

New-Age *Thinking*



Ask Dale McClellan about his work and watch his face change. An authentic smile appears, along with a twinkle in his eye.

It's a sign that Dale, owner of M&B Dairy and M&B Products, is about to tell you a story—about his family history in dairy farming, perhaps, or the newest product his processing plant is planning to roll out or the latest community event with which he's involved. All these elements, and more, are what have made Dale the successful business owner he is today. And his willingness to share his experience and expertise, for whatever benefit it might bring to others, is a large part of the reason he was named the 2012 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year.

Another measure of his success is via hard numbers. First, there's the 65,000-square-foot M&B Products processing plant in Tampa, Fla., which employs 140 people and packages and processes more than 1 million combined units of milk and juice every day.

Then there's the dairy in Lecanto, about 90 miles north of Tampa. Overseen by Dale's eldest son, Leon, the farm encompasses 1,172 acres, including 250 acres used for growing corn and oats, and another 850 leased from the Florida Forest Service that remain uncleared and unplanted. The crops grown on the farm help feed the operation's 690 dairy cows, which produce 6,000 gallons of milk on a typical day.

Reinventing the Business

Times weren't always this good, though. The current M&B plant site in Tampa was once home to Sunnybrook Dairy, a farm and processing plant owned by Dale's grandfather beginning in 1959. Growing up, Dale worked alongside his granddad, aunts and uncles on the farm and at the plant.

Yet, the plant fell on hard times and was forced to shut down in 1979. With a love for the work already in his blood, Dale continued to milk a few of >>



Far left Dale McClellan, 2012 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year. **This page** The McClellan family businesses include a 690-cow dairy that produces 6,000 gallons of milk daily and a 65,000-square-foot processing plant that packages and processes more than 1 million units of milk and juice products every day.

