



## FORT BRANCH, INDIANA

During their college years at Purdue University, where they studied Agri-Business Management, sibling duo, Jacob Hirsch and Emily Cooper, discussed the possibility of both returning to the family farm. They wondered what that would look like and what roles each would play as they worked alongside their parents, Mike and Beverly.

That wondering turned into a reality after they graduated in 2011 and formed Pathway Family Farms with their parents, which has since evolved into a multi-location operation farming corn, soybeans and wheat.

"We've grown our business in terms of total acres since we felt that was one of the directions we needed to be headed in to be sustainable and competitive in the industry," explained Emily.

"At the same time, we realized that every aspect of our operation had to grow in unison," she continued, "so we focused on the foundation and structure of the business which included people, financial systems, accounting and training."

So how have their roles played out in the farm's operations?

Emily explains that initially she was involved in the operations and grain inventory, but as they grew, her focus shifted to deal with finances, their people and outside vendors and customers. She is now responsible for many facets of the business including: risk management, grain marketing, crop insurance and the financial aspects of the company.



Jacob Hirsch, Emily Cooper and Mike Hirsch.

Jacob manages these "pod" locations with their different supervisors, allowing each to share in the family-owned Pathway Family Farms culture.

"Through our working relationship with other farmers, we have been able to help them achieve their families' goals," says Mike. "We are a generational business and it is my hope that we and other family farms remain strong in the United States."

"One of the strongest points of H&R is that they are an employee-owned company, not corporately owned – it's very unique in these times and it means something to the customer," commented Mike.

"We really are grateful to the staff at H&R Agri-Power in Princeton, IN for their tremendous support that allowed us to complete our acquisition in 2020," Mike continues. "With the teamwork of store manager, Paul Beuligmann, H&R upper management & CNH Capital, we were able to trade all of the equipment in and convert it to part of our Case IH fleet."

Pathway Family Farms was able to take advantage of this opportunity thanks to the support of H&R and Mr. Wayne Hunt. It seemed as though Pathway's goals and H&R's goals were right in line with each other.

"I see it as a great 3-part relationship," said Emily. "The H&R Princeton location team, CNH Capital and Pathway Family Farms."

Mike explains, "It's not about equipment color as much as it's about who you are doing business with and the relationship – it's about the service, it's overall."



Part of Pathway Family Farms Case IH fleet harvesting corn

"Having good techs that can come out like the Princeton H&R location has is huge," adds Jacob. "The service we've received from them has been very timely and it's always quality techs coming out."

This is especially true during peak season when 30 people are working for them. There is no way they can afford equipment to be idle at these crucial production times.

What does Pathway Family Farms see as their business outlook in the future?

"You can't get tunnel vision," says Emily. "You have to open your vision and not fear trends but embrace them and see how you can be successful with them

going forward. You need the mindset of change and adaptability – that attitude will get you where you need to be in the future."

"I feel that the skills within our management team are great for where our industry is now and for where a business like ours needs to be headed," Emily added.

How does the team find the time to manage their land in 5 counties within 3 states?

"Anyone who works in agriculture knows that the hours are long. Early on we decided that we would ask our employees to only work Monday through Saturday," Jacob said. "Our employees



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**– Mike Hirsch**

need to have Sundays off to have a chance for faith, family and rest. We do too. Everyone comes back on Monday refreshed and ready to go!"

When asked about running a family farm or business, Mike said that different skillsets are very important. Each generation has to come in and build upon the skillsets of the previous generation and you need to bring new skills into the mix for that business to advance to another generation.

In regards to the pod locations and overall operations, Mike said, "There is no job that is not important, each task has a purpose within the operation."

It's this true sense of purpose, along with precise planning, that has allowed Pathway Family Farms to grow and look forward to a very bright future.

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