



What do managing a dairy farm and making an apple pie have in common?

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It has been raining for a week in my part of the world and the days are getting shorter. There is no mistaking that fall is here with the leaves falling and the smell of apple pie wafting out of the kitchen. My girlfriend makes an excellent pie by the way... but how is this all connected to the farming business? Let me explain...

Everyone has their own recipe...

...for apple pie

There are probably as many recipes for apple pie as there are cooks. Still, they all contain the same basic ingredients: flour, apples and sugar. The difference lies in the details, the type of apple used, the amount of sugar added and of course, how you make the crust. Moreover, everyone

seems to add their own personal touch (a touch of cinnamon?) that gives it that certain « je ne sais quoi ».

Regardless of how you make your pie, the end result is the same: an apple pie that suits your taste! If it turns to applesauce, though, we have a problem. Even though there are many good recipes, there is always one that we like best. Especially when it is prepared with love!

... for their business!

There are many different **business** models and managers choose to adhere to the one that suits them best. The basic principles for a successful dairy farm, however, are the same for everyone: use your resources to their full potential (herd, quota, facilities, land, equipment and labour), maintain a balance among them, measure the economic results of its operations and respect its financial capacity when making investments. This is where, similar to an apple pie, each manager can choose to put more or less emphasis on one or another of these aspects adding their personal touches and preferences.

At the end of the line, the expected result is the same for everyone: a profitable company that brings a sense of accomplishment! If it falls into a deficit, there is a big problem. If you are not happy, that is not any better. Even if the neighboring farms recipe seems to be excellent, it is not necessarily, what will suit you the best.

What is the best recipe for me?

In my pie, I like big chunks of apple that are still somewhat firm and I prefer if it is slightly more sour than sweet. What about you, what do you prefer? Is this opinion shared by all of the associates in your business? How do you work it out so that you can meet your goals?

It is rather easy to find the perfect recipe for an apple pie: you just keep trying pies until you find the one that you like the best. Using the same approach for your business, however, would be catastrophic. Relying only on what is recommended by others may lead us where we don't want to go. Choosing to take some time as a team to think about it collectively is definitely a more promising route. This process is known as strategic planning. I plan to delve a little deeper into this subject in the coming months.

In the meantime, why not continue to think about finding your recipe? Ask each member of your team to answer the following questions:

Over the last two years,

1. What did you like the most about your business and what would you like to see repeated in the future?
2. What situations have you lived through that you would not like to go through again?

Take some time to think about it... maybe sitting around a table with a big slice of pie... and an irreplaceable scoop of ice cream!

Have a good fall.



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