

Livestock Partnerships

CASE STUDY

Bob Giacomini operates a 720-acre dairy in Marin County, CA with daughters Karen, Diana, Lynn, and Jill. The dairy is the heart of the Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company, where the Giacomini's make their award-winning cheeses and demonstrate sustainable farming practices. A leader in the dairy industry, Giacomini sat on the National Dairy Board from 1989 to 1995, including as President for his last 2 years of service.



Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company. Photo courtesy of the Giacomini Family and Kodiak Greenwood.

Like farmers across the State, his farm has faced record drought, and he has real concerns about having enough forage for his cows. He is not just worried about his 800 animals—he also wonders whether his farm will have enough drinking water since he relies on a well.

Giacomini's farm is at the forefront of conservation. Rotational grazing of their cows keeps soils healthy and helps prevent harmful erosion into Tomales Bay. To preserve their open space and working landscapes, they transferred their development rights to the Marin Agricultural Land Trust.

The Giacomini's also use a methane digester to convert cow manure into clean, renewable energy that powers their dairy and cheese facility. The digester, which was installed in 2009, was funded in part by grants from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the California Energy Commission, administered by Western United Resource Development, Inc., and the Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Self Generation Incentive Program. Most recently, the Giacomini's received a grant from USDA's Rural Energy for America Program. Electricity generated by the digester system is used to power dairy operations as well as on-site cheesemaking operations at the family's Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company. Hot water is recaptured from the system and used both in the milk parlor and in the cheese plant, saving approximately \$1,000 a month on propane costs.

In addition to land stewardship, diversification is a key component of the Giacomini's operation.

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In 2010, they opened The Fork, a culinary and educational center situated on their property. Agri-tourism has been an integral component to the marketing and promotion of their products, and the experience creates brand loyalty for both trade and consumer customers who visit them from across the country. Their property is a model for the region and the dairy industry, and they have been recognized for their leadership with the 2013 Leopold Award.

“I’ve always felt it was the responsibility of a rancher and landowner to take care of the land for the next generation,” said Giacomini.