

PROFILE:



For more info and some terrific photos of their programs, visit their website at: <http://www.neubauerfarms.ca/>

Neubauer Farms, owned and operated by Mark and Nichole Neubauer, is a mixed farming operation located just west of Medicine Hat. They grow cereals, oilseeds and forage, and raise beef cattle.

This traditional mixed farm diversified significantly by adding a community supported agriculture (CSA) component.

When customers began coming to the farm, their questions showed a need and an opportunity for more formal education programs. A grant from Alberta agriculture allowed the Neubauers to offer a program called Growing Minds. Hundreds of eager youngsters in many school classes had a chance to see how their food grows. A visit to this farm bridges the urban-rural divide with understanding and fun!

This action brings young people into the rural area where they are sorely needed. We hope that some of them decide to use the Neubauers as role models and mentors.





Just between you and me, . . .

Mark and Nichole are too modest to talk about this sort of thing, but here's what I have observed:

Through hard work, imagination and a sense of adventure, they have gradually broadened the scope of their operation. In a sense, they have enriched their farm's ecology with more participants, products and especially relationships. The grains, the livestock

and the vegetables each bring suppliers and customers to the farm. Add the school children, and the weekly visits from the CSA supporters, and you have a dynamic location. The farm's active participation in public events like the province's Open Farm Day brings even more people. Like a natural ecosystem, this diversity brings sustainability and resilience. We need more farms, and farmers, like these.

Community Supported Agriculture

Neubauer Farm was the first operation in this area to offer a "community supported agriculture" sales plan. Customers pay a flat amount in the spring, then receive a basket of varied produce each week over the summer.

The sample basket on the left looks delicious! Obviously, the customers receive excellent vegetables at a reasonable price.

Just as important, the Neubauers have a guaranteed market for what they grow. They don't have to spend valuable sunny days trying to sell their produce.

This type of operation allows farmers to spread the risk among urban residents. If, for some reason, a total crop failure occurs, there are no refunds. The customers and the farmers share the misfortune. However, with modern irrigation, this sort of problem is pretty much a thing of the past.

CSAs, as they are commonly known, are popular. The Neubauers sell their shares well in advance of summer.