

# Farming has always been a family affair

*A life-long love of farming*



For Josh Dillman, growing up on a dairy farm in Middle Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia instilled in him a life-long love of farming he is hoping to pass on to his children. He is now part of the next generation operating the Port Hill Milking Company established by Ron and Erwin Maynard and their families in 1992. His wife, Maryella, is the daughter of Ron and Liz Maynard. The couple met at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (now the Dalhousie University Faculty of Agriculture) and he worked for the PEI Department of Agriculture and Land before deciding to work full-time at the farm. Maryella continues to work in sales and agronomy with PEI Agromart.



With a herd of 300, with 135 milking cows, Port Hill Milking Company is larger than the average Canadian dairy herd of 89 cows.

Josh explained the operation is actually two adjacent farms with the milking cows and parlour located at Ron's farm and the calves, heifers and dry cows housed across the field at Ron's cousin, Erwin's barn. While both Ron and Erwin continue to remain active in the operation, the cousins are working on a succession plan to transition the operation over to Josh and Maryella and Erwin's son Andrew and his wife Annie.

"It is great to have that wealth of experience we can call on as young farmers," Josh explained. "It is a challenge to grow currently in the dairy industry so we are focusing on being more efficient."

To help with that task, they have received funding from the Future Farmer Program. With funding from the federal and provincial governments under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the five-year funding program is designed to assist people entering the industry to establish or expand their operations.

Josh is a firm believer in the program, noting it is flexible enough to accommodate both young farmers like him who are part of a multi-generational farm as well as those who are establishing their own operations. He added, "I think one of the great strengths of agriculture is there can be a place for everybody, from a large and long-established operation, to a market garden. We want to attract new people to help grow the industry."

One of their first priorities was to purchase conservation tillage equipment allowing them to eliminate moldboard plowing. Josh noted that this allows them to reduce soil erosion and to cover more acres.

Since then, he has continued to replace aging equipment to something that is more fuel efficient, making the operation not only run smoother but also lessen the farm's environmental footprint. Josh said they have also used the funds from the program to assist with soil and milk sampling.

As a supply managed commodity, Josh said the dairy industry is not subject to sudden price and market fluctuations but noted.

“The best way we can prepare for the future is to become as efficient as possible,” Josh maintains. “I really don’t see us getting all that much bigger because of the limited availability of quota, so we want to concentrate on getting better at what we do.”

