

Young Farmer Profile: Chris Kilby of Glade Spring, Virginia

Like many young farmers, Chris Kilby wanted to take his experiences and education and put them to work on his own farm. And, like so many others with that ambition, he found that going out on his own offered many challenges. He was raised on an 1100 acre dairy in Washington County, Virginia that was purchased by the grandfather, giving him exposure to the farming lifestyle throughout his childhood and high school years. He continued his education by attending Virginia Tech's Agricultural Technology Program in Blacksburg.

Chris continued to work on the dairy, but had an interest in raising beef cattle and hoped to turn that into a full-time venture. He began to increase the size of his operation and purchased a small farm with plans to build a shop to house his growing inventory of equipment. He also planned to add an apartment to the building for his own residence. That plan was restricted, however, due to issues Chris was having in obtaining financing for construction. "Basically, the banks I was working with wouldn't let me put a building on the land." Through Ralph Puckett, a Farm Credit director he had known since childhood,



Chris Kilby on his family's dairy farm in Glade Spring, Virginia

Chris was referred to loan officer Ed Blevins in the Abingdon office, just a few miles from where he was hoping to build.

"I needed a place to work out of," said Chris. He qualified for Farm Credit's Young, Beginning and Small Farmer Program and was able to begin the construction process. The 40 x 50 foot structure now stands on his 20-acre property, complete with the apartment that he had hoped for. "I didn't realize what a process it was to build a place," he said. "I didn't know

what I was doing. There is a lot of running up and down the road for permits and licenses. It took some doing, but I finally got it."

Chris currently rents a 150-acre farm in Abingdon and has 50 head of cattle. He is working hard to expand when he finds opportunities to do so. "It's hard to get out here and start farming on your own. I've started small and tried to work my way up. I don't have enough cows right now to be completely on my own, so I have to work somewhere else, too." That presents another challenge that other beginning farmers have faced—long hours. "Sometimes I don't get home until late at night after I work at the dairy and then go work with my beef cows." Chris enjoys the farming lifestyle and understands the road to becoming a full-time farmer will be a tough one, but one that is entirely possible with hard work and dedication. "I like everything about it," he said. ∞



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