

Dairying in a unique environment

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

Ben Smith has been farming and dairying on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state his whole life.

"Our family farm was started in 1930 by my great-grandfather," Smith said.

His brother and his wife, Troy and Becky Smith, now own the farm with Ben and his wife, Jacki.

They are the fourth generation on the dairy and milk about 400 Holstein cows and farm about 700 acres.

"I take care of the cows and my brother, Troy, grows most of our feed — about 90 percent of our forage, and about 500 tons of barley. We buy a little alfalfa hay," he said.

Their farm is a member of the Darigold co-op, which is owned by more than 500 dairy farm members of the Northwest

Dairy Association in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Northern California and Montana.

"Darigold quit hauling milk for its producers in the mid-1980s and we bid for the hauling contract, to help support our dairy," Smith said. "At that time we were picking up milk from 14 dairies in our area. Now those dairies are gone and we just haul our own milk," Ben says.

Their milk goes to the Darigold plant in Chehalis, Wash., a 250-mile round trip.

"We fill a set of double tankers every other day. En route we supply milk to the Mt. Townsend Creamery, an artisan producer of handcrafted cheese in Port Townsend, Wash.," Ben says.

Even though the region gets a lot of moisture, their farm is fairly dry.

"We live in what is called a rain shadow, so we only get about 17 inches of rain a year," he says. "If you go 20 miles in any

direction you'll have 45 or more inches per year. If you go 70 miles to the coast, it's a rain forest with 120 inches per year."

The weather is mild year-round.

"We are on the Straits of Juan de Fuca (the farm goes nearly down to the water), which gives our area a moderate climate. We are warmer in winter and cooler in summer than most places, so this a phenomenal place for cows," Ben says. "We don't have to worry about heat stress in summer or frostbitten teats in the winter."

Maple View Farm has 10 full-time employees at the dairy and 5 full-time employees in the crop operation.

"We raise our own heifers and sell surplus heifers into the dairy market," Ben says. "About 80 percent of our cows are registered Holsteins, so we sometimes get a premium selling them to registered breeders."



Courtesy Photo

Maple View Farm on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington state is run by two brothers and their wives. From left are Becky, Troy, Jacki and Ben Smith.

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