



## **Lantz Adams**

For many people, dreams are those things in our lives that we want most but often feel that they are just unattainable. As we grow older, our dreams shift or change. Many people are never able to fulfill their dreams, but there are those select few, the lucky ones, who do. I was probably nine or ten years old when I realized my dream. I can't pick out a specific moment, event, or day that I decided, but my earliest formation of a dream was to do exactly what my father is lucky enough to do every single day. I am 20 years old and I can still say that my dream hasn't wavered, but rather I'm more certain of my dream now than ever before.

My name is Lantz Adams, I am a second-year student at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo majoring in Dairy Science and minoring in AgBusiness. My parents, Rick and Michelle Adams, are the third generation to own and operate our dairy now known as AdamsCows Dairy located in Laton, California. My dream is to be the fourth generation of AdamsCows Dairy. For as long as I can remember, my family dairy farm has played a huge role in my life, but our family dairy is not like most other family dairies in California. The reality is I don't think there is another dairy like us that exists anywhere in the state of California.

As of today January 15th, 2020, we are milking 72 cows in an eight-stall flat barn. Every day, my father wakes up and lives his dream. He personally milks and feeds our 72 cows, every morning and every night, seven days a week, 365 days a year; that is unless my sisters or I do it. To most Californians, a 72 cow dairy may sound huge but to a California dairyman, it sounds more like a hobby farm. With the average California herd size nearing 1,250 cows and Wisconsin herds closer to 140 our size farm could be considered hobby sized. To my family, however, that is the farthest thing from the truth. When my parents and I attend various dairy shows, functions, or meetings, we are often asked when explaining our operation. "How do you manage to survive at that size?" Frankly, there is only one answer, sustainability.

All dairies, including ours, strive for sustainability, ours just looks a little different. Personally, when I think of the word sustainability, I think of finding creative ways to be successful that others may not be doing. If you ask most people what dairy sustainability looks like, they think of environmental sustainability. On AdamsCows Dairy, we are self-sustainable in addition to being environmentally sustainable.

In addition to our 72 milking cows and their offspring, we also farm 80 acres growing all our own forages. Not only do we grow our own feed, but we also take our sustainability to the next level by harvesting those feeds ourselves as well. We double or triple crop our farm growing alfalfa, wheat, and corn. We cut, rake, and bale or chop, truck, and bag every crop with our own equipment. We call that self-sustainability. Admittedly, our equipment is not the latest or greatest, but with the proper care and maintenance, our results are comparable to any commercial harvester. Rather than pay a custom harvester to make a profit, we have invested in the equipment necessary to keep the profits on our farm's books.

Most people know California is a desert without irrigation, so we depend on surface water or groundwater to irrigate our crops. Excessive groundwater pumping has created a new set of problems,

our water table is dropping. Some of the steps we have taken to limit our impact on the water table include recycling/redirecting the water used in our barn up to seven times before it eventually irrigates our crops. Additionally, we have implemented a partial no-till farming program that decreases water use, increases soil health and reduces the amount of fuel used and other costs associated with conventional tillage.

I envision the future of the dairy industry becoming not only more environmentally sustainable but also becoming increasingly sustainable through automation. We hope to implement an automated milking system for the cows and an automated feeding system for the entire herd including the calves. There has been extensive research regarding the benefits of automation correlating increased production from free flow milking times, reduced human interaction, and increased feed intake.

Dairy farmers will continue to find ways, when economically feasible, to use better genetics, implement better manure management systems and better farm-land management practices, while also increasing cow comfort and health, thus increasing whole-farm sustainability. According to the USDA and MyPlate, every person on this planet should be consuming 2-3 cups of dairy DAILY. With the world population growing at a faster rate than ever, it is important that the dairy industry continues to make strides to provide nature's most nearly perfect food, while leaving an even smaller environmental footprint. We are under more scrutiny now than ever before and must always strive to find ways to create innovative wholesome new dairy products in an increasingly competitive market. We must find ways to encourage the public to purchase dairy products rather than one of the dozens of sugary and other non-dairy drinks available in the marketplace.

To me, there is no better feeling than waking up in the morning, following your dream and doing what you love. At the end of the day, there is nothing more fulfilling than laying your head down after a long day of work, knowing that you did everything in your power to provide the public with a wholesome, nutritious, and safe product to consume with hopes that maybe your children will one day want to do what dad does. That is what I look forward to in the dairy industry, but it is only possible through sustainability.