



Old Green Farm

WE SPOKE TO MIKE AND GEMMA AT OLD GREEN FARM TO FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES RUNNING THE FAMILY FARM, AND TO HEAR WHAT ADVICE THEY'D GIVE NEW FARMS WHO ARE JUST STARTING OUT.

Farm Facts

Farm type:	Mixed, Dairy, Arable & Pasture
Farm size:	180 acres grass, 74 acres arable
Employees:	4: dad/mom/son/daughter-in-law Richard/Kathy/Mike/Gem
Tenure:	Owner Occupied
County/region:	South Gloucestershire
Soil type:	Clay
Key Farming Practices:	Free range, rotational paddock grazing, robotic milking, spring and summer block calving, closed herd.
Breed:	Holstein Friesian, Brown Swiss, Swedish red, Jersey
Milking herd:	110
Followers:	25-30 per year calving in at 2 years
Avrg yld/cow:	10,500 litres
Total annual production	1,155,000 litres
Annual sales of RDM:	36,300 litres
Milk selling price:	£1.20 per litre
Dairy products sold:	Raw Milk, yoghurt, cheese, cream, milkshakes



Raw Milk Producers Association

Tell us something about you / your family / your background / why you are a dairy farmer & how long have you been selling raw milk.

We are Mike and Gemma King and we have 3 children. We took over the running of our family farm from Mike's parents, Richard and Kathy in 2007/8 when we married. The farm has been run/ owned by the King family since 1898, passing down through the generations and has always been a dairy farm. Mike went to Aberystwyth University to study agriculture graduating in 1998 and returned to work on the farm. Gemma is from Doncaster and a self-confessed Townie, she met Mike in a nightclub in 2006 and hasn't looked back, fully embracing and loving the crazy life of a farmer's wife.

Describe your production system, including feed, OAD or TAD milking, type & age of parlour.

Partial mixed ration, robotic milking by 2 x Lely A3 next (Lily and Lola) since 2010 milking avg 3.2 times a day, block calving 70% July-August, 30% February, feeding by a Lely Vector (Ainsley) since 2019, yard cleaning by Lely discovery 120sw (vacuum cleaner affectionately known as Poover).

Please describe how you prepare your cows for milking ie from when they walk into the parlour, how do you wash their udders/ teats, what with, etc.

The robots take care of this process and we manage the robots. The robot uses rotating brushes to clean the teats using peracetic acid. This process is done twice, cleaning the brush between each udder cleaning.

Describe your pastures and grazing system.

Our cows are grazed at least 8 months of the year on a rotational paddock system with one and a half paddocks per day. This is permanent pasture. We split the paddocks using electric fencing with concrete track access to each paddock.

Why have you chosen the breed of cow you have? Describe their particular traits and why they fit your system.

We started with a Holstein Friesian herd and have cross bred with Swedish Red, Brown Swiss and Jersey to introduce some

variety. We particularly choose cows breeding for A2 protein in the milk, polled and general health traits e.g. feet, udders etc

Why did you start selling raw drinking milk, what have you found to be the biggest challenges & how did you overcome them?

We chose to sell raw milk because we believe that milk is a great product and loses some of its benefits in processing. We also wanted to open the farm up to the public as a way of educating people about farming and the origins of their food.

We found the biggest challenges to be bureaucracy and dealing with the stigma around raw milk. As time as gone on there are more people leaning towards a raw diet who specifically want raw milk. We have also found that opening the farm to the public and showing them what we do has changed many people's perceptions of milk and farming or introduced them to things they didn't know existed.

Describe your marketing strategy / what is your USP?

We have a Facebook page and Google profile but we rely mainly on word of mouth and reviews from our customers. We use social media to show highlights from the day to day working of the farm.

How do you sell your milk – routes to market – and how have you found your customer-base?

We sell from an on-farm vending machine only. Customer base found online by searching for raw milk or by word of mouth.

Do you sell via vending machine or pre-bottled? If bottles, how do you fill them? If returnable glass, how do you clean & sterilise them?



We sell via a vending machine, we sell glass bottles for customers to purchase or they can bring their own containers. The cleaning and sterilising of the bottles is the customer's responsibility, we maintain the cleanliness of the machines.

For someone just starting, what would your top tips be?

Don't try to do too much too soon. Start small and let your business grow at a rate you can manage. In our experience it will grow quickly enough on its own and you can always add more later e.g. if what you want to do is sell milk then concentrate on that first and do it well, you can add things like eggs, yoghurt, cakes etc later. When you know you have the customer base and won't be wasting products.

Find what sells you, your customers aren't just buying your milk they are buying into you and the idea of milk straight from a farm, local and cutting out the middle man. What makes you special? Free range, pasture fed, organic, artisan? These are all buzz words and will catch customers eyes, don't be afraid to use them. Simple catch phrases and logos are good too.