

New Hampshire

Business Programs • Rural Energy for America Program

Sunny Days: The First-Generation Magic of Manning Hill Farm

Sarah Costa and Sam Canonica met in junior high and immediately connected because of their mutual love for animals. Finding in each other a kindred soul who shared a passion for farming and the outdoors, they knew as teenagers that one day they'd own and operate their own place. In 2006, the vision became substance when they purchased [Manning Hill Farm](#) in Winchester, NH. Against a beautiful backdrop of rolling hills and verdant meadows, they built up the soil while establishing and expanding various flocks, broods and herds.

15 years later, Manning Hill Farm is a bustling and diverse agricultural concern. After buying their anchor herd of nine Dutch Belted milk cows in 2009, Sam and Sarah haven't looked back. They converted an old stone garage into a streamlined milk-production facility, selling to local markets including distributors in southern Vermont and northern Massachusetts.

As businesspeople who care deeply about the environment, Sam and Sarah wanted to find a way to reduce costs and energy needs. That's when the innovative first-generation farmers decided to apply for funding through the [USDA's Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#). REAP grants help farmers, producers and rural small businesses improve energy efficiency and integrate renewable-energy systems into their operations.

In July, Sam and Sarah's application for a roof-mounted solar array—large enough to generate 35,080 kWh/year—was approved. With an \$18,875 contribution from USDA Rural Development, Manning Hill Farm will enjoy debt-free energy independence within roughly seven years, according to Sam.

The early dreams of new farmers don't often bear fruit. In the case of Sarah and Sam of Manning Hill Farm, those dreams have certainly come true, and moreover, serve as living examples for other hopeful farmers to make theirs a reality.



Above: Sarah Costa prepping for sale at the winter Keene Farmer's Market. Below: Sam Canonica welcomes hours-old calf 'Primrose' into the world.

Obligation Amount: \$18,875 REAP grant

Date of Obligation: July 28, 2020

Congressional District: Representative Kuster, District 2 NH; Senators Shaheen and Hassan

Impact: This \$18,875 Rural Energy for America Program grant will allow Manning Hill Farm to generate 35,080 kWh annually, which covers the demand at the farm and allows for expansion.