**A memoir about a farm, a marriage, and a fierce determination to change things for the better**

**Key points:**

* The full story behind Europe’s largest cow-with-calf dairy farm has been published after a crowdfunding campaign smashed through its £10k goal in less than a week
* Self-publishing was chosen to fast-track publication after a cancer diagnosis, with the book written in just 6 months
* Launched at Wigtown Book Festival on 29th September 2022
* The authors hope the book will help make cow-with-calf regenerative dairy as normal as free range eggs
* Review copies and photographs are available

**Dust Jacket Blurb**

For David and Wilma Finlay, the standard industry practice of separating newly born dairy calves from their mother was becoming a problem.

The sound of cows bawling and questions from visitors to their farm - plus their own growing alarm about climate change and the environment - prompted them to question everything the farming experts insisted must be done. Together, they embarked on a radical twenty-five year transformation, and the biggest change of all?

Keeping the dairy cows and their calves together.

**About *A Dairy Story***

David and Wilma Finlay, the couple behind a ground breaking farm in south west Scotland, have published a memoir to tell the story behind their journey to cow-with-calf dairy farming.

Rainton Farm is home to Cream o’ Galloway ice-cream and The Ethical Dairy cheese, and it’s the largest dairy farm in Europe leaving dairy calves with their mothers to suckle. The book called ‘*A Dairy Story*’ has been written in response to rising public interest in their radically different approach to dairy farming.

The Finlays hope their story of climate-driven farming transformation will help show that transitioning to resilient, net zero, agroecological food production is both do-able and necessary.

David Finlay said:

“Change is never easy, but change is urgently needed if we are going to feed the population without wrecking our planet. We started changing our farming system 25 years ago, and we’re not finished yet.

“This book doesn’t claim we have all the answers – far from it. Rather it’s a story about the challenges that change brings, the problems that need to be overcome and, at times, the very personal consequences of moving away from conventional practice to an approach that centres the environment and climate.”

Wilma Finlay said:

“Writing a book is something we’ve spoken about for years, but now felt like the right time to do it for all sorts of reasons, including personal reasons. The story of our farm transformation is also the story of us - our motivations and our hopes for the future - so it’s more than a dairy story, it’s our story. We hope the book has something to contribute to the current debates about sustainability, climate and farming.”

*A Dairy Story* is a joint memoir, structured chronologically and written in alternating points of view chapter by chapter. Writing began in February 2022 and concluded in June, and a crowdfunding campaign to support self publication was launched in July. The crowdfunder smashed through the original £10,000 goal in less than a week, with more than 400 people contributing a total of £16,743. The book was launched at Wigtown Book Festival on 29th September 2022.

The decision to write the book was made after Wilma was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer late last year. The memoir charts the roller-coaster nature of their business journey, including the launch of their original farm diversification, Cream o’ Galloway, and the trauma of the 2001 foot and mouth disease outbreak. It outlines the drivers behind moving to a cow-with-calf system, explains why their initial pilot of cow-with-calf dairy nearly ended in bankruptcy and how they figured out how to make the system work, and it charts their joint awakening about climate and the environment.

Wilma added:

“Many of the people who helped us develop our current system have done so with the hope that this way of farming could become much more commonplace. We hope that too. We want cow-with-calf regenerative dairy to become as normal as free-range eggs.

“For that to happen will require a big shift in mindset in the industry and it will also require knowledge to be shared. We hope that sharing as much as possible about what we have learned will help. Our goal is to make sure that nothing about our farm transformation is left unsaid.”

*A Dairy Story* is self published by Finlay’s Farm Ltd. It’s available as a 264 page hardback book costing £20 from The Ethical Dairy and selected stockists. ISBN 978-1739103903. *A Dairy Story* will also be published as a Kindle e-book on 21st November, priced at £9.99.

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**Excerpts from *A Dairy Story***

**Wilma Finlay, Introduction**

Farming needs to change, and it needs to change quickly. The most important thing we have learned is that change is possible, and that, in itself, gives us hope. Our experience has proven to us that the transformation of complex eco-systems for the benefit of planet, animals and people is not only possible, it’s beautiful and it’s immensely rewarding. We hope that sharing our experience might help to show how system change can happen, what it takes as well as what can help to make it all work.

**David Finlay, Chapter 1**

When you’re a sixth generation dairy farmer, and distantly related to probably half the local farming community, there are acceptable variations of farming practice and there are unacceptable ones. Acceptability is narrowly defined to be what everyone else is doing - driven by history, culture, peer pressure, education and industry agendas. As farmers we grow up together, learn together, work together, socialise together and we tend to live in our own little ‘country-ways’ bubble.

Innovation in farming tends to be defined as applying the latest technology that promises to extract an extra litre of milk, kilo of beef or corn, carry an extra cow or two, cut out a worker or reduce some other cost - basically, doing more of the same but cheaper, faster and in more volume. In other words, intensification. To question this convention is seen as a criticism and can be considered offensive. To do so as a ‘family’ member is borderline traitorous.

**Wilma Finlay, Chapter 14**

At that time we had advisors from Scottish Enterprise who reviewed our business plans, and on the vast majority of occasions their advice was relevant and valued. But when I explained our new ten year plan to change the whole business model, the advisor strongly cautioned against it. We were more or less told that everyone who had been involved with our business over the years thought we were making a major mistake - in fact, they believed we were threatening the viability of the whole business. It was clear that in 2008, climate change, resource depletion, energy costs and environmental degradation were not considered things that a small business should be concerned about.

**David Finlay, Chapter 17**

The separation of cows and calves on our farm was becoming a problem because our visitors were seeing with fresh eyes what so many people working in dairy farming had stopped noticing. It should have been easy to simply brush aside their concerns, and I did at first, but I have to confess, I didn’t like the standard practice of separating cows and calves either.

I found it deeply upsetting listening to and observing any recently separated cow looking back towards the calving boxes, calling gently then cocking her ears, straining to hear a reply. I found I was connecting with her grief at a very deep level, perhaps because, in a way, I’d been there too. I felt it was a topic worth exploring, if only to rule it out.

**Wilma Finlay, Chapter 26**

David and I agree with our critics that calling ourselves ‘The Ethical Dairy’ was arrogant. It took us a long, long time to agree that our brand name would be The Ethical Dairy, and we resisted it every step of the way.

**David Finlay, Chapter 27**

I expect that within the next two years our unit cost of producing a litre of milk – in an organic, cow-with-calf, 100% forage system - will be no more than our 2000-cow neighbour. Looking at the way the market is going, we might reach cost of production parity with our intensive neighbours well before then.

It’s not the cost of milk production in this cow-with-calf system that’s expensive; it’s what’s involved in getting our small scale artisan products to our customers that adds the cost. If the UK dairy industry switched to this system across the board, I am confident the price of milk in shops would be not much different than it is right now. Will the industry switch? Well, that depends on what the public and the government demands.

**Wilma Finlay, Chapter 42**

Just before Covid I had a cold that never quite went away. Nothing serious, I just found myself clearing my throat several times a day. I tried steam inhalation and herbal remedies, but nothing worked. I assumed that when summer came it would go away. It didn’t.

Like everyone else, I wasn’t going near a doctors’ surgery during Covid, so it was April 2021 before I made an appointment with my GP. Her thinking was that since I wasn’t a smoker and since this had been going on for 18 months, it was unlikely to be lung cancer, but she’d arrange an x-ray just to check it out. Up until this point, cancer hadn’t even crossed my mind.

**David Finlay, Chapter 44**

Our ethical dairy farming system isn’t just about letting calves stay with their mum, it’s about so much more than that. Our goal is the creation of a circular, regenerative food production system, fed by sunlight and rain, that has a positive environmental impact, delivers nutritious food, provides good quality jobs and works to the highest possible standards of animal welfare. It might not have been easy, but our farm is living proof that it can be done.

**Praise for *A Dairy Story***

**Helen Browning, Chief Executive of the Soil Association:**

“*A Dairy Story* sets out David and Wilma’s life’s work in a way that will be hugely helpful for future generations of would-be ethical farmers. However, this memoir should have resonance way beyond the farming community. There is personal growth, and the story of a marriage and business partnership over many decades. This is a tale of resilience, conviction, courage and sensitivity, and it is told with startling honesty.”

**Karen Campbell, author of The Sound of the Hours and Paper Cup:**

“A brave, honest and inspiring account of how one traditional family farm radically diverged, to put kindness and compassion at the heart of all they do. It's about more than rethinking how we farm - it's also the deeply personal story of two quiet, determined visionaries - who saw how the world could be different, then went about changing it.”

**Pete Ritchie, Executive Director of Nourish Scotland:**

“It’s not about the cows – though when future agriculture students learn about the transformation of dairy farming in the 2030s, this text will be required reading. Even better, this is a great story about two likeable, inspiring and unsaintly people, and their journey through life so far.”

**Sue Lawrence, writer and former MasterChef winner:**

“What a story! So brave and raw. Also heart-breaking yet hopeful; sad yet uplifting - a true tale of determination and indefatigable passion for a goal. A must-read for our time.”

**Carol Hogarth, Arts Editor, Dumfries & Galloway Life Magazine:**

“A hugely personal, highly readable call to arms, not just for the agricultural industry, but for producers, consumers and the world at large. Deeply moving in an unexpected way, the book is searingly honest as well as highly informative and will appeal to a wide range of readers, from farmers, conservationists, scientists and students, to anyone looking for an absorbing and inspirational true story.”