

Marcoot Jersey Creamery Comprehensive Food Safety Program

Project Titles: Marcoot Jersey Creamery
Comprehensive Food Safety Program
Coordinators: Beth Marcoot
Location: Greenville, Illinois
SARE Grants: \$7,495

Duration: 2013-2015
To read the full project reports, go to
www.sare.org/projects and search for project
number FNC13-918.

When the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was passed in 2011, farmers across the country recognized a need to develop a food safety plan. Marcoot Jersey Creamery in Greenville, Illinois was no exception. In 2013, Marcoot family member, Beth Marcoot, applied for and received a \$7,495 NCRSARE Farmer Rancher grant to develop a food safety and defense program that could be useful to other producers in the dairy industry.

Marcoot is a seventh generation, grass-based, rotational grazing operation with registered Jersey cattle. John Marcoot had been running the dairy farm since he was 17 years old, but in the mid-2000s his daughters, Amy and Beth, expressed an interest in returning to the farm to start an artisan cheese company. John took over managing the cattle herd, while Amy, Beth, and their mother Linda started working on plans for Marcoot Jersey Creamery.

In the summer of 2009, the family started building a processing facility with an on-farm store and educational facility. Their goal was to make and sell farmstead and artisan cheeses solely from the milk produced on Marcoot Jersey Farm. Today, the Marcoots employ more than a dozen people, produce several varieties of cheese, and welcome thousands of



With support from an NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grant, Beth Marcoot and the Marcoot

visitors to the farmstead each year. "Assurance that food is safe to eat strengthens consumer confidence and improves quality; both will positively affect income," said Beth Marcoot. "This also verifies the integrity and commitment of the Marcoot family in meeting our goal to continue to be a sustainable agriculture business for future generations."

They started their work by gathering information and standards from regulatory agencies and industry associations. They also developed an "excellent" working relationship with their Regional Illinois Department of Public Health inspector. In Phase I, they conducted an analysis of their daily routines in food handling.

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In Phase II, they implemented and evaluated a proactive food safety plan, including a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) program. In Phase III, they developed a comprehensive employee training program. Finally, in Phase IV, they shared the information they had gathered with others in the dairy industry, so that others could use this information while establishing their own food safety programs.

Their comprehensive food safety plan achieved high scores and certification by a third party audit through AIB International, and they say the plan has contributed to increased productivity on the farm. They are selling more cheese, and they are growing.

“Our dairy herd has increased to keep up the demands,” said Marcoot. “We have increased employees on our farm and creamery. We are confident we provide a high quality product. Our comprehensive food safety/defense program has allowed substantial growth, therefore, assuring sustainability of our family farm.”

The manual that Beth co-wrote with her mother, Linda Marcoot, is called *How to Start a Creamery: Food Safety & Defense Plan*; it covers the basics for producing dairy products, and provides hands-on, step-by-step instructions for developing a food safety program.

For more information on Marcoot’s NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grant project, visit the SARE project reporting website. Simply search by the project number, FNC13-918, at www.mysare.sare.org, or contact the NCR-SARE office.

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