

CARES Recipient Profile



THIS FARM
CARES

Farm: Dairy Production Systems (DPS)

Location: Bell, Gilchrist County

Date of Origination: 2004

Commodities: Dairy

David Sumrall wasn't raised in a dairy family. In fact, his career in the milk business began as a part-time job while he worked his way through college. He spent the first two decades of his dairy career working with some of the largest herds in America. Over time he began to realize there was more to the dairy business than just producing milk.



Following that simple philosophy, Sumrall established Dairy Production Systems. DPS is comprised of four farms, including two in Florida and one each in Georgia and Mississippi, and Sumrall is a co-owner of a fifth farm in Texas. Combined, these comprise a total herd of about 15,000 cows.

From the outset Sumrall wanted this to be more than just a local business. Producing a high-quality product is the goal of every dairy, but to Sumrall it was only part of what could be done at the farm; he wanted the farm to be a good steward and a good neighbor. Being located so close to the Santa Fe River, and sitting in the middle of the largest concentration of freshwater springs on earth, it was critically important to Sumrall to ensure that no damage come to these amazing natural resources.

DPS deals with its effluent not as a waste stream, but rather as a nutrient stream. With assistance from Farm Pilot Project Coordination, Inc., and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, DPS constructed a state-of-the-art waste management system. The first facility processed liquids and reintroduced them into the system through irrigation, and the second turned solids into a marketable by-product like compost.

With its ability to remove a high percentage of nitrogen and phosphorous, DPS virtually neutralizes the water used for irrigation. This process is so effective that the dairy can adjust the nutrient level in the recycled irrigation water to the nutritional requirement of the crops.

While compost does generate revenue for the dairy, DPS has set aside Fridays as "Cowpeat Giveaway Day." As a good neighbor, DPS invites local residents to the dairy to fill their trucks with free compost for their gardens.

Sumrall is proud of his career as a dairy farmer and summed it up with, "The most rewarding thing for me, being a part of DPS, is that we've created a living breathing organism that has roots that extend out into the communities where we operate."

Source: FreshFromFlorida.com – 2009