

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

Freund's Farm East Canaan, Connecticut



Creating a path for the next generation

For dairy farmers Ben and Matt Freund, their cows have become a source of economic and environmental efficiency.

While milk provides their steady income, they've also managed to make the most of nutrient-rich manure. With the support of neighbors, land-grant colleges and state and federal agencies, they've refined a process to export those nutrients.

It's in the form of CowPots®, a line of biodegradable gardening containers made of composted manure, and it has become an important part of their family's operation.

CowPots has grown into a business that supplements their dairy's income and helps their East Canaan, Connecticut, community manage manure sustainably. Tens of millions of CowPots have been manufactured in a modest building on Freund's Farm, the family's 275-cow operation, then sold in Canada, Europe and the United States.

The Freunds didn't set out to create a novel product with a catchy name. They wanted to find alternative uses for their dairy's manure in order to reduce phosphorous buildup in soils that could threaten nearby rivers. They also needed to raise their farm's income – and they've since done that and more.

Now, Freund's Farm is using CowPots to bring attention to the advantages of sustainability. The Freunds aren't just reducing their own carbon footprint, they're using manure from neighboring farms to keep up with demand for feeding the farm's digester. The farm also is producing the equivalent of 100 percent of its own electricity needs with a solar system that has zero carbon impact.

CowPots® is now a stand-alone business for the Freunds, boasting:

- 11 full-time employees
- 15 seasonal personnel
- \$2 million invested back into the local community
- A facility built and maintained by local vendors
- International exposure thanks to social media

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