GOLD NUGGET

How A Conventional "Commodity Cowboy" Became A Regenerative Farming Pioneer

From 1946 – when Will Harris's father was still running the farm – to 1995, the farm used industrial farming methods and chemicals with just one focus: how many pounds of beef they could produce at the lowest price possible.

Today, such concerns no longer occupy Will's mind. Instead, he's wholly absorbed in figuring out how he can make the land thrive even more. Instead of feeding cattle, he now says his business is built around feeding microbes in the soil – all those crucial microorganisms that in turn make the soil fertile.

Why did Will change?

As time went on, despite always turning a profit, Harris became increasingly disenchanted with the way his farm was progressing, looking and feeling ever more like a factory than a farm. When he heard people were looking for grass – fed beef, he saw an opportunity to make some changes.

What did he do?

He began by giving up feeding his animals corn, sub therapeutic antibiotics and hormone implants. Initially, that's as far as he had intended to go. But in time he realized that "using chemical fertilizers on pastures was as wrong as using hormone implants and sub therapeutic antibiotics," he says.

Will realised that synthetic fertilizers actually harm the microorganisms in the soil, without which soil degradation sets in, nutrition (both in the soil and the food) goes down and, ultimately, the entire ecosystem begins to suffer.

The transition was by no means an easy one. He went from being debt – free to taking out $7.5 million in loans to build the processing facilities he needed — an operation that lost money each and every year to boot. There were dark times, when he didn't know whether he might lose the farm that had been in the family for more than 130 years. "We took incredible risks," he admits

Symbiosis and Synergy

In addition to cattle, Harris now has free – range goats, ewes, pigs, chickens, geese and ducks on his farm. This mix of species brings a much needed synergy to the whole system. They form symbiotic relationships where one species helps keep parasites from overwhelming another.

The Result?

Harris no longer uses any kind of chemical fertilizers or pesticides on his farm. He's also quit tilling. As a result, the farm and the land as a whole is teeming with life that was not there before.

The organic matter in the soil — which is a good indicator of quality — has gone from 0.5% to more than 5% in the past 15 years, which is a significant improvement.

"Today I'm very glad I made the changes that I made, because the farm is again profitable; cash flow positive, and two of my daughters and their spouses have come back to work on the farm. At least that last part would not have happened in the earlier scenario."

His farm now produces high – quality grass – fed products. But while beef and other animal products are the commodities being sold to the public, what Harris is really producing is healthy soil, and the success of his farm is a great demonstration of how you can accomplish the conversion from conventional to regenerative agriculture.

Soil Lovers say: ***Improving Your Soil Biology Is Your Key to Winning***

Ref: *http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2016/10/29/regenerative-farming-methods.aspx*