



CASE IN POINT

- LOCATION:** Becker Farms
Eden Valley, Minnesota
- SITUATION:** 1,100 acres total,
300 irrigated
- CHALLENGE:** Irrigating around a wooded
wetland in the middle of
a field
- DEPLOYMENT:** Bender160™ with corner arm
- EFFECT:** Yield increases of 30 to 40
percent on corn and similar
increases on alfalfa

Customized Irrigation Setup Improves Silage Yields for Minnesota Dairy Farmer

To feed 1,200 dairy cows in Eden Valley, Minn., Joe Becker grows corn and alfalfa on 1,100 acres of farmland. Both crops require plenty of water, so Joe decided to irrigate about 300 acres in areas where the soil is light and sandy.

In 2013 Joe got his first center pivot machine from Grand Irrigation, his local Valley® dealer. The results were promising, but Joe knew they could be even better. To maximize the reach of his pivot, he needed to overcome a topographical challenge—a wooded wetland area situated right in the middle of one of his fields. Valley Irrigation came up with a solution: a Bender160™ with two corner arms.

Kelan Buchta of Grand Irrigation explains, “With a Bender160, we were able to center the pivot point with the woods on the south side. At the corner of the woods, the first two spans stop and the Bender160 is activated. The rest of the machine keeps moving all the way around.

Joe’s machine actually bends in two different spots,” Kelan continues. “It bends 90 degrees to the right on the west side of the woods and 90 degrees to the left on the east side of the woods. It also has a Precision Corner on the end of the machine. This can irrigate more land than he could reach using a straight pivot with end guns. The corner arm bends around the woods to pick up another four acres of irrigated land, and also picks up more acreage in the four corners of the field.”

The Bender160 pivot with corner arm was installed in 2014, and Joe has been pleased with the results. “It would have taken at least two irrigators to do what this one can do,” he points out. “Yields have increased significantly. On some of the land we’ve had 30 to 40 percent yield increases on corn.” Alfalfa yields have also benefited from the increased reach of the Bender160.

As third-generation dairy farmers, Joe and his brother Vern have always been on the lookout for ways to improve the productivity of Becker Farms. Irrigation is just one part of the overall picture.





“My grandfather started dairy farming in this area during the 1920s and my dad’s brother took over that farm. My dad bought this farmland in 1964 and my brother and myself have taken over. Now our kids are working in it,” Joe explains. Joe’s two daughters and Vern’s two daughters are involved in the daily operations of Becker Farms.



“We’re running two separate dairies,” Joe says. “My daughter Rachael and her husband Patrick are our managers on one dairy. My two nieces and their husbands are managing the other dairy. My wife handles all the bookkeeping and payroll.”

In addition to family members, about two dozen workers are employed by Becker Farms— 18 full-time and six part-time. “One gentleman has been with us for 12 or 13 years,” Joe says.

When Joe and Vern’s father purchased the land for his dairy farm in 1964, he would have had a hard time envisioning the technological changes that would take place over the next half-century. Innovations like the Valley Bender160 and Precision Corner ensure the ongoing productivity of Becker Farms for future generations.

