated GPS-guided tractors into their planting method which has supported their ability to scale.

LaJoie Growers, LLC has established logistics relationships which allow deliveries as far as New Jersey. They specialize in growing heirloom produce for niche markets, including the production of parsnips, carrots, beets and blue potatoes for the Terra label.

As if farming didn’t take up most of their time, Jay LaJoie and his family are active throughout the state and the country promoting and developing the potato industry. Walt Whitcomb, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has high regard for the LaJoie family, recognizing them as leaders in the agricultural world locally, statewide and nationally, as well as innovators and excellent stewards of their land.

Meet Jay LaJoie in the following clip and learn about the region’s history and the promising future of Aroostook County.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bv64090GYws>

Credits

Thank you to LaJoie Growers, LLC, Nature's Circle Farm, Marquis Farms, MOFGA, Jean English, Paul Cyr, the Aroostook Partnership for Progress, and Organic Valley for the content and photos published on this page.