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Why this Minnesota farmer supports Riverview dairy | Opinion

Scott Ruiter, opinion Special to the St. Cloud Times

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To the Editor:

For as long as I can remember, farming has been about hard work, adapting to change and thinking about the next generation.

Farming has been part of our family for generations. The land we farm today was farmed by the generation before us, and now my sons are helping carry the operation forward. One of them has a young son of his own, and like many farm families, we spend a lot of time thinking about what opportunities will exist for the next generation.

That's one reason I've been paying attention to the recent conversation about Riverview and the future of agriculture in Minnesota.

While I can't speak for everyone, I can speak from my own experience. When Riverview's Louriston Dairy came to our area in 2017, it created opportunities for our farm. Working with Riverview allowed us to diversify our operation by adding another crop and expanding our custom harvesting business. Having those additional opportunities helped strengthen our operation and provided another source of income alongside the work we were already doing.

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Anyone who farms knows there are years when things go well and years when they don't. Markets change. Weather changes. Input costs change. Agriculture teaches you

to take the long view and adapt when opportunities arise. Riverview helped create one of those opportunities for our farm.

I've heard a lot of discussion lately about what Riverview means for rural Minnesota. My experience has been that it created opportunities for our farm that didn't exist before.

I've also come to appreciate how connected agriculture really is. Crop farmers, livestock producers, veterinarians, equipment dealers, truck drivers, agronomists, and local businesses all depend on one another. That's how agriculture works in Minnesota.

On our farm, manure from Louriston Dairy provides nutrients and organic matter that help improve our soil while reducing our reliance on commercial fertilizer. It's practical, cost-effective, and beneficial for the land we farm. Because we're located nearby, we're able to put those nutrients to work close to where they're produced.

Over the years, I've also gotten to know many of the people who work for Riverview. They live in our communities. Their children attend local schools. They support local businesses, volunteer, attend church and contribute to the same towns the rest of us care about.

What I've seen firsthand is that agriculture works best when people work together. That's been true for our farm, and it's one of the reasons I believe Riverview has been a positive part of our community. And it's why animal agriculture of all sizes should be supported in rural Minnesota.

Most of all, I think about the future. Like many farm families, we hope the next generation will have the same opportunity to build a life in agriculture that previous generations had. In my experience, that future depends on agriculture continuing to create opportunities, support rural communities, and give young people reasons to stay and build their lives here.

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