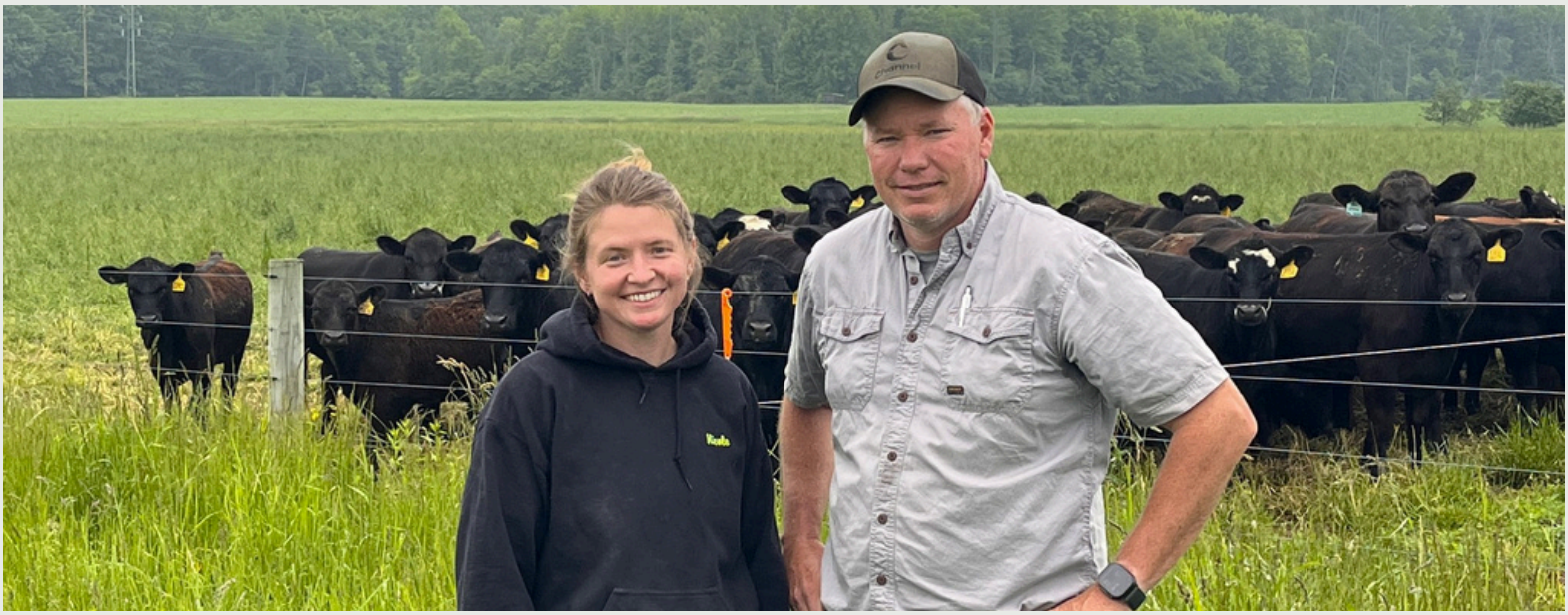
ZELIFF FARM



Nicole Porter & Pete Zeliff

Farming with Curiosity

Nestled along the Lake Ontario Watershed, where open fields meet the quiet edges of the Iroquois Federal Wildlife Refuge and the Tonawanda State Forest, Zeliff Farms stretches across 1,272 acres of open fields on clay-loam soil. Tucked between the quiet watershed and forests, Pete Zeliff first walked this land as a hunter, long before he ever imagined owning and farming it. In 2008, he purchased the farm as a first-generation farmer, stepping into a life that somehow felt inherited.

Farm at a Glance

COUNTY: Orleans County, NY

WATERSHED: Lake Ontario Direct

FARM SIZE: 1272 acres

ENTERPRISE: Row crop & Beef

GRAZING MANAGEMENT GOALS:

- Support Ecological soil health
- Improve forage productivity
- Strengthen long-term land stewardship
- Reduce risks such as erosion, pests + disease
- Enhance soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat

"When I was a kid, my grandfather had a farm," Pete says. "I think it was something that always stuck with me; it was always in my blood." At first, the farm operated under conventional corn and soybean rotation. But as Pete spent more time on the land, curiosity took root. He began researching, experimenting, and paying attention to what the soil was telling him. It was that curiosity that led him to regenerative agriculture, a shift that would shape the future of Zeliff Farm.

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Today, Pete farms alongside his daughter Nicole Porter, where each decision is guided by one principle: soil health comes first. "We have a saying," Pete explains, "Everything we do either adds to or takes away from what we're doing." It's simple but it captures the heart of their approach—balancing financial sustainability with ecological responsibility.

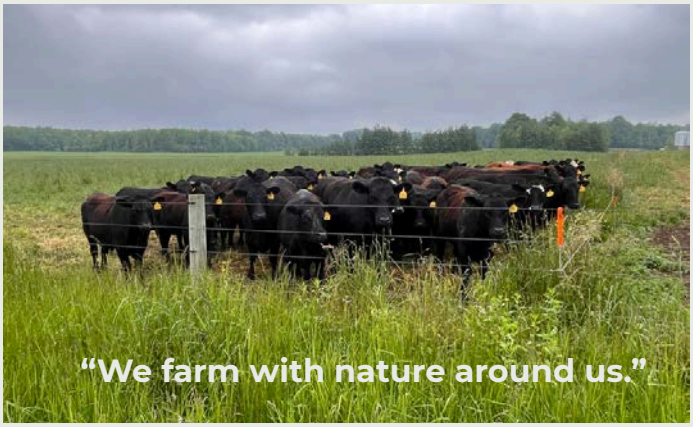
Partners in Regeneration

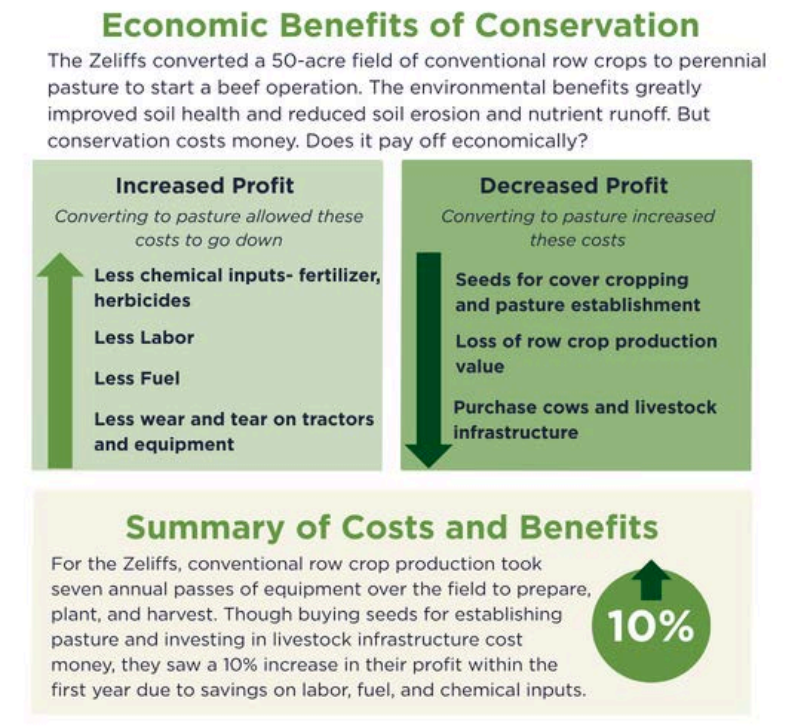
In 2019, their next step in regenerative agriculture was clear: beef cattle. The toughest ground on their farm —the areas most resistant to growing row crops — turned out to be ideal for grazing. Adding beef made ecological sense, closing nutrient loops and bringing hoof action, manure, and plant diversity into the system. It also made economic sense, strengthening the farm's resilience to changing markets.

With support from NRCS and American Farmland Trust, Pete and Nicole converted fifty acres of conventional row crops to perennial pasture. They designed a grazing plan that expanded their pastures to allow them to grow their herd. NRCS helped come up with a plan for the size of paddocks, rotation schedule, and forage education.

The grazing plan helped reduce the need for chemicals and enhanced soil biota, leading to a truly regenerative process.

"We farm with nature in mind around us," Pete says, a philosophy that shows up in every pasture and every decision.
The farm sponge-like soil doesn't erode easily, but it does hold water—especially in the spring. In 2020, Pete installed drainage tile and a 30-foot grassed waterway on either side





with better drainage and a regenerative system in place, cover crops and perennial pasture now thrive. Soil structure has improved, biological activity has accelerated, fields that once struggled to dry out each spring now support vibrant living soils.

The Results

These soil health practices have improved the biological activity in Zeliff Farm's fields. Using higher amounts of humic acid has made a big difference—unlocking nutrients already present in the soil allow it's natural process to do more of the work. Focusing on biology and providing different food sources for the soil has been a major turning point. Residue breaks down easily now, and issues like vomitoxin (a mold that affects cereal grains) have essentially disappeared.

Zeliff Farms is still a first-generation operation, but Pete and Nicole are building a legacy rooted in regeneration. The Zeliffs prove that when soil health becomes the compass, the land responds —with resilience, productivity, and a future that grows stronger every year.

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