How Two Words Make a Big Impact on Sustainability

Wisconsin dairy farmer Dean Strauss enjoys the journey of new possibilities. It’s why he often precedes many questions during team meetings with “what if?”

His farm, Majestic Crossing Dairy, is a testament to where “what if” can lead.

“In terms of sustainability, we’re always looking for the what-ifs,” Strauss said. “What if we tried something else or considered something new that’s out there? We’re always looking for energy savings, labor savings, time efficiencies. How can we do projects better related to our land or our animal-welfare program? It’s all about a bigger picture.”

Strauss further enhanced his sustainability commitment by adopting a GPS guidance system on his tractors and other machinery. The farm grows 3,600 acres of corn, alfalfa, wheat and soybeans for cow feed, and the technology helps Strauss identify efficiencies in seed distribution as well as reducing fuel, pesticide and fertilizer use.

The 2,000 cows at Majestic Crossing are the result of a unique strategic shift when Strauss began building a herd of crossbreeds. The cows are a genetic mix of Holsteins, Viking Red and French Montbéliarde. They are moderate in size, therefore eating less food and producing less manure while providing milk that is higher in milkfat and protein, ideal for cheese production. And that is beneficial to the end user of Strauss’ milk, the Sartori cheese company. This relationship also brings another element of sustainability—Strauss’ milk only travels seven miles to the plant.

These successes, and others, keep Strauss and his team on the lookout for more ways they can help protect the planet.

“I like that fork in the road where some people are going the other way,” Strauss said. “There’s value in that fork. You have to find where that fork is and that’s kind of been part of our success to doing things a little differently. I enjoy the journey.”