SWEET BEET FARM – Fifth-generation family farm
Nick & Amelia Neaton - Watertown, MN
Why farm?

- Family heritage – farm in the family since 1883
- Desire to get ‘back to the land’ and increase self-sufficiency doing meaningful work
- Farm location (Watertown) made for a healthy balance between rural and urban worlds
- Expand our efforts to live and teach sustainability.
- Eat well year-round!
The Road to Farming

• 2009: Farm stand; meet future customers and ‘practice’ market-farming
• Rented ½ acre of land on family farm
• Grew lots and ‘netted’ little!
• BONUS: Full freezer and pantry at the end of the season!
2010: First-year CSA

- CSA structure worked better with our schedules
- 10 members total
- Balanced full-time work schedules with farming
- Rented ½ acre on family farm and ½ acre on neighbor’s farm
CSA First Year continued...

- Rented greenhouse space
- Offered “full” shares and “half” shares
- Added eggs, honey, and apples to our box
- 18 weeks, June - October
- On-farm pickup, Sunday afternoons
CSA Year Two - 2011

- Expanded from 10 to 20 members
- Began delivering shares to Minneapolis drop-site
- Rented one acre on family farm and ½ acre on neighbor’s farm
- Purchased tractor and some equipment
Cover crops – build fertility and conserve soil
CSA Year 3 – 2012 - Go Big or Go Home

• Amelia reduces off-farm work to two days/week
• 35 members; two acres
• Major equipment investments: rototiller, walk-in cooler, greenhouse
• Five CSA drop-sites, plus on-farm pickup
Greenhouse: 24’ x 48’, in-floor heating
Walk-in cooler: 10’ x 10’
CSA Year 4 - 2013

• Amelia on-farm full-time
• Rent 2.5 acres all on family farm
• 80 members – 8 drop-sites
• Wholesale sales
• Hire one part-time employee
• Great growing year despite slow start
Challenges...

- Sharing land/equipment with family
- Conventional & organic practices on same farm
- Renting vs. owning land
- Balancing off-farm work with farm
- The many hats worn by a CSA grower
Remember...

• Mother Nature always bats last!
These pictures were taken about 500 feet from each other. Twenty years went by, but I didn’t lose my fashion sense.
Rewards!!!!

- Good source of income
- Healthy food, healthy lifestyle
- Community builder
Sweet Beet Farm
Nick & Amelia Neaton
CSA & wholesale produce
Lamb
sweetbeetfarm.com