

# the MINNESOTA PROJECT

ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY FOR COMMUNITIES  
ACROSS MINNESOTA

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## Utility Rebates

**Utilities in Minnesota offer rebates for energy efficiency upgrades on farms, homes, and businesses.**

Contact your local utility to find out what kind of options will work best for your farm and family. By reducing your energy consumption, you'll be saving money to help improve your facility and to ensure the future of your farm.

*For more information, or questions about how to proceed with efficiency improvements on your farm contact your local utility.*

*For more help, contact:*

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## Energy Efficient Farms – Case Study Sadie and Glen Frericks: Blue Diamond Dairy



Sadie and Glen Frericks met at the State Fair when they were both students at the University of Minnesota. From there it was love. One thing they had in common was growing up on dairy farms – Sadie in the northeastern part of the state and Glen near where the couple now runs Blue Diamond Dairy outside of Melrose. After working off-farm for a few years, they knew they wanted to settle down and start a dairy business of their own. In 2005, they began by farming on Sadie's dad's place up north. About a year later, they moved – cows and all – to Melrose and worked with a family friend. Then, in July 2007, the opportunity arose to purchase the farm they now call home.

In establishing their dairy, the Frerickses started with an existing two-story barn, built in 1981. They replaced the original fans right away with more efficient models. And they installed a plate cooler in the milking system, from which they saw immediate benefit: quality milk, electricity savings, and pre-warmed water that the cows prefer to drink. Sadie describes such upgrades as “win-win-win.”

As with many dairy farmers, the emphasis of the Frerickses' farm is on cow comfort and producing quality milk. They raise all their heifers and sell bull calves, do most of the labor themselves, and are part of Land O Lakes cooperative. With about 75 cows in the herd and 60 to 70 milking, depending on the time of year, they graze their animals on 90 acres of pasture six months of the year. This cuts down on feed costs, energy and labor, given that they also grow much of their feed on 195 acres. Other upgrades and approaches have included a new bulk tank and a fre-heater (refrigeration heat recovery unit), replacing the milk pump, switching to long-day lighting, and swapping out all incandescents for CFLs, as well as replacing outside lights with one halogen and one LED.



According to Sadie, “dollars and sense” was one of the primary reasons they started making upgrades, and it has allowed them to be more energy efficient while saving money. For many items they were able to utilize rebates offered by their local utility, Stearns Electric. They found the application process easy and utilized the materials available on the utility's website.



Yet despite the help, Sadie says the biggest challenge to making energy efficiency upgrades is still funding. For example, because of previous budget considerations, the Frerickses had to delay paving their heifer lot until this year. “Even with rebates, everything has a cost,” she says.

Other plans are in the works for the right time and budget – to upgrade the rest of their lights to T-8 fluorescents this summer, to try a new feed enzyme for improving forage utilization, to replace their water heater with something bigger and more efficient, to someday build a shop with a ground-source heat pump. “We're always looking for ways to improve,” says Sadie. “We're avid readers.”

Still, Glen and Sadie are pleased with the improvements they've made and the techniques they've adopted. And for now they're busy with running Blue Diamond Dairy, raising their son and daughter, and Sadie with her regular contributions to the Dairy Star newspaper. As she looks out on the rolling hills, old oak stands, and scattered ponds on the property, Sadie sees a visual reminder of the impacts of their decisions. “It's a wonderful place to live and a great lifestyle,” she concludes.