

Press release: October, 5 2015

## OMSCo Farm of the Year announced

Shropshire organic dairy farmer, Tim Downes, has been crowned OMSCo's Farm of the Year at the hugely successful Positive Dairying conference, held in Birmingham on October 1.

Farming just under 700 acres with a further 230 acres of contract youngstock agreements, Tim was complemented on his successful implementation of out-of-the-box thinking, as well as his commitment to sustainable organic dairy farming.



Judge, Lyndon Edwards, OMSCo's vice chairman, says how he and his fellow judges Caroline Drummond MBE, LEAF chief executive and Jamie Day, editor, all felt that Tim was incredibly visionary and open minded in his approach to dairying and had a hunger for knowledge.

“Tim is proactive in adopting initiatives that have the potential to improve his grass, herd and staff management. Just one example of this is his involvement in revolutionary tree trials. The first gives cows access to trees specifically planted for their browsing potential, with the trial aiming to assess the impact on dry matter produced per acre, and the general synergy of growing trees in a grazing area.

“The second trial makes use of willow varieties in the grazing system and aims to monitor the benefits to cows from consuming the leaves. It's predicted that the willow will offer some preventative therapies to the animals and increase overall health,” says Lyndon.

“We were also impressed by his ‘can-do’ attitude. As a Nuffield Scholar he'd travelled the world in search of knowledge and best practice. In 1998 together with his parents, he began converting the farm to organic, a process that was completed in 2000 when Tim and Louise were also married.”

Selling his milk to OMSCo, Tim milks 280 cows through a 24/48 herringbone parlor and has been a member of the successful co-operative for the last 15 years, he's also chairman of a local discussion group – the Star Grazers.

“Tim is a really positive example of a dairy farmer who’s striving for business success, he’s clearly always looking at new, yet practical, ways to grow his business and he’s not afraid to go out and look for the answer.

“He’s committed to hard work, team work, innovation and a willingness to adapt. This is demonstrated through his lateral thinking, adaptable and practical nature together with great business skills. He also clearly manages his business with strong environmental values, always in hand with nature, to maximise the sustainability and long term future of his land and farm,” adds Jamie Day.

Tim was judged against two other shortlisted farms, the Howlett’s of Bromyard and the Davies’ of Carmarthen – both farms we stiff competition for the title, demonstrating not only out of the box thinking, but also best dairying practice and a commitment to farming sustainably.