Emily Schaapman Shows What Modern Dairy Actually Looks Like in Georgia

Schaapman's Abbeville farm represents the evolution of agriculture in the South—and the story most local residents don't get to witness

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, October 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Most Americans enjoy dairy foods, but few have ever stepped onto a dairy farm. When they search for images of modern dairy farming, what they find doesn't reflect the people doing the work—people running businesses, using data and technology, caring for animals and natural resources, managing teams, solving problems, and planning for the next generation. There is much more behind the title "dairy farmer" than most people ever get to see.

That's exactly why Emily Schaapman is opening up Schaapman Holsteins in Wilcox County Georgia to be featured in Portraits of Modern Dairy—a national initiative created to change that picture, literally.

Before many are out of bed, the Schaapman family is already making the kinds of decisions that shape the food on American tables. What began with about 80 cows in 1995, Schaapman Holsteins has grown to approximately 1,200 milking cows today. The next generation, including Emily alongside her husband Ruben and their young son Teddy, have returned to the operation, and everyone has a role to play.

What Emily calls their “family powerhouse” also includes her sister-in-law, Monica, focusing on herd health, while her mother-in-law, Aileen, cares for calves. Her brother-in-law, Thomas, focuses on farm maintenance, and her father-in-law, Harry, oversees daily operations. Emily’s husband, Ruben, brings his expertise as a dairy nutritionist, while Emily pitches in across the farm and uses her storytelling skills to help others see the bigger picture of what happens there every day.

The choices made by farmers like Emily aren’t simple. Each decision involves weighing competing priorities and operational realities: business judgment tempered by data and instinct, innovation

alongside tradition, maintaining current operations while positioning for growth, all while caring for animals and the land. Every morning, Emily navigates this complexity, drawing on her knowledge, technology, and experience to shape outcomes that most people never see.

On National Farmer's Day, October 12, during the UN's International Year of the Woman Farmer, Portraits of Modern Dairy launches to change exactly that. The initiative features seven women across six U.S. dairy farms, including Emily. Through photography, film, and storytelling, her portrait reveals Emily as a whole person: business leader and problem-solver, innovator, and animal caretaker —and the relationships, decisions, and everyday moments that define her work.

“When you take a step back, you realize how incredible it is to get to be a part of feeding the world,” said Emily Schaapman. “I know I’m very lucky to have family surrounding me, and to be able to have other strong women to look up to.”

The complete stories, photography, and video are available on USDairy.com/Portraits. A curated selection of images is available free through Unsplash to help authentic representations of U.S. dairy farmers reach journalists, educators, and content creators.

To learn more:

View Emily Schaapman's portrait and story: LINK
Explore Portraits of Modern Dairy: https://www.usdairy.com/portraits
Access photography on Unsplash: https://unsplash.com/@portraitsofmoderndairy

Throughout the year, The Dairy Alliance works with farmers across the Southeast to showcase the importance of real dairy milk and the farmers, like Emily Schaapman, who provide this valuable resource to their communities. For more information, visit thedairyalliance.com or @TheDairyAlliance on Facebook or Instagram.

About The Dairy Alliance
The Dairy Alliance is a nonprofit funded by dairy farm families of the Southeast. We work diligently with dairy farmers, schools, sports teams, health professionals, local organizations, state leaders, the media, and the public to promote dairy foods and knowledge about the dairy industry. Our efforts center in eight states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

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