HOW TRANSFERRING THE FAMILY FARM TO THE 5TH GENERATION IS SIMPLIFIED BY ORGANIZING FARM DATA ON AN ACCESSIBLE PLATFORM

CHALLENGE

James Reamer had already managed succession planning from a land and asset point of view, but knew there is a lot more to pass on than just the asset. Jamie, his daughter, wanted to help facilitate the knowledge and experience transfer as quickly and effectively as possible and knew a digital platform was the best opportunity to do so. Jamie also knew that she needed to be in the field to really learn the farm’s subtleties and be of the greatest value to the business.

SOLUTION

The Reamers adopted Agworld’s farm management platform to bring together their agronomic, financial and operational data into a central location where James, Jamie and their team can work together to grow the business.

RESULT

Agworld’s easy to use mobile solution has enabled the Reamers to share and leverage James’ knowledge and experience across the team. By keeping the team out of the office at the end of a long day, the Reamers’ succession plan is on-track without compromising their work-life-balance.

“Critical information is not just in Dad’s head now. It’s on the Agworld platform and also visible to me.”

Jamie Reamer
Reamer Farms, Clarksburg CA
From early settlers to the 5th generation

James Reamer’s great-grandfather settled in the Clarksburg area in the late 1800’s and started to farm row crops such as corn, tomato, sugar beet and asparagus. James’ father planted the first vineyard on the family property in 1978 and when James came back to the farm in 1997, there were around 114 acres of grapes planted. Fast forward 21 years and Reamer Farms now boasts 1,200 acres of wine grapes between the home farm in Clarksburg and several other farms in neighboring towns.

James’ daughter, Jamie, graduated with a masters in sociology and worked for Governor Schwarzenegger for 3 years before coming home to start a family and join the family farming operation. The main varieties of wine grapes grown by the Reamers are chardonnay, pinot gris, chenin blanc, riesling and pinot noir. Clarksburg is located approximately an hour’s drive from Napa Valley; the relatively warm days and cool nights make for a unique grape growing climate that results in excellent quality wine grapes.

Jamie remarks: “Our oldest vineyard is now 40 years old and it’s the only vineyard where we use flood irrigation. I’d love to update our older vineyards with the latest technology, so we can attack nutrient deficiencies more efficiently, but we’re not in a position where we can pull a well-producing vineyard out at the moment; making changes in viticulture is a slow process.”

Transferring knowledge

As soon as Jamie joined the family farming operation, it was clear that the record keeping process had to be updated so that it would become easier for Jamie to absorb all the information she needs to help manage the vineyards. Jamie explains: “Dad knew that I was looking for a new, more dynamic farm management system. When I first started here, we were taking our notes in a spreadsheet, printing them out at the end of the season and putting them in a binder.” It was a chance meeting in a butcher shop with Agworld USA President, Zach Sheely, that introduced Agworld to James. After a demo, the Reamers decided to adopt the Agworld platform into their operation. They initially began a trial with Agworld, but Jamie soon realized they had to fully commit to implementing the platform in order to be successful: “You have to truly commit to the software to understand how it works and if it will work for you going forward. This year we have decided to jump-in with both feet and it’s been great.”

As a large vineyard operation, Reamer Farms encounters the usual challenges of operations this size: organizing all machinery and personnel, keeping track of who is doing what and making sure that all jobs get done in a timely fashion. James remarks: “That is what Agworld does for us. It helps us to keep everything organized. We have access to all our information and we can see a clear path of what we need to achieve on a daily basis. I like to be a very organized person and don’t like to waste time; Agworld helps me and everyone else in our operation become more efficient.”

James also uses Agworld to transfer knowledge about managing the vineyards to Jamie, a process that is perceived as difficult and complicated in many
farming families. Jamie elaborates: “With Agworld, I have become a part of the management and workflow processes. Critical information is not just in my dad’s head anymore; it’s in the app. And now that I can see it organized in the app, I can better understand how he is making decisions and how jobs are being prioritized. I can also more easily participate in that decision-making. I was concerned that he might resist using the app at first, that it might slow him down, or that it might be too daunting, but he is completely and enthusiastically using Agworld to help us with this transition.” James: “Agworld has allowed Jamie to take over incrementally more of the challenges of management.”

Future proofing the family farm

Like any business, the Reamer family has to keep an eye on the future to ensure they remain relevant in the farming landscape of the future. Reamer Farms work with a viticulturist that visits weekly to help them plan for the future. With vineyards exceeding 40 years in age, decisions made now have an impact for a long time and need to be carefully considered. While data is playing a more important role in decision making on the farm, Jamie hasn’t lost sight of the importance of spending more time in the field and less time in the office. “One of the really big draws of Agworld for me was this ability to write my work orders and mark them as completed from any of our 40 vineyards; I can be out in the vineyard and still see all the workflow, observations and to-do lists which not only helps me with my time management, but I believe makes me a better farmer. That is, I can take all of that data into consideration right there in the field as I make sense of what I’m seeing in my vines and decide what they might need next. This is a huge advantage for me.”

For James Reamer, profitability is a metric that he sees as key moving into the future: “I love being able to pull up a field in Agworld, tap ‘snapshot’ and see all the inputs we used this year. Having that information at your fingertips just makes you that much more efficient and lets you make better decisions going
forward. We can also generate reports instantly and send them off electronically instead of having to manually calculate everything. Reports such as pesticide use for the county or total input reports for our clients, the wineries, are all easily created. We’re still to this day discovering more and more things that Agworld can do for us in the future and they’re all very exciting features.”

James’ goal for the future is to have more of his family come back to join the operation and continue the family tradition, while also maintaining long standing relationships with the wineries that buy their grapes. Jamie adds to this: “I love working with my family and look forward to the next generation coming in and finding their place at Reamer Farms. What is great is that Agworld not only makes us better at what we are doing right now, but it will also help the next generation as well. Our records will be preserved so that they will know what we have tried in the past and what the outcomes were. That information will be at their fingertips and not sitting in a box somewhere. This will make them better farmers, too.”

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