

M&B Products, Inc.

Meeting the Needs of Niche Markets & Making an Industry Wide Impact

by Leslie Shepherd

The day seemed like any other, as Dale McClellan walked through the old building that was once his family's dairy. It was significant, however, because as he appraised the damage left by renters since the original milk plant closed in 1979, his mind was turning over ways to make a dream into reality. Where pieces of the roof lay on the ground, he envisioned advanced processing machinery. Where fond memories of working with his father and grandfather in these very rooms surfaced, he could see his own sons working beside him in the future. A third generation dairyman, he knew on this day that history, hard work and dedication would not be enough to succeed in Florida's competitive agricultural market. It would take innovation to make M&B Products a reality. M&B Products is celebrating twenty successful years in business since reopening in 1987, and innovation is still on Dale McClellan's mind.

The company's innovative, cost effective and environmentally sound product line expertly meets the needs of a unique niche market. When Dale and his grandfather,



Pictured: Leon, Brian, Dale and Daniel McClellan, and Lola

Earl Lovelace, first considered reopening the plant, they built their business plans on lessons learned from the past. "We took a hard look at the things we did not want to repeat this time around," Dale explains. "We made the decision to steer clear of retail customers and focus on institutions." This decision proved to be pivotal in their success from the beginning

when Dale and his wife Mary started M&B as a continuation of the original Sunny Brook Dairy Milk Plant. The company provides milk and juice products in the specific size, quantity and quality required by their customers, which include schools, hospitals and nursing homes.

...continues on next page

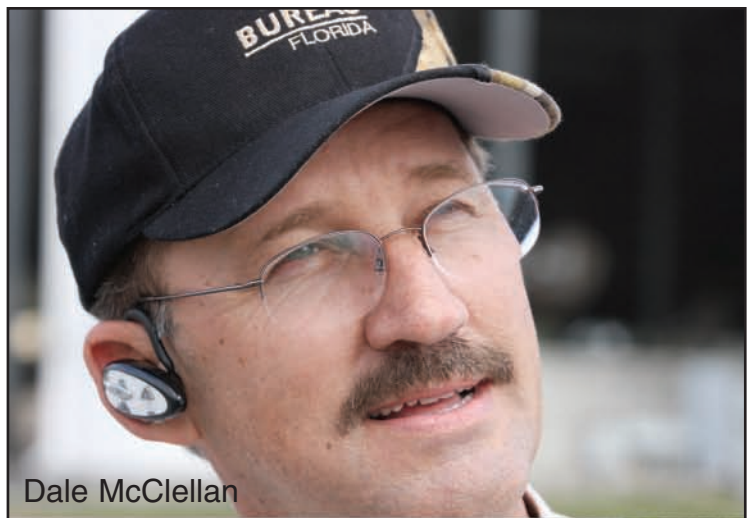


Over the last twenty years, M&B has focused on diversifying by adding new products. They have expanded beyond their original milk line to include specialty items such as shakes, fruit juices and frozen juice bars. It remains the mission of the company to progressively evolve to better serve their niche market and remain proactive in surpassing industry and environmental standards. M&B only sells Florida orange juice, and their milk is also produced and packaged locally. In fact, it is the only milk available to Florida schools with the “Fresh from Florida” logo. Products are packaged in recyclable corrugated boxes, as opposed to crates, which have the added health benefit of keeping the cartons clean. Another unique item that Dale points out is the mini-sip pouch, which can take the place of the small one serving carton. Its compact design can be flattened to a fraction of that of a carton, can or bottle and allows for forty percent more inventory per truckload. The pouches are recyclable and reduce trash by about 2.3 million pounds a year.

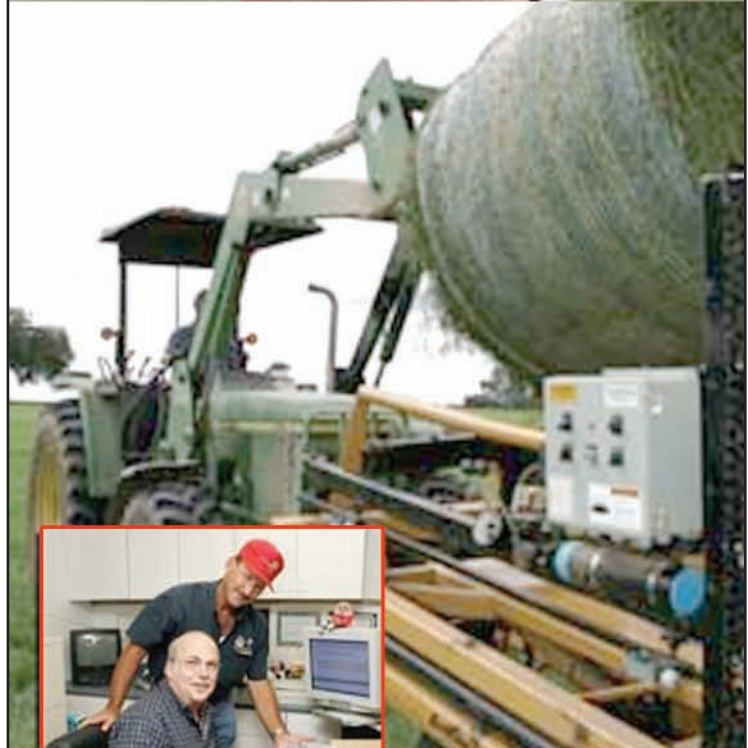
Expanding and upgrading the family’s Tampa based operation is also a driving force behind Dale’s commitment. “My grandfather and I made an agreement that most of our profits would go back into the business so that we could continually improve,” he says. This included Dale’s vision to build a futuristic dairy on their farm in Lecanto. After years of costly research, milking began in the new state-of-the-art facility in the summer of 2003. The advanced design includes open-air barns to maximize the flow of breezes and rubber mats in the stalls for the cows’ comfort. The dairy also incorporates progressive environmental procedures. For example, the barns are flushed three times a day with reuse water, which is carried to a concrete-lined holding tank. The water is then sprayed onto a hay field for irrigation. The grass absorbs the nutrients from the wastewater preventing them from seeping into the groundwater. By recycling the wastewater, the dairy draws only a fraction of its allotted amount of fresh water. The hay is then fed to the cows.

The innovation of M&B Products includes playing a proactive role in the public’s image of both the plant and dairy, and ultimately Florida’s agriculture. “We are in an environment now where people don’t understand agriculture. I feel that if agriculture is going to continue in Florida, we’ve got to constantly improve,” he says. “So we strive for a dairy operation that will make agriculture proud.” A concept that was confirmed when M&B Products was chosen as a recipient of the coveted Commissioner’s Ag-Environmental Leadership Awards in 2004. Dale also acts on his belief that educating the average Floridian about the importance of rural farmlands and agricultural operations is vital. Prior to building the dairy, Dale initiated public meetings for the community to ask questions and be heard. He welcomes opportunities to invite the public into the dairy and provides tours of the processing plant.

Dale realized another important vision when his three sons, Leon, Bryan and Daniel, joined the Lecanto dairy as the fourth generation to carry on the family’s dairy tradition. Attempting to downplay his pride he says, “The dairy operation is a good place to test their metal!” By his own definition, Dale McClellan has “high expectations.” Fortunately for his family’s business, the agriculture industry and Florida’s environment, the benefits of Dale McClellan’s vision and commitment to innovation are far reaching. •



Dale McClellan



Dale & Rocky

