Collaborative Marketing Case Study: Dutch Hill Creamery

Brian and Crystal Aukema operate Dutch Hill Creamery (<http://www.dutchhillcreamery.com/>), a micro-creamery producing yogurt, milk and cheese curds. Dutch Hill Creamery farms on 260 acres with 130 head of dairy cows and youngstock. They have been in operation since April 2013 selling through farmers’ market, on-farm and through wholesale channels.

When Dutch Hill Creamery started participating in this project they were selling in four collaborative marketing relationships, as well as direct to consumer through their on-farm store and at farmers market. They evaluated whether each venture was profitable by volume being delivered and whether it was enough to cover their gas costs. They did not possess a tool to make any more quantitative judgements.

Since participating in this collaborative marketing project they have made the following decisions:

* Ended one of their collaborative marketing relationships 🡪 this was based on both volume being purchased and the price they were being given per ½ gallon of milk.
* Increased sales at another of their collaborative marketing venues 🡪 they believe this was due to customers following them from the venue they dropped
* Added a Taste of NY store, located on an interstate 🡪 they made this decision based on volume sold, timeliness of payments and commitment to telling their story and drive sales to their on-farm store through agri-tourism
  + Throughout the summer of 2015 they had to add another day of processing to their schedule to keep up with this demand.

The economic impact of their participation was a doubling of sales based on dropping on relationship and increased attention to the other. They have also experienced decreased labor and transportation time by being more efficient and sales driven when working with collaborators.

When Dutch Hill first joined the project they identified the following as challenges in collaborative marketing:

* Time (lack thereof)
* Wanting to start working with distributors 🡪 Selling through the Taste of NY store will allow the farm access to the other stores in the state
* Trying to figure out the best method to get the “biggest bang” for your buck
* Maintaining relationships 🡪 By dropping one of the collaborative marketing relationships the farm was able to focus more intensively on the others
* Keeping up with demand

Through participation in the project the farm was able to utilize the resources provided, mainly the checklist, to evaluate current and potential relationships, thereby becoming more profitable in their collaborative marketing efforts.

Next steps include:

* Exploring the feasibility of another product line (drinkable yogurt) due to demand from the Taste of NY store
* Keeping with increased day of processing to keep up with demand increased sales