



Daniel "Rocky" and Lisa Donati 'Teamwork spells success for this young family'

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For Daniel "Rocky" Donati, each year in farming and ranching is a chance to build upon the previous years' decisions and improve on both income and outcome.

Donati, past president of the Butte County Farm Bureau, and his wife Lisa currently farm rice and run commercial cow-calf and registered Angus cattle herds. Together with his parents' rice operation, Donati manages a total of 600 acres of rice.

"The cattle side of things actually started out as a 4-H project with my brother," he said.

From that initial project, he began breeding cattle and his herd grew from there.

The Donatis earned the California Young Farmers and Ranchers Achievement Award last year for their diversified farming operation.

The couple met while attending California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where he was working on a degree in agricultural business and she was studying nutritional science. They married two months after graduating.

"Because I studied nutrition, that was lumped in with agriculture, so we were both in the same ag dorm," said Lisa Donati, who did not come from a farming background. "I'm a city girl from Fresno."

She also describes herself as a stay-at-home mom who helps with her husband's farming when she can.

"It could be driving the hay wagon while he's throwing hay with the kids or I could be running parts. I'm pretty good at picking up parts," she said.

Rocky Donati said he wants to expand into other crops for diversification, but acknowledged "good irrigated land is getting more and more difficult to lease and owning is not a small financial decision." But he added that some land opportunities, while limited, do come up.

"They're harder and harder to find, but there are properties that become available," he said.

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