



Shepherding the Flock

Good Shepherd Cheese Bath County, Kentucky

Sanford Dotson did not grow up farming. In fact, the Pike County native was a coal miner, then was in the military and then worked at Toyota for 17 years. But when he and his wife, Colleen, felt a spiritual calling to become shepherds, they moved to an old tobacco farm in Bath County and bought six dairy sheep from Vermont.

The Dotsons knew they would need to make a profit from the sheep, and discovered you could make cheese from their milk. So, despite never having milked a sheep before, they took cheese-making courses while their six sheep were having lambs. When those lambs were born in 2011, Sanford and Colleen started making the first sheep's cheese in Kentucky, and their business, Good Shepherd Cheese, was born.

Good Shepherd Cheese's name and reputation spread through artisan cheese circles. And with MACED's help, the Dotsons were able to buy milking equipment that will make the process more efficient so more cheese, and profits, can be made. Not only that, but it will better allow the Dotsons to do what they love best: be shepherds.

"Our first love is the animals," Sanford said. "We don't have sheep so we can make cheese—we make cheese so we can have sheep."

MACED works with people in eastern Kentucky and Central Appalachia to create economic opportunity, strengthen democracy and support the sustainable use of natural resources.

Sanford Dotson discusses how milk turns to cheese through a series of cheese-making machines.

Development Impact

Distressed County Served

Family Owned Business

Low to Moderate Income

Agriculture Business



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