



## Story Ideas

### Apprenticeship Program

- ❖ First formal Apprenticeship for farming in the nation, created by and for farmers in 2010
- ❖ Same education system that has prepared people for skilled trades (electrician, plumber, bricklayer, etc.) for more than a century
- ❖ Work-based education that allows Apprentices earn while they learn
- ❖ 4000 hours of training over two years: 3700 on-farm under Master farmer; 300 related coursework
- ❖ Comprehensive education and technical support as well as financial planning services
- ❖ National Apprenticeship, initiated in Wisconsin, that now operates in 15 states, with 200 approved farm sites, and has provided more than 500,000 hours of training on managed grazing dairy

### Beginning Farmers

- ❖ Average of age of farmers in U.S. is 59 years old and many do not have an identified successor
- ❖ Farm loss has led to expansion of large farms and capital intensive model of confinement dairy that prohibits entry for aspiring farmers
- ❖ Barriers for new farmers include lack of skills/knowledge in low-cost sustainable methods, connections in Ag infrastructure; experience in business management; capital for land, cattle, etc.
- ❖ Apprenticeship addresses all barriers by providing comprehensive training, support, and networking
- ❖ Managed grazing systems keep costs low and improve farm profitability with even a small herd

### Rural Development

- ❖ Each dairy cow generates \$34,000 of economic activity in the local community
- ❖ DGA creates small businesses owners, not just employees
- ❖ Mid-sized commodity dairy farms support the infrastructure (feed store, veterinarian, hardware store, etc.) that other rural business enterprises depend upon
- ❖ DGA graduates have the option of becoming Masters themselves and may go on to train multiple Apprentices during their farming career
- ❖ More farmers and more farms will revitalize rural communities: populate schools and churches, patronize business, engage in civic responsibilities, etc.

### Water Quality & Environment

- ❖ In a managed grazing system, livestock are rotated through biologically diverse, high quality paddocks that are allowed to rest and regrow
- ❖ Managed grazing mimics natural prairie ecosystems that historically supported large grazing herds
- ❖ Protects and restores water quality, reducing soil loss and phosphorus run-off to nearly zero tons per acre (compared to 5.5 tons per acre in 6-yr base corn-soy/alfalfa dairy rotation on similar soils )
- ❖ Creates critical habitat for ground nesting birds, pollinators, and other wildlife
- ❖ Cows harvest their own feed and spread organic matter as they graze, which reduces energy use as well as the cost of feed production, harvest, and storage
- ❖ Managed grazing systems are resilient and adaptable in the face of a changing climate

### Value-Added Growth Markets

- ❖ Consumers increasingly demand food products that reflect their values
- ❖ Organic dairy hit \$6 billion in sales in the U.S. in 2015
- ❖ DGA graduates can produce for conventional market or for value-added markets (organic, grass-based, non-GMO, humanely raised, high CLA content, A-2) and get a premium for their milk
- ❖ Robust grass-based dairy sector can make U.S. more competitive globally (in class with New Zealand)
- ❖ Diversity in scale and management systems makes U.S. dairy industry less brittle, more resilient