



INTERVIEW

CHARLES WACHSMUTH,

vice president, Chippewa Valley Bean

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common'Tater*

NAME: Charles Wachsmuth

TITLE: Vice President

COMPANY: Chippewa Valley Bean

LOCATION: Menomonie, WI

HOMETOWN: Menomonie

TIME IN PRESENT POSITION: Two
as vice president, and seven with
Chippewa Valley Bean

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:
Agricultural development consultant

SCHOOLING: Bachelor of Science in
international business

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS:
U.S. Dry Bean Council, American
Pulse Association and Global Pulse
Confederation

FAMILY: Daughter, Claire, 8 years old;
grandfather, Russell Doane (founder
of Doane Farms and Chippewa
Valley Bean); mother, Cindy Doane
Brown (president, owner); uncle,
Brian Doane (owner); aunt, Ruth
Doane (owner); and cousin, Robert
Wachsmuth (owner)

HOBBIES: Kayaking, hiking, cooking
and gaming

Above: Charles Wachsmuth, vice
president of Chippewa Valley Bean,
is the grandson of company founder,
Russell Doane, and represents the
third generation to go into the office
every day.

The largest processor and exporter of kidney beans in the
world, Chippewa Valley Bean, located in Menomonie, Wisconsin, exports
over 70 percent of the beans they handle.

It all began with Russell and Nancy
Doane who, when they started
farming, fell in love with the land.
As their family grew, so did their
passion for agriculture.

They expanded the family's
traditional livestock farm
(homesteaded in 1858) to one
focused on dark red kidney beans.

Founded in 1973, specifically
for the purpose of cleaning and
marketing the beans grown on Doane
Farms, Russell partnered with Bob
Wachsmuth to start the Chippewa
Valley Bean processing operation
so they could begin cleaning and
shipping kidney beans to domestic
canners around the Midwest.

Over the years, the company grew,
and Chippewa Valley Bean started
contracting with other growers in
Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The company exported its first load
of beans to the United Kingdom,
in the early 1980's, and developed
an export market from there.

NEXT GENERATION

As the business has grown and



changed, Russell, now 90 years
young, and Nancy have remained
excited and pleased with the
transition to the next generation.

Their belief in family, pride, respect
for the land and the production
of quality food, which was the
motivation nearly 50 years ago,
still sustains them today, providing
energy and inspiration for tomorrow
with the next generation playing
a major role in what is now a joint
management corporation.

Russell and Nancy's three children,
Cindy Brown, Ruth Anne Hofland and
Brian Doane, along with long-time

business partner, Wachsmuth, are all shareholders and a major part of the business today.

Cindy is the president of Chippewa Valley Bean and plays a leadership role in the bean industry while Ruth Anne oversees quality control.

Brian and Bob's positions overlap in many areas, with Bob primarily responsible for production and Brian in charge of processing.

Each of them has been a part of the business for the past 40 years, and they all have the same pride and belief in keeping the family tradition going for many years to come.

Russell's grandson and Cindy's son, Charles Wachsmuth, is vice president of Chippewa Valley Bean and this issue's interviewee.

Charles, I understand that Russell Doane planted his first crop of dark red kidney beans more than 50 years ago. Why did he go into the kidney bean business, and were/are kidney beans a common crop in Wisconsin?

Russell planted his first crop of edible beans in 1969, and at the time, there were not any edible beans grown in Wisconsin to speak of.

Russell worked closely with Condon Bush of Bush Brothers. Condon was looking to do something different with the old pea canning plant in Augusta, Wisconsin, and seeking out local farmers to grow edible beans for him.



Russell Doane, now 90 years young, founded Chippewa Valley Bean, in 1973, specifically for the purpose of cleaning and marketing the beans grown on Doane Farms. Russell partnered with Bob Wachsmuth to start the Chippewa Valley Bean processing operation so they could begin cleaning and shipping kidney beans to domestic canners around the Midwest.

Russell grew several types of beans to start and decided that dark red kidney beans were the way to go.

I believe Doane Ltd. is the farming side of the Chippewa Valley Bean operation—do you continue to grow your own beans, and if so, how many acres? Doane Farms is still our families' farming operation, growing 3,000 acres in Dunn, Pepin and Eau Claire counties.

Are Chippewa Valley Bean and Doane Ltd. truly family businesses? If so, how many generations? CVB and Doane Farms remain family companies, and we are lucky enough to have three generations come into the office every day.

Our founder, Russell (90), still likes to be involved with every aspect of the operation. His children all have their roles in the company, and two of his grandchildren, me and Marcus (23), work for the family as well.

You work with over 100 Midwestern family farms. What growers in Wisconsin and particularly the Central Sands region of the state do Doan Ltd. and Chippewa Valley Bean work with? In the last few years, we have made a dedicated push to develop more kidney bean acres in the Central Sands for two main reasons. Number one, the soil types are conducive for kidney beans; and secondly, to manage risk.

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With most kidney beans grown in Minnesota, it would only take a couple major weather events to cause some serious disruptions to our supply. By spreading acres east, we can help mitigate that risk.

We have been lucky in this expansion and have partnered with some great operations. Dan Trzebiatowski signed on at the beginning and has had good success, and we've been working with Bacon Farms as well as with the Wysockis, just to name a few.



Why are dark red kidney beans an attractive crop to grow, and are they the only variety you specialize in?

Dark red kidney beans provide an additional legume option into our growers' rotation. They are also a preferred crop in rotation and for machine and labor management in a grower's portfolio, as typically this crop is the last crop the farmer will plant and the first crop he or she will harvest.

This enables the grower to spread the machinery and labor costs over

a greater amount of acres, reducing their cost of operation.

In addition to dark red kidney beans, we also contract light red kidney beans, white kidney beans and some organic dark red kidney beans.

With our ability to capture contracts overseas, the pay out on kidney beans has been able to remain competitive with other legume rotation options such as soybeans and snapbeans/peas.

On what rotation are dark red kidney beans grown and with what other crops? Kidney beans are best planted in the production year after a grass crop like corn or small grain crops for disease management.

Generally, kidney beans are a great rotational crop for many of the acres that are grown in Central Wisconsin.

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Above Left: It was the first day of summer 2020 when this photo showing a field of dark red kidney beans was taken on Kasowski Farm in Casselton, North Dakota, and shared to the Chippewa Valley Bean Facebook page.

Above Right: Kidney beans are harvested on Doane Farms in Menomonie, Wisconsin. In all, Doane Ltd. grows 3,000 acres of kidney beans in Dunn, Pepin and Eau Claire counties.



Typically, kidney beans are grown every third or fourth year in the rotation to give nature a chance to help manage soil diseases.

With corn or small grain crops best planted before kidney beans, economics at the grower level always play a factor in the rotation.

Typically, kidney beans are planted the year preceding potatoes, as the harvest is more advantageous with cover crop and soil preparation the fall prior to planting potatoes.

With proper planning, we can ensure that the chemistries used in management of the rotational crops do not interfere with the kidney beans' growth, and vice-versa.

How many acres of dark red kidney beans are grown in Wisconsin and in what regions? In 2021, Chippewa Valley Bean expects to grow around 5,000 acres of dark red and a few acres of light red kidney beans in the state of Wisconsin. About half of this production is done in the Central

Left: There is no mistaking the look and feel of freshly harvested dark red kidney beans.

Right: Beans are unloaded at Chippewa Valley Bean from underneath a Jedlicki (Foley, Minnesota) truck.

Sands region, while the remaining production is in Dunn County, closer to the processing plant.

Does Chippewa Valley Bean have storage and shipping operations?

At our facility, we can store beans prior to the milling process, and we



Pallets and bags of kidney beans are stacked at the Chippewa Valley Bean facility, which stores them prior to the milling process and has warehouse storage for finished goods.



have warehouse storage for finished goods. Our new distribution center has nine loading docks, so containers and trucks are constantly on the move.

Aside from chile recipes, three-bean salads and baked bean dishes, how are kidney beans used regionally, nationally and internationally?

Unfortunately, many people only think of kidney beans in those dishes. Kidney beans are an extremely versatile ingredient!

For example, the kidney bean is well known for being in red beans and rice, adds wonderful color to soups like pasta e fagioli, and can be a healthy and beautiful addition to any green salad.

Honestly, any dish could use more kidney beans! The combination of plant-based protein and fiber is a great addition to any diet.

People also use kidney beans in some inventive manners. We have a great brownie recipe that uses them, people add them to bulk up the nutrition of their smoothies, and blending beans, adding them to things like pasta sauce, is a great way

to increase your kids' protein and fiber levels without anyone knowing.

Is there a processed bean product like dehydrated potatoes or French fries and hash browns?

There are dehydrated bean products, but we do not see many of them hit the retail or consumer markets in America.

These mainly end up as a dehydrated

Above: The company's new distribution center has nine loading docks, so containers and trucks are constantly on the move.

refried bean paste. Think of Taco Bell or Taco Johns.

Still, the innovation and number of new products that use beans in nontraditional ways is amazing.

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Interview . . .

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Around the world, we are seeing beans used in chips and snack foods, and bean flour is showing up in breads and pastas.

Bean chips are common in grocery stores and a great way to improve the fiber and protein in snack foods.

With kidney beans being a staple in diets around the world, how far does Chippewa Valley Bean ship its products? CVB ships beans to over 30

countries all around the world to be canned, packaged, frozen and milled. These beans are used in traditional dishes like masala in Pakistan, red beans and rice in Jamaica and sweet bean paste buns in South Korea.

In some countries, the beans are cooked and packed in “snack packs” for individual consumption, added to salads and rice or used as the main protein source in a food dish.

Above: Dark red kidney beans are unloaded after harvest at Prairie Farms and Rath Farms in Minnesota, with both images having been shared to the Chippewa Valley Bean Facebook page.

Are they used to combat malnutrition and alleviate poverty? Beans are excellent at combating malnutrition and alleviating poverty. They are a powerhouse of nutrition with high levels of protein and fiber, as well as a host of micronutrients.



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Beans help alleviate poverty because they bring high value back to small stakeholder farmers in developing countries.

The sustainable nature of beans also facilitates with this. They require less water than many other protein sources, making them suitable for drought-prone areas, and as a legume, they require fewer inputs per unit than other sources.

So, they are a sustainable crop to grow, but in what other ways? We feel that kidney beans fit nicely into a “sustainable management program.” Generally, kidney beans are harvested around the first week in September. This early harvest window allows our growers to establish a cover crop in the field after harvest.

With more time to get established in the late summer/early fall, the cover crops sequester more nutrients, develop larger root systems and, in turn, increase soil microbial activity and produce more above-ground biomass.

With better root structures and above-ground biomass, cover crops have an opportunity to hold soil in place and reduce erosion across the environment.

In addition to erosion control, as the above-ground biomass increases, so too will the cover crop’s ability to sequester carbon out of the atmosphere and return some of the elements back to the soil.

This nutrient sequestration will be more important in the future.

I also understand dark red kidney beans provide natural fertilizers and enrich the soil. How? The kidney bean is a legume like snapbeans, peas, alfalfa and soybeans. Legumes form a relationship with rhizobia bacteria in the soil, and the plant produces a portion of its required nutrients from the soil.

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“Kidney beans are a great rotational crop for potato growers. The early harvest window allows fumigation and field prep for the following year’s potato crop to get done in a timely manner.”

– Charles Wachsmuth



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One thing that is extremely detrimental to the soil and its biology is a monocrop system, not only with kidney beans, but all crops benefit from rotation. The diversity of microbes in the soil helps the “good” thrive and keeps the “bad bugs” away.

Are there parallels between vegetable crops and kidney beans, and can experienced growers adapt easily in introducing beans into their rotations? Yes! There are many parallels between the management

of vegetable crops such as snapbeans and kidney beans. The fertilizer requirements and herbicide and fungicide programs are similar.

We are confident that farmers successfully growing vegetables will have a simple transition to producing kidney beans. This has been proven in other areas of the country.

Are you currently looking for growers in Wisconsin? We are always looking for progressive, environmentally minded growers

Left: Kidney bean harvest is underway on Doane Farms, Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Right: Bob Wachsmuth hoists a bean plant at Anderson Farms, Belgrade, Minnesota, which hosted a Chippewa Valley Bean Field Day, in 2019.

in Wisconsin to partner with.

We hired an agronomist who is based in the Plover area because we see this as a big growth area for us.

Do you want to expand operations, or what are your hopes for the future of Chippewa Valley Bean?

Our plan is to continue to grow Chippewa Valley Bean. In addition to our core operation of processing and exporting kidney beans, we have also begun to broker other commodities to offer our customers a full basket of agricultural options.

Is there anything I have missed that you would like to add, Charles?

Kidney beans are a great rotational crop for potato growers. The early harvest window allows fumigation and field prep for the following year’s potato crop to get done in a timely manner.

Kidney beans are not planted until late May/early June. At this time, most growers have their vegetable and row crop seed planted, so this aids in maximizing equipment cost and labor in the operation. **BCT**

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