

LAND TRANSITION CASE STUDY

VERN JANTZEN AND KATIE JANTZEN



Land transition comes in many forms and involves many decisions among the parties involved. This case study focuses on a familial transition of land from generation to generation. To learn more about our work in this area of farming, visit cfra.org/farmers.

1891

Vern's great-great-grandfather immigrated from Russia in 1884 and purchased the land in 1891.

1970s

From the beginning, both Vern's grandfather and father milked cows on the farm and sold cream in cans, eventually offering Grade B milk. In 1970, a new dairy parlor was installed to start selling Grade A milk.

1990s

Vern purchased the home quarter section of land from his parents in the late 1990s, and eventually more of the land.

2017

Katie rented a portion of the land from her dad, Vern, and started West End Farm to grow vegetables.



WEST END FARM



Katie attended college in Virginia and developed an interest in local food and food access. She worked for a vegetable Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Indiana, which piqued her interest in farming.

She returned to Nebraska, worked for a different CSA for one year, and then eventually got a full-time job in town to save money.

Katie officially started West End Farm in 2017. She rented half an acre of land from her father to start growing vegetables.

Today, Katie has a part-time job and raises a diverse range of vegetables that go into a local CSA. She also sells some of her produce at the Beatrice farmers market, and she raises bees and sells honey.

RENTAL AGREEMENT & CONFLICT



Vern and Katie wrote and signed a rental contract.

Things they included were: land details, use of barn for processing facility, water usage, electricity usage, and equipment use.

Katie's situation is unique and advantageous because she's working with family. Vern and Katie have occasional disagreements but they have control over their areas of the farm. Because they farm different crops, they don't run into conflicts typical of farmers with traditional shares (farming the same land and the same type of crops).

They also help each other with light work without pay. For example, Vern will turn Katie's compost or haul sandbags with his skid-steer so Katie can avoid purchasing expensive equipment.



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CONSERVATION PRACTICES

- The farm uses drip irrigation to save water.
- Because the land consisted of dairy cow lots prior to her vegetable farm, it has plenty of phosphorus and potassium. She is looking into ways to improve soil nitrogen content. Katie wants to be better at cover cropping to help balance the soil.
- Katie bought her high tunnel using an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost-share.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

“ I only have so many hours in a day. I would like to be able to hire some help in the coming years. I still have a good amount of productivity potential in the small space I currently farm. If I max out the capacity of this land, I would rent more land from Dad.

-Katie Jantzen ”



CHALLENGES



Although the land is much cheaper than if Katie was close to the city, tapping into the full potential of a local food market in such a rural area is difficult.



Katie still has to have a part-time job in town because making a living is difficult.



There is a lack of practical insurance options for small-scale, diversified, specialty-crop farms.



Pesticides prove to be a challenge. Katie's farm is surrounded by corn and soybeans, and nearby spraying poses a risk to her crops and her bees.

“ I hope Katie keeps farming the land. I'm tickled pink she decided to come home to start farming. I don't plan on selling the land outside the family.

-Vern Jantzen ”

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

- Stacking enterprises on a farm can be one option for bringing family members back to the farm.
- Share equipment with others, if possible. Buying equipment that only gets used a few times per year is not worth the expense.
- Renting land (whether from family or not) can be a good option for starting a farm when purchase costs of land may be prohibitive. Make sure to have a rental agreement to avoid conflict.



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