

PRAIRIE FRUITS FARM & CREAMERY

Champaign County, IL

SIZE

46 acres of transitional farmland

FARMERS

Wes Jarrell & Leslie Cooperband



FARM VISION

To educate the community about sustainable agriculture and the connections between food production, health, and enjoyment.

ABOUT THE FARM

Leslie and Wes are both professors and PhD's in soil science who came to dairy farming in 2003. They started with seven acres of land that had been in grain production. They got to work immediately planting an orchard. A year later, they had three Nubian goat does and one buck and began making cheese. They built [Prairie Fruits](#) slowly by planting fruit trees, perennials, pasture and restoring prairie ecosystems, all while growing their herd. Their goats are certified Animal Welfare Approved. They sell French-style goat cheeses as well as gelato, sorbetto, and fruit leather. Visitors are welcome to pick their own fruit at the orchard.

FARMING PRACTICES

Leslie and Wes both studied goats and their role in building soil in academia – goats will eat all sorts of plants, from leafy pasture to woody shrubs, which makes them excellent partners in removing invasive plant species and even clearing brush in fire-prone regions. On the new land, Wes and Leslie will plant a mix of both silvopasture and more standard pasture that will encourage goats to decide where they want to graze. They mix woody and herbaceous species, which offers balance, consistency in milk production, and a great tasting cheese. They have partnered with [The Agroforestry Center](#) at the University of Missouri and [Savanna Institute](#) in their farm planning.

HOW WE HELPED

The new acreage will not only help Prairie Fruits expand their operation, but also build a model farm. There are very few pasture-based goat milk dairies in the US, let alone the Midwest. On this land, they hope that they can demonstrate the potential for goats to thrive on diverse silvopasture, restore ecosystems, and be a vital partner in building soil – and that farms based on this model can be financially viable through the production of dairy products.

