

## Jim Walker

**Co-owner, Walkerville Farms Ltd.**

Jim Walker has been in the dairy business, as he says, “Ever since I could work.” You could say it’s in his blood. The Sussex, N.B.-based dairy farm has been in the Walker family for over six generations. When Jim’s dad took it over from his dad in the 1950s, it was a 200-acre, mixed-farm operation. Today there are 400 cows and a sprawling 1,000 acres known as Walkerville Farms Ltd., co-owned by Jim and his brother Paul. The brothers and five employees milk about 200 of the cows, with their wives and children pitching in when necessary. In addition to Walkerville, Jim is vice-chairman of the board of Dairytown Products Ltd., which is owned by New Brunswick’s dairy farmers. In 2004 Dairytown, which produces milk powders and other dairy products, won the Best of Class in the unsalted butter category at the World Championship Cheese Contest in Madison, Wis. And for the last five years, Dairytown’s butter was voted Canada’s Best Butter at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto. Here Jim discusses the future of the dairy industry.



Jim Walker

## Q&A

### What do you love most about your job?

“It’s different every day. We milk cows twice a day and feed calves, but I also do maintenance, cut grass, tractor work and equipment purchases. There’s never a dull moment.”

### What is your management philosophy?

“To make things easier for people and to make, not always more money, but a better living for everybody around me. We also manage the cows so that they’re comfortable and produce the most milk.”

### What is the most challenging part of your job?

“Every person on our operation has different needs and wants. I find that challenging – cows are pretty easy to deal with most days. That’s not always a bad thing with people. But everybody looks at a situation differently. Sometimes you think someone will enjoy something, but they find it difficult, so you have to make them see where the good is.”

### How would you describe your operational or management style?

“I look at different ways of doing something and make people see that it’s exciting to do things in a new way. To challenge people, too, so they enjoy their work.”

### Where do you see the dairy industry going?

“The farms are going to get larger, more specialized. There’s going to be less of us producing more milk. I see more specialty milk coming like organic, or omega-3. Consumers are looking at healthy choices. That’s what we’ve got to offer. Our product was always looked at as natural, but we

may have to make it even better. Offer smaller portions, different packaging. The old pound of butter in the square foil will probably disappear. Some innovation will come from the farm and some will come from dairies.”

### What are the issues your sector is facing?

“The dairy industry doesn’t get a lot of government help, whereas a lot of other countries get subsidies and that keeps the price of milk down. That’s an issue. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is always an issue. There’s give and take when the government negotiates with the WTO and I’m scared. I’m worried about large farms – ourselves included. We’ve got to be environmental stewards and show our neighbours and consumers that we’re doing a good job. That’s a challenge. To produce a product at the lowest possible price and be efficient we have to grow, and with growth comes larger environmental problems to manage.”

### What about opportunities?

“Farming has become more of a business. We can offer our employees and families a better way of life. We’re a lot better educated. There are a lot of products out there that milk can generate that demand a higher premium, so there’s a good future.”

## INTHE SPOTLIGHT

**First industry job:** “Milking cows and feeding calves.”

**Favourite food:** “Lobster with Dairytown butter.”

**Industry mentor:** “My father, George, and John Robinson, a local producer. He’s someone I always hoped I could be like. He’s very easy going but when he speaks everyone listens because he really thinks out what he’s going to say.”