

## **MN Agriculture - Sara and Mark Hewitt and Farming, Drainage Tile and Bees**

Day 4 of 30 Days "All Things Minnesota Agriculture" is Sara and Mark Hewitt from Le Sueur County, Minnesota. I met Sara when she was interning with Minnesota Farm Bureau and she visited my farm. Just as a FYI, I will be featuring a number of young farmers from Minnesota and Sara and Mark are my first. It truly warms my heart to see our younger generation carrying on the family farm. And I especially love when they have the courage and fortitude to start a new bee farming enterprise such as their new Sweet Cheeks Honey.

Mark is an employee of Hewitt Drainage Equipment, a family owned business. They sell Gold Digger tile plows, stringer trailers, and the Maverick Tile Finder to farmers in the Midwest. A tile plow allows farmers to tile for themselves based upon GPS coordinates they map. Tile allows our soil to act like a sponge, holding more water during times of flooding to reduce water run-off and soil erosion. It also creates a deeper root depth for crops such as corn, wheat and soybeans. And their newest adventure is Sweet Cheeks Honey!

Both Sara and Mark have been farming their whole lives as both grew up on farming operations. Sara is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation farmer. Mark is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation farmer. Hewitt Drainage has been in operation since 2001, and Sweet Cheeks Honey has been in operation since 2014.

Their newest adventure is all about bee hives. Sweet Cheeks Honey is all about selling and producing local honey. They operate with two hives, so around 20,000 bees give or take currently. They are hoping to expand to 12 hives in 2015.

Social media sites to checkout:

Blog for Hewitt Farms: [hewittfarmsinc.wordpress.com](http://hewittfarmsinc.wordpress.com)

Website for Sweet Cheeks Honey: [sweetcheekshoney.com](http://sweetcheekshoney.com)

Twitter at @swchhoney and @hewittfarms

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/hewittfarms](http://www.facebook.com/hewittfarms)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sweetcheekshoneymn>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HewittDrainageEquipment>

**Where do you sell or provide services to? Who is your end consumer?**

"For the drainage business, we sell directly to other farmers, and provide services to other farmers. For our cash crops, we usually sell our corn to a local ethanol plant, so at the end of the day, our consumers are those who use ethanol to fuel their vehicles. We will sell our soybeans to a local elevator such as CHS. Our hay ground goes to horse owners. Our honey is directly marketed to consumers."

**What makes your farm/business unique or special? What are you proud of?**

"I think part of what makes us unique is we are a big farm family that is making multiple ideas and diversifications work. Mark's dad diversified the crop operation with the drainage business. Mark and I are working to diversify with our honeybees and hay. Mark's brother farms crops and works for the drainage business too. We want farming to continue down to our next generation, so diversification is going to be important moving forward. In order to stay successful, farms have to change and be open to new ideas. I hope that is something our farm always continues to do as we work to keep it going."

**If there is one thing you could change about your farm it is \_\_\_\_\_.**

"I would add livestock to diversify our farm even further. Agricultural really is cyclical in nature, so having diversification helps protect your farming operation. I grew up with hogs, sheep or cattle at any point in time, and I definitely miss having livestock around the farm. I also miss having the meat in my freezer that our livestock provided for our family too."

**What is one interesting fact about your farm/crops/livestock/your business you would like to share.**

"We farm land that has been in my family for over 100 years now. The farm I grew up on is a Century Farm and is still being operated by myself and husband with crops. I think some of the history there is just fantastic. My grandpa and great-grandpa were blacksmiths, and they built coffins besides. It actually started as a potato farm surprisingly enough! The cornerstone from our barn that was taken down in a straight-line wind is now part of the stone hearth of the fireplace at my mom's. We have a lot of rich history there."

**What do you love most about farming/business?**

I love being part of something so much bigger than myself. There is nothing better than working in the fresh air, working outside, being your own boss, working with nature and

caring for and nurturing the gifts God bestowed to us. I love working with my husband, knowing that our goals for our farm, mean more than just what we think. It means that our economy continues to thrive, jobs get created and that hopefully we've created something the next generation will want to continue.

**What is one interesting thing no one probably knows about your farm/business/product that you would like to share?**

"Bees are a lot of work! Everyone thinks it is set them and forget them. We've had so many people tell us they want to start bees because they think they are easy or that they are inexpensive, which they are not. Bees require a lot of care, especially when you are first establishing colonies. There is always a chance you lose a colony, especially when winterizing them. You have to medicate bees for mites, and there are other predators like certain bugs or even bears and raccoons. You have to feed your bees, and give them pollen patties in the early spring before pollen has come out. If your bees are not near a water source, you have to even water them too. Then comes harvesting the honey, which is a whole other task in itself depending if you are going to have comb honey or extract the honey. They are more intensive than most people think!"

**What makes Minnesota the place to farm/grow/raise/produce/provide a service?**

"I think Minnesota is a gem because it has amazing and abundant resources, and I'm not just referring to our natural resources. We have great health care options, a tremendous infrastructure involving rail, ship, air and bridges, many large agricultural companies, some of the best private and public colleges and some of the best recreation. It truly is a wonderful place to raise a family, live and farm."

**What is your favorite Minnesota location or a fun thing to do in Minnesota?**

"We love camping, and go as many times as we can in the summer. Minnesota is home to so many great state parks. Mark and I are members of the MN State Park's Club, where you get badges for every certain number of state parks you visit as you try to visit them all. We are one away from our first badge. My favorite state park is probably Gooseberry Falls."

**What is one ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about. What is one non-ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about and why?**

"The [Intivity Center at AGCO](#) down in Jackson. It really is a neat place to visit, but you have to schedule a tour through them. The changing history in equipment and technology is fascinating!"

**Minnesota Farm Living**

Connecting Consumers with those who grow your food  
<http://www.mnfarmliving.com>

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A couple more pictures from Sara and Mark Hewitt: