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June 19, 2004

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**Mapleline Farm celebrates new milk facility and
conservation work with open house**

HADLEY, Mass. -- Federal and state officials joined Mapleline Farm owners John and Elaine Kokoski on June 19 as they cut the ribbon on their new on-farm milk processing facility in Hadley. The Kokoskis also highlighted recent farm conservation work at the event.

The Kokoskis have actively worked to keep their dairy farm operation viable and to protect its natural resources by partnering with federal and state programs including the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program.

The Kokoskis, who run a home-delivery business and a farm store, celebrated the grand opening with an open house and "Massachusetts Dairy Farm Day," an event that featured farm tours and vendors of Massachusetts food products including local strawberries, cheese, egg products, maple products, soda and coffee. Several hundred Mapleline Farm customers were expected to attend.

The milk processing equipment was moved from its previous location at Quality Milk in Ware to the farm in January. Mapleline Farm produces farm fresh milk in glass bottles which they sell through their farm store and home delivery, and is also available at local food stores, restaurants and bakeries.

"Your conservation efforts and participation in NRCS programs are helping to maintain the environmental viability of your farm and to protect the precious natural resources of this community and region," said Cecil Currin, Massachusetts State Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, presenting the Kokoskis with a certificate for appreciation for partnership and commitment in conservation.

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Last year, John Kokoski installed an innovative waste storage project. As part of his EQIP contract, a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) developed for the farm. Kokoski's CNMP, a valuable progressive planning tool, was the first one to be signed and implemented in Massachusetts.

The CNMP provided Kokoski with nutrient management recommendations for applying manure and wastewater to meet the nutrient requirements of his crop fields. Kokoski's SlurryStore tank was sized to store the collected heifer manure, milkhouse wastewater and milk processing wastewater.

Officials attending included Currin, Massachusetts Commissioner of Agricultural Resources Douglas Gillespie, State Senator Stanley Rosenberg and State Representative John Scibak. Soil Conservationist Gene Kosinski of the NRCS Hadley field office was on hand to speak about the conservation work to farm tour participants.

Celebrating their 100th anniversary of operating the farm this year, the Kokoskis were recognized by the state Department of Agricultural Resources as a "Century Farm."