The Kinnard Family takes pride in knowing they produce food for others and that somewhere in the world someone didn’t go hungry.

Alvin and Milly Kinnard started their farm in 1948 with 14 cows and 80 acres, using money borrowed from their parents. Today, their children successfully grew the farm because of their commitment to best practices in cow comfort and soil health. And grow they have!

They milk 7,500 cows and cultivate crops on 6,500 acres with forage grown by neighbors on an additional 3,000 acres. Among other things, this scale allows Kinnard Farms to support their rural community’s agricultural roots.

Thirty years ago, their township had 47 licensed dairy farms. Now there are 11. The Kinnards recruit employees who grew up on those farms, went to college to earn engineering and other degrees, and want to return home.

Kinnards’ cows also feed on forages from local farmers who no longer produce milk. Use of forage, in turn, works toward their mission to leave the soil in better condition each year.

They also use satellite imagery to test and geo-reference fields and then they precisely apply fertilizer to their crops. This way they can avoid shallow bedrock that would allow manure and liquid to quickly soak into groundwater. No-till and cover cropping, practices the Kinnards have implemented for over 25 years, help keep nutrients in the soil. Frequently, the Kinnards are early adopters. And sometimes they’re innovators.

For example, they designed the first-of-its-kind sand recycling center – one that uses no freshwater in the process – to separate, wash and dry sand bedding for continual reuse. Sand is this farm’s preferred bedding material because it provides comfort and sure footing for the cows and is bacteria-free, keeping udders healthy.

Lee, one of Alvin and Milly’s sons, says his family feels fortunate to work together on new opportunities: “We genuinely believe sustainability needs to work environmentally and economically, as well as for our community.”