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## **For Immediate Release**

### ***Donald and Cheri De Jong Win 2016 Top Producer of the Year Award***

*Philadelphia, Pa.* (Jan. 29, 2016) – Dairy producers Donald and Cheri De Jong of Hartley, Texas, have been named the 2016 winners of the Top Producer of the Year award. The husband-and-wife team has grown their dairy from 1,000 cows to 17,000, producing milk for organic and conventional markets. The De Jongs grow about 85% of their feed needs, both organic and conventional, on 50,000 acres in Texas and Colorado.

“They have detailed standard operating procedures, software to track every expense and audited financial statements,” noted Sara Schafer, Editor of Top Producer magazine. “Core competencies are outlined for every position, and employees are able to develop career paths.”

A centralized management business called AgriVision Farm Management controls accounting, human resources, purchasing and inventory for all of their main operations, which include Natural Prairie Dairy, Northside Farms and Jersey Gold Dairy. The De Jongs have 300 employees.

Sponsored by Bayer CropScience and Case IH, the Top Producer of the Year contest is in its 17<sup>th</sup> year and represents the best in the business of farming. Three finalists are chosen from a slew of applications by a panel of judges based on entrepreneurial originality, financial and business progress, and industry and community leadership. Also honored as finalists during the annual Top Producer of the Year banquet, held Wednesday night, were father-daughter team Ron and Zoey Brooks of Brooks Farms in Waupaca, Wis., and Annie Dee of Dee River Ranch in Aliceville, Ala.

Approximately 1,000 attendees participated in Farm Journal Media’s Top Producer event, including more than 600 of the nation’s largest producers, representing about 4 million acres. Producers came to Chicago from 28 states and Canada.

“There is no other event in agriculture that attracts such a concentration of the nation’s top farmers,” said Ron Wall, Division President, Publishing, Farm Journal Media. “Top Producer Seminar attendees not only hear from the industry’s best experts but have the opportunity to network with likeminded producers, as well as sponsors.”

This year’s seminar theme “Cultivate Every Opportunity” featured more than 30 different educational sessions for producers to hone their money, marketing and management skills and deal with today’s volatile farm economy.

In addition to Top Producer Seminar, the eighth annual Tomorrow’s Top Producer event will be held June 16-17 in Nashville, Tenn., and will host the nation’s brightest young producers. The program is designed to introduce young and beginning farmers under the age of 35 to the business of farming. Top Producer also recognizes a top operator 35 and under with its Horizon Award. This year’s winner is Chris Noble of Noblehurst Farms in Pavilion, N.Y.

Premier Sponsors of the 2015 Top Producer Seminar are Advance Trading, Inc., Agrium, BASF, Bayer CropScience, Cargill, Case IH, Channel, CropZilla, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont Pioneer, Farmers Business Network, Farmers Edge, Firestone, Granular, John Deere, K-Coe Isom, MAVRX, New Holland, O&B Barnstorm, SoybeanPremiums.org, Top Third Ag Marketing and Verdesian. Co-sponsors are Agro-Liquid, CliftonLarsonAllen, Conservis, Gavelon and Gulke Group. Supporting sponsors are T-L Irrigation and Transition Point Business Advisors. For more information on the Top Producer Seminar or Tomorrow's Top Producer event, visit [www.TopProducerSeminar.com](http://www.TopProducerSeminar.com).

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