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Farmer plans small-scale 'micro dairy'

By BRAD CARLSON Capital Press
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Wilder Jones of Wild Spaces Farm near Glenns Ferry, Idaho.
Impact Idaho Fund

A small dairy planned near Glenns Ferry targets a gap in the south-central Idaho market caused by the closure of two operations in 2021.

Wild Spaces Farm owner Wilder Jones, an organic producer, is using a \$75,000 no-interest loan from the Impact Idaho Fund on a milking barn, processing parlor, equipment, additional animals and certification. Raw milk, to be sold in reusable glass containers, is expected to be available this spring.

He and the fund's staff started working on the dairy's financial framework last summer.

"I am looking forward to continuing the ongoing friendship and working relationship with this group of people who share my ideology," Jones said in a release. "As I launch the dairy, it is incredibly valuable to be part of a team and not feel like I have to go it alone."

He told Capital Press that his 160-acre farm includes alfalfa hay, some feeder corn in rotation, 45 young peach trees and part of his father's cow-calf operation.

The so-called "micro dairy" is "brand new and intentionally small," Jones said. It now consists of a bull and five cows; the first calf is expected to be born next month. Milking has not yet started.

“Cattle are exceptional in their ability to convert sunlight and grass into fat and protein,” he said.

“We are looking forward to having a project that is entirely unique.”

Jones will use regenerative practices in running the dairy. He may have up to 10 milking cows in the next several years, but the idea is to keep the dairy small.

The Impact Idaho Fund is a project of the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience. The institute in December received a second major gift from the Heinz Family Foundation.

Amy Mattias, the institute’s program director, said in the release that the Wild Spaces “will fill a much-needed gap in our regional food system and be a demonstration of a regenerative and profitable model for small-scale dairy farming in southern Idaho.”

Two small dairies in southern Idaho, Old Almo Creamery and Picabo Desert Farm, closed last year, the institute said.

Mattias said Wild Spaces is its third project for the Impact Idaho Fund, which seeks to grow. It provides capital and entrepreneurial support services.

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