Show-Me Sustainable Agriculture ...
They were pleased to find that customers wanted to drive out to the farm from town to pick berries and flowers. Customers often ask the family questions about how they grow their food. The DoWells proudly show off their gardens and explain how they use crop rotations, cover crops, mulches, and other techniques to prevent disease, weed, and insect problems, a practice known as integrated pest management. While the trees grow, cows and other animals graze on the grass between them, which is an agroforestry practice called silvopasture. The trees also give shelter, protecting the animals from the hot sun in summer and providing a windbreak during winter. Windbreaks also provide shelter for wildlife. Diverse crops and edges help to provide food for wildlife. In some places, the family left wide spaces between trees so they could plant crops like wheat between the rows, a practice called alley cropping.

The DoWell kids started a 4-H project growing vegetables in raised beds. They had a lot of fun and the family really enjoyed the fresh vegetables from the garden. One project led to another and their garden got bigger and bigger. Soon the family was raising enough sweet corn, tomatoes, melons, and other vegetables to sell at the farmers’ market in town and a farm stand at their farm. The garden and the farm created so much interest that now, the Bright Future School in town organizes annual field days to visit the Good Life Farm.

A few years ago, the family experimented with a pick-your-own strawberry patch and then a flower garden. They were pleased to find that customers wanted to drive out to the farm from town to pick berries and flowers. Customers often ask the family questions about how they grow their food. The DoWells proudly show off their gardens and explain how they use crop rotations, cover crops, mulches, and other techniques to prevent disease, weed, and insect problems, a practice known as integrated pest management. They point out the greenhouse where they start plants and show how they compost their garden waste, and return the “black gold” to the soil as a wonderful fertilizer. Their customers are pleased to see the environmentally friendly practices that are used to grow their food.

When a neighboring farmer moved his chickens to a nearby pasture, one of the customers at the Good Life Farm asked if they could buy their farm fresh eggs. They asked the DoWells what else they could buy from the area’s farms and discovered that cheese, butter, ground beef, steaks, lamb, and pork were all available within a short distance from town.

The residents of Friendly Corners decided to have a festival to celebrate all of the food produced within their community. They also asked local businesses to carry food from the neighboring farms. Before long, the Eat Well Diner and Good 4 U Snacks started serving local meats, fruits, and vegetables. The grocery store started stocking vegetables, fruit, eggs, and meats from the farms. The town grew stronger as more and more people started buying locally produced foods. As a result, more and more families raise food to sell, which means that more families in town and on the farm will live happily ever after.

Resources for more information:

- ATTRA, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, P.O. Box 3838, Butte, MT 59702, www.attra.ncat.org, 1-800-346-9140
  Contact ATTRA for information packets on a wide variety of sustainable and organic agriculture topics.

- The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC), National Agricultural Library, USDA, 10301 Baltimore Ave, Room 123, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351, 301-504-6559, https://afsic.nal.usda.gov/
  Contact AFSIC to talk to information specialists who specialize in locating, collecting, and providing information about sustainable agriculture.

- North Central Region - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE), University of Minnesota, 120 BioAgEng Bldg, 1390 Eckles Ave, St. Paul, MN 55108, 612-626-3113, ncrsare@umn.edu, www.northcentralsare.org.
  Contact the NCR-SARE office or your NCR-SARE State Coordinator for information about SARE grant programs and sustainable agriculture education materials.

See: http://www.northcentralsare.org/State-Programs for a listing of state coordinator contact information.