



Pennsylvania Young Farmers Over 30 are J. Kenneth and Lisa Wiker. They own a 75-acre dairy farm in Holtwood. In addition they rent 200 acres. As a hobby, they grow 5-acres of cabbage and daylilies for a wholesaler.

## Wikers Are Pennsylvania's Outstanding Young Farmers Over 30

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

**HOLTWOOD** (Lancaster Co.) — "I'm just an ordinary guy, not very interesting for a story," Ken Wiker said.

Wiker may be an ordinary guy but he's done a remarkable job on his 75-acre Holtwood farm. He recently received the Outstanding Farmer Over 30 Award at the annual convention of Pennsylvania Young Farmers.

Ken, his wife Lisa, and children Matt, 11, and Emily, 9, work together milking Holsteins and farming about 300 acres.

Sounds ordinary.

But what is unusual is that the Wikers raise cabbage and daylilies.

Wiker said that he got into the alternative crops as a hobby. But raising five acres of green cabbage outgrew the hobby status.

Harvesting cabbage is labor intensive, requiring each head to be cut off with a knife and boxed for wholesale marketing.

Suffice it to say that neither his wife nor his kids share the same passion for hobby farming when the seasonal crop demands sunup to sundown harvesting. Even Wiker grew weary of the labor-intensive crop.

The Wikers stumbled across a crop that they do enjoy harvesting — daylilies.

A neighbor who sells greenhouse supplies asked the Wikers to grow Stellardore daylilies.

According to Lisa, growing daylily roots is fairly easy. And most welcoming is that they can use a potato digger to remove the roots to sell. The roots need to be divided annually and replanted. Depending on the weather, both a spring and a fall crop can be harvested.

Because raising cabbage is no longer a hobby, Wiker said that he is considering phasing out

growing it and planting more flowers.

"With flowers you only need to use a herbicide and cultivate them. You don't need to worry about bugs," he said. He also plants two acres of pumpkins.

Of course, flowers, pumpkins, and cabbage are only sideline businesses from the mainstay of milking and crop growing.

Two years ago, the Wikers added 20 stalls that forms an L-shaped barn. Lots of windows allows natural sunlight. At that time, they also added a TMR mixer, which makes feeding much simpler, and automatic water bowls.

Mattresses and barn stormer fans increase cow comfort. About 95 cows are milked twice daily with a pipeline system. Herd production is 23,000 pounds milk, 725 pounds protein, and 810 pounds butterfat.

BST is used to maintain production on lower-producing cows.

Wiker generally takes care of the twice daily milking except on weekends, when Lisa and Matt help. Milk is shipped to Land O' Lakes.

Wiker recently purchased the home farm from his dad, Ken, who continues to help out with the fieldwork. Conservation practices were always important on the Wiker farm. These include contour strips that range in size from two and a half to five acres. Terraces and grass waterways control erosion and water movement on the soil, which is a combination of Glenig and Chester silt loam.

Wiker said that cropping with rye and corn silage is important for controlling soil runoff.

Minimum tillage practices include chisel plowing, disking,

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Despite busy schedules, family time is set aside for relaxation.

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