

Who Farms? THE LARSONS

Dairy farmers *Cynthia* and *Rich Larson*, of *Larson Farm and Creamery*, located one mile south of Wells, Vermont.

We kind of feel like *David and Goliath*. But there's lots of us Davids down here taking care of the soil and producing good food.

How could we lose?



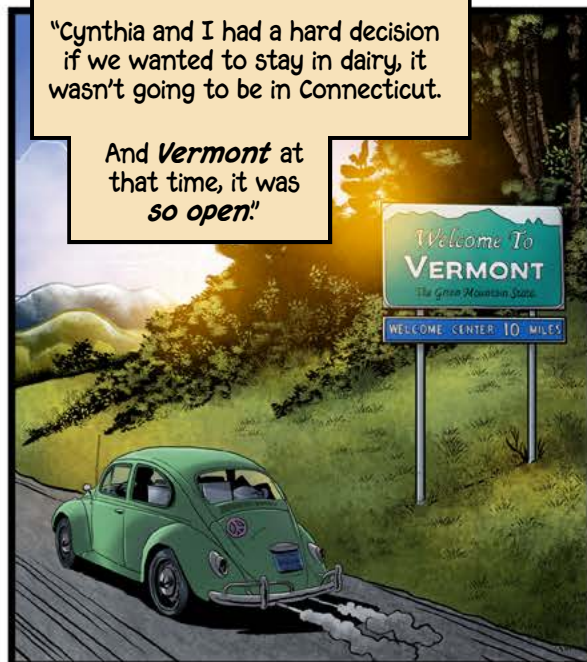
Their story starts in the 1970s.

"We both grew up in Connecticut and went to U Conn. Rich comes from a long family of dairy farmers as far back as Sweden."



"Cynthia and I had a hard decision if we wanted to stay in dairy, it wasn't going to be in Connecticut.

And *Vermont* at that time, it was *so open*."



And that's kind of how it began.

Our need was for a way to start farming on our own.

We looked at *this farm* in December or November of 1977.

We bought the place because *nobody else wanted it*. It was so trashed.

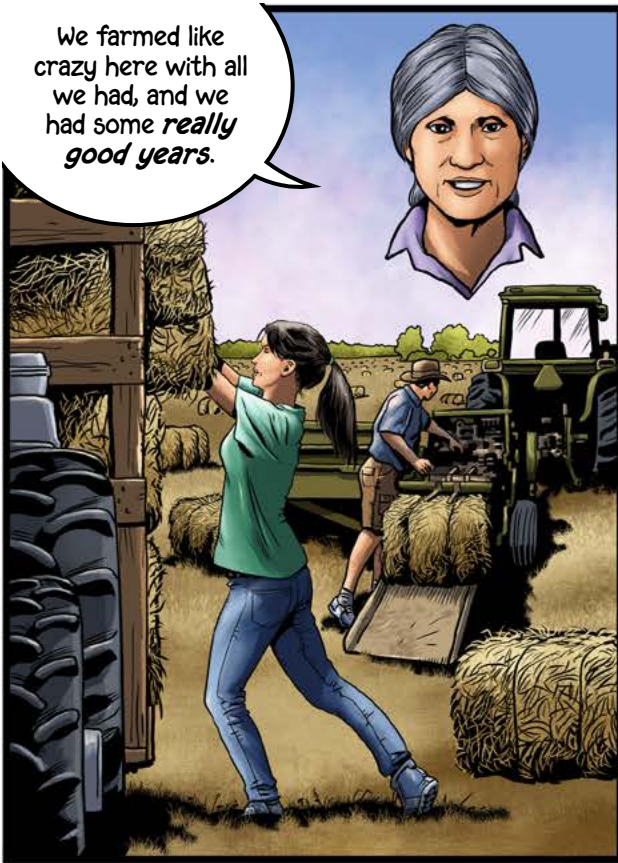
Literally the door of the house had been kicked in.

My dad mortgaged his house to give us the down payment.

That was really something.

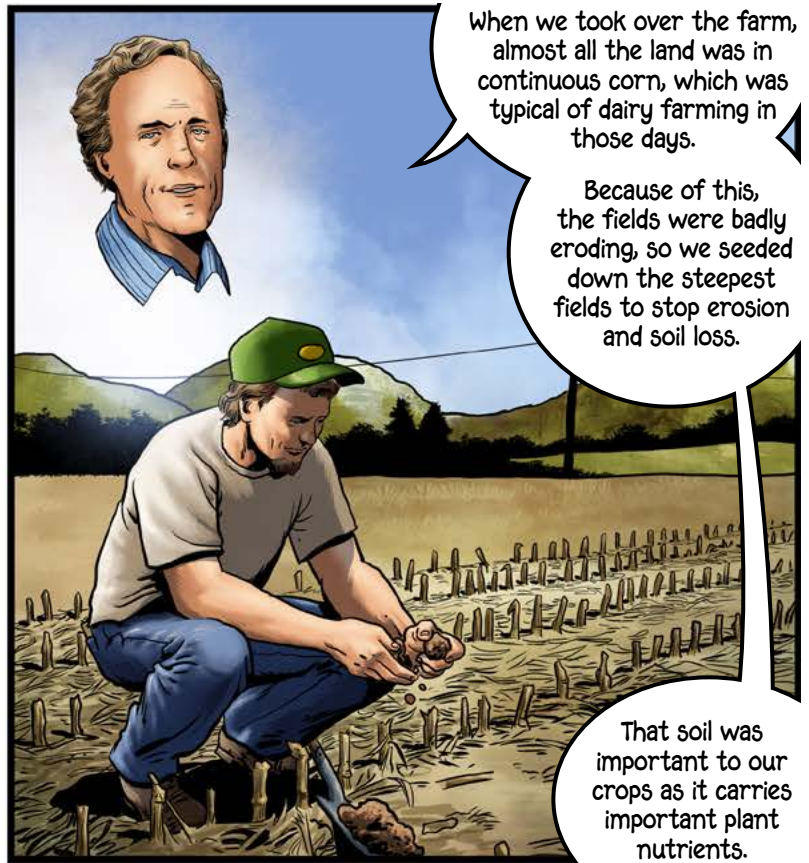


We farmed like crazy here with all we had, and we had some *really good years*.



When we took over the farm, almost all the land was in continuous corn, which was typical of dairy farming in those days.

Because of this, the fields were badly eroding, so we seeded down the steepest fields to stop erosion and soil loss.



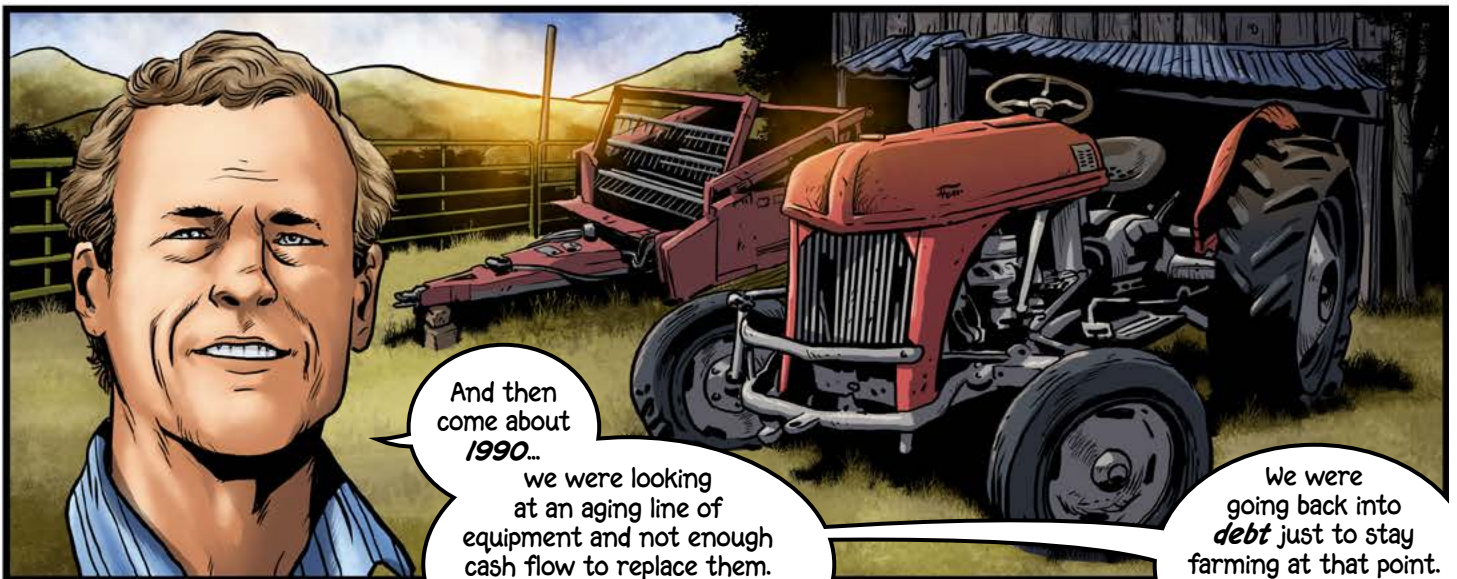
That soil was important to our crops as it carries important plant nutrients.

And, of course, there are environmental benefits of no erosion, and less herbicide getting into our environment and our food.

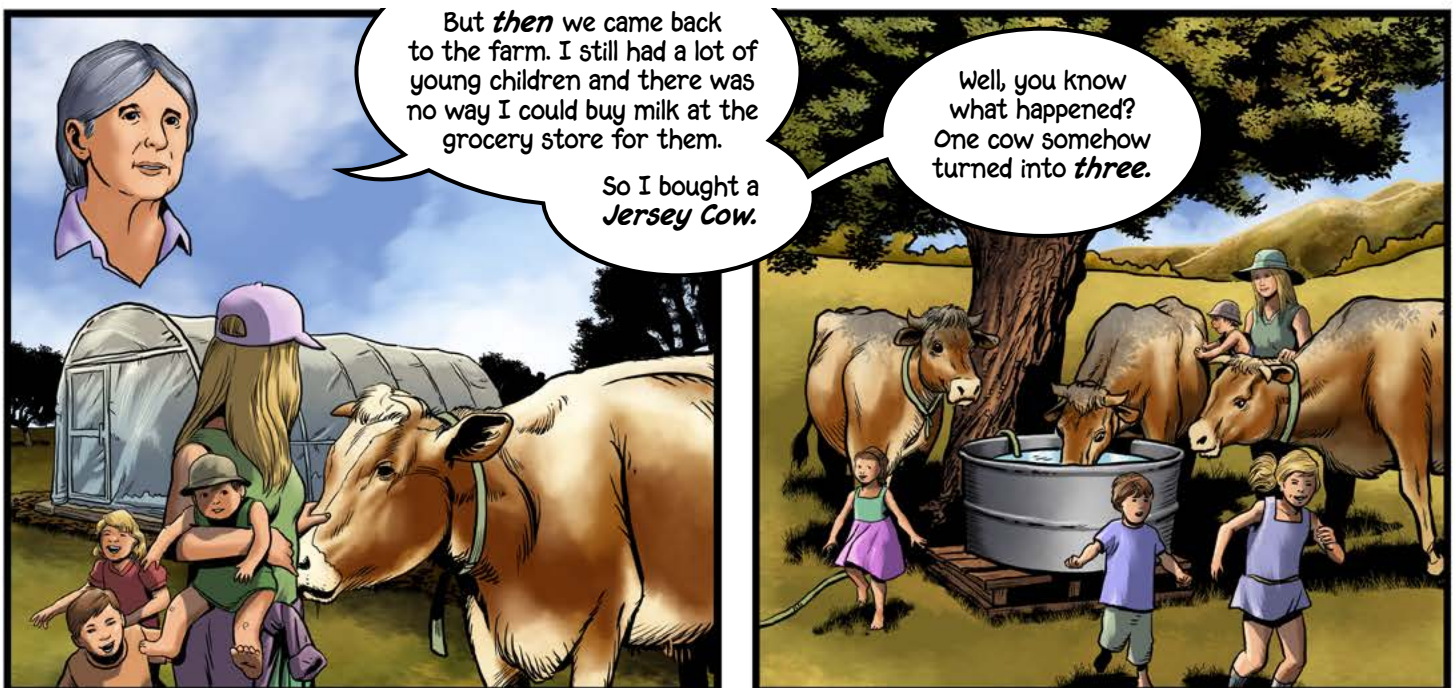
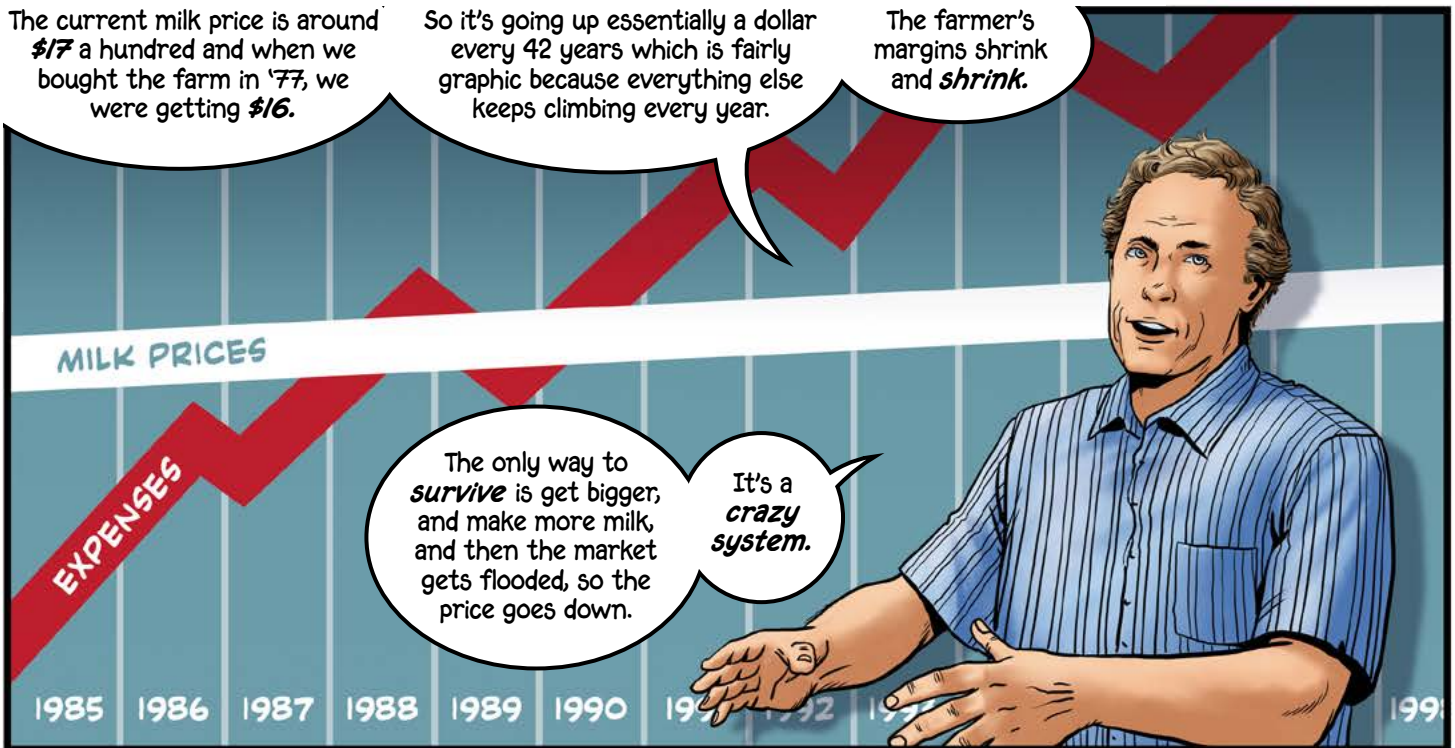


At the farm's height, it was home to 150 dairy cows. Cynthia and Rich received production and milk quality awards, and were named Outstanding Young Farmers of the Year in 1985.

And then come about *1990...* we were looking at an aging line of equipment and not enough cash flow to replace them.



We were going back into *debt* just to stay farming at that point.

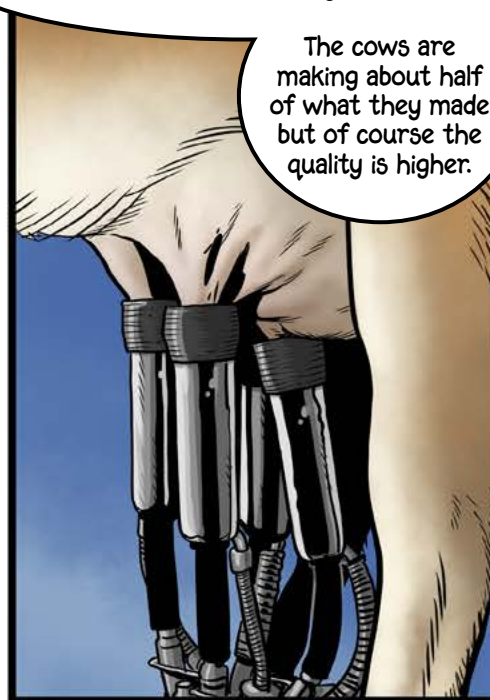




Pretty soon, with the help of an apprentice from Green Mountain College, we got up and going with our **raw milk sales business**.

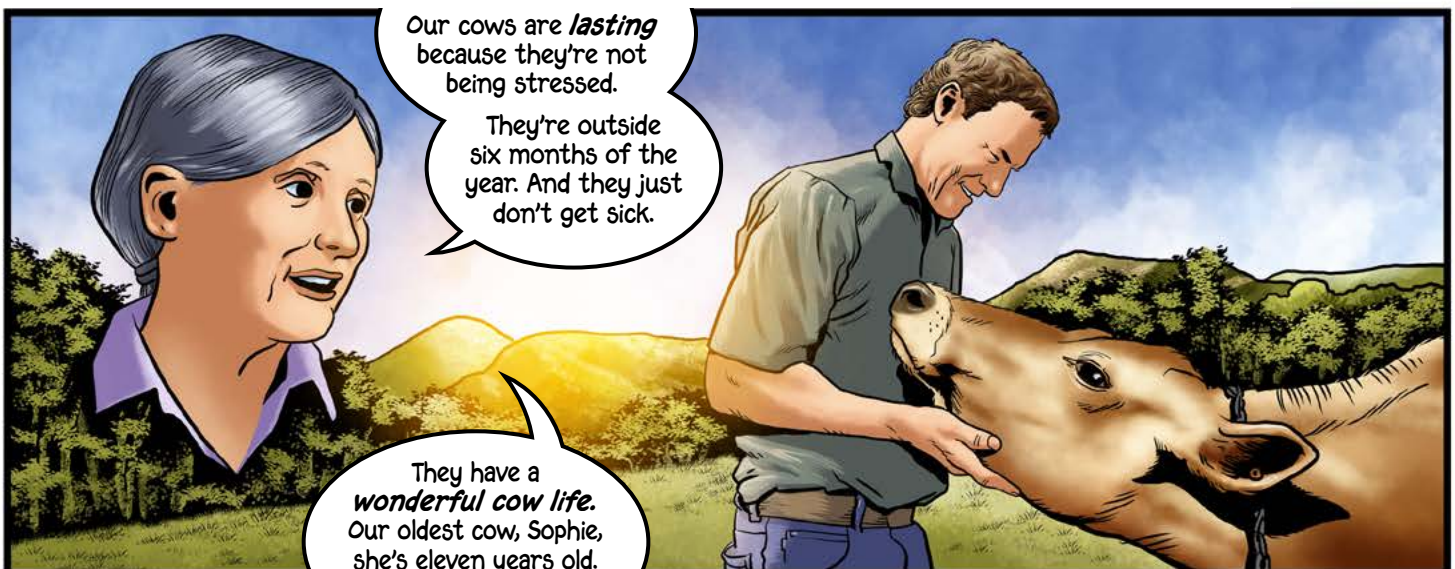


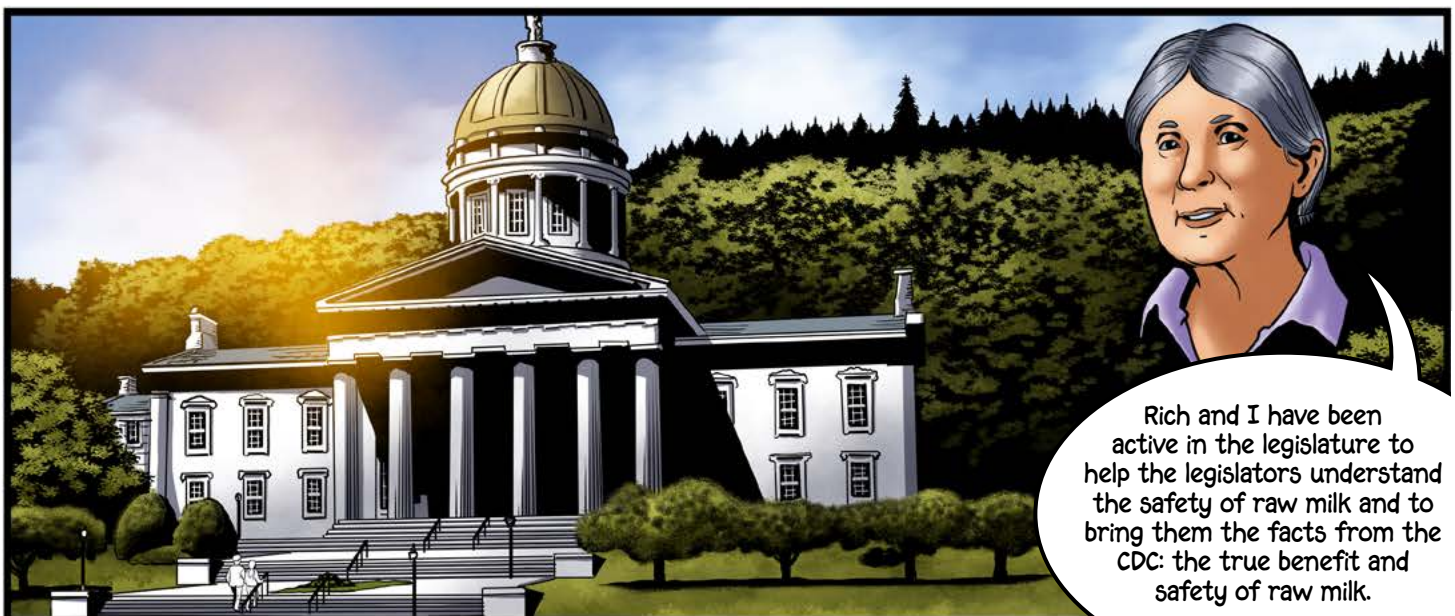
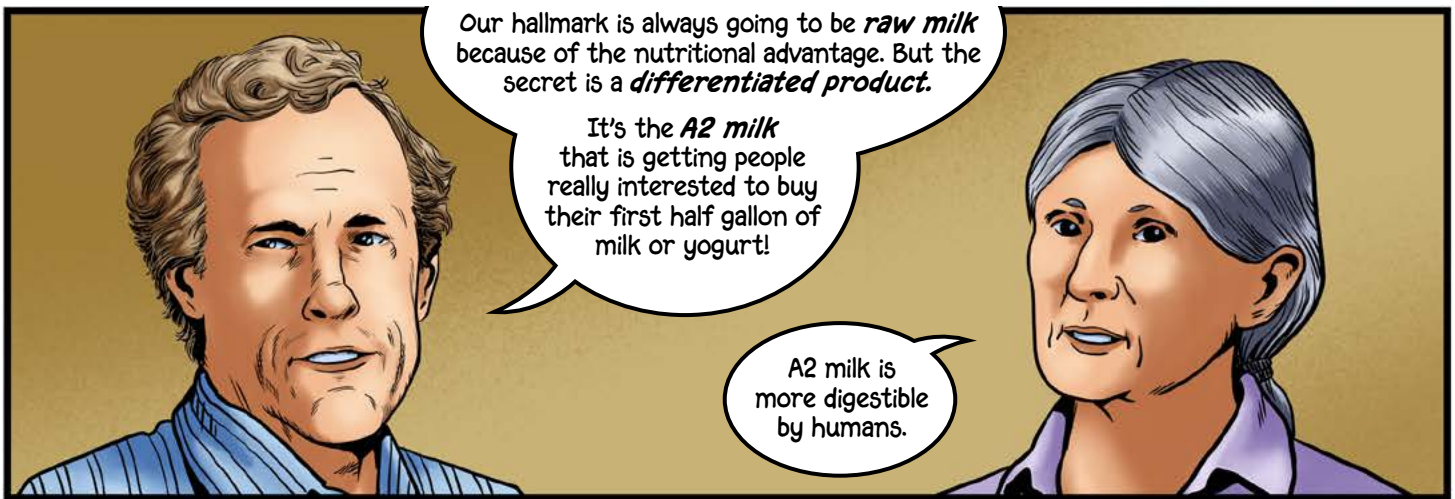
So many interesting things happened when we went **organic**.

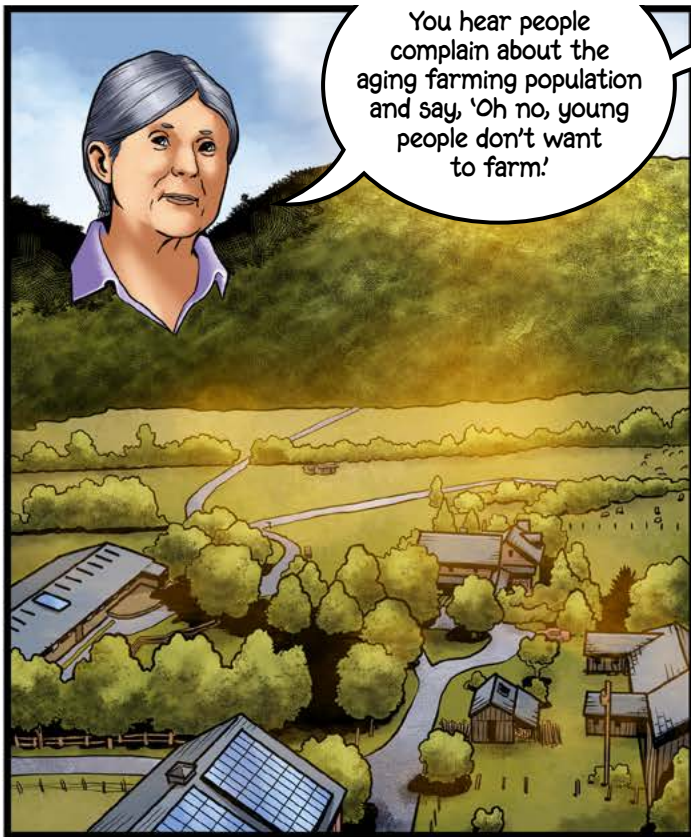


Our livestock feeding program is **pasture-based**.

This improves the soil, helps remove carbon dioxide from the air, and helps to keep rain water on the fields so it does not run off so fast, thereby reducing stream flooding.







You hear people complain about the aging farming population and say, 'Oh no, young people don't want to farm.'



But that's *simply not true*. Young people *do* want to farm.

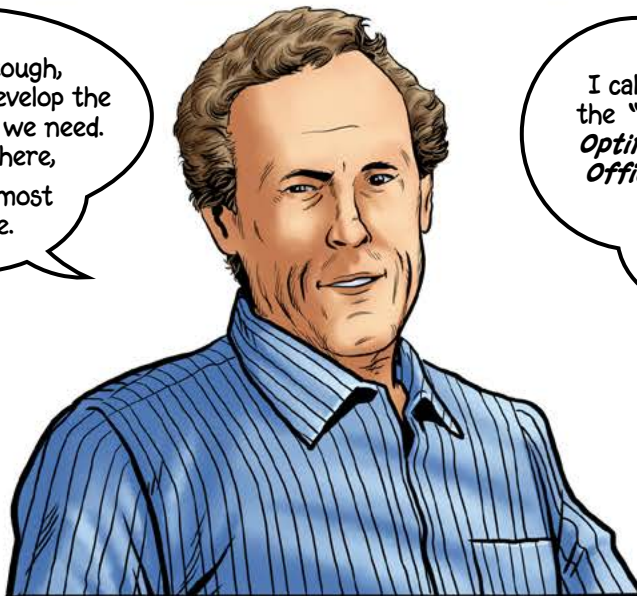
And we know that for this farm to go forward into *future generations*... it has to be *financially* as well as *ecologically sustainable*.



Our *passion* is being good stewards of the land, taking care of this amazing ecosystem in which we live and trying to keep it *healthy* and to *build community*.

It's been a tough, tough road to develop the volume of sales we need. But we're there, we're almost there.

I call him the "*Chief Optimism Officer*."





THE LARSONS

Storytellers: Rich & Cynthia Larson

Videographer & interviewer: Becky Gollin, Across the Fence

Adapted and illustrated by Eureka Comics

Story editors: Cheryl Herrick, Sha'an Mouliert, Luis Vivanco, Linda Berlin

Interviewed on location at the Larson Family Farm, Wells, Vermont, July 2019

WHO FARMS?

*Oral histories
from Vermont's
diverse community
of farmers*

Edited by

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The Squier Family Farm: Josh & Meadow Squier and family, interviewed by
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional resources, study guides, and more, visit:

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See digital videos of each farmer story-teller on our Vimeo channel:

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