



#FridaysOnTheFarm: Meadowlark's Market Advantage

Each Friday, visit local farms, ranches, forests, and resource areas through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Meet farmers, producers, and landowners who are working to improve their operations with

This Friday meet Eric and Amy Kinman, owners of Meadowlark Farm, a regenerative farming operation located in rural Gasconade County, Missouri. Rooted on eight acres, Meadowlark Farm began with just six head of heritage breed feeder pigs in 2013. Today, six head of hogs are shipped to the processor every two weeks.

Hog Wild

"The pigs were my idea, although growing up, my family raised cows, sheep, and goats – no hogs," Amy said. "My husband had experience raising hogs with his extended family, so I relied on him to learn the ropes of raising pigs."

The current operation consists of Red Wattle and Large Black heritage hog breeds, which are rare but intentionally chosen by the Kinmans to fulfill their goal of carrying on diversified farming practices and producing superior meats. In addition to hogs, the Kinmans have incorporated Angus, South Poll, and Pinzgauer cattle breeds into their operation.

The cattle herd is rotated daily across 800 acres of adjacent land that they cash lease. Both the cattle and hog herds live on pasture and woodlots year-round, and graze cover crops - including oats, forage pea, succotash, turnips, giant beets, and clover- in the spring and fall. The Kinmans also mix and grind their own feed on-site as a supplement and raise meat birds seasonally.

In the beginning, the family also grew seasonal fruits, vegetables and fresh flowers. To market their produce and meat, they looked to local farmers markets for direct sales.

"This was an on-ramp for us to start to build our business once we had product to sell," Amy said. "Farmers markets give producers a start – a good incubator for their business. For our operation, it allowed us to develop relationships with fellow growers and consumers."

A Leg Up

As the business expanded, the Kinmans realized the need for a better way to manage and market their product. For this, they turned to their local USDA [Farm Service Agency](#) to explore options for cold storage and freezer structures. They utilized the [Farm Storage Facility Loan](#) program to purchase a freezer and cooler to better store and maintain their produce and meat cuts.

"The facility loan program really allowed our business to branch out and give us a leg up in the marketplace," Amy said.



The Kinmans have also participated in the [Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) and [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) through FSA.

“Working with the local FSA office was a positive experience for us,” Amy said. “The people really care about your operation and want to help in any way they can.”

Full Circle

Today, Meadowlark Farm maintains monthly deliveries to Jefferson City and St. Louis, and now ships direct to customers. The Kinmans also wholesale whole and half meat carcasses, and manage Everyday Good Life Co-op in Owensville, Missouri. Farm-to-table dinners and cooking classes are also popular among Meadowlark Farm followers. For the Kinmans, their goal is to continue to grow their business in a sustainable way.

“Anything we can do to bring our practices full-circle is important,” Amy said. “Meadowlark Farm has been a journey with some hard decisions made along the way, but it has allowed us to grow and now we are better able to manage our herd and focus on more responsible grazing practices.”

More Information

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster assistance, loan, and conservation programs to help agricultural producers in the United States weather ups and downs in the market and recover from natural disasters as well as invest in improvements to their operations. [Learn about additional programs.](#)

For more information about USDA programs and services, [contact your local USDA service center.](#)

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