



dedded to family by the King of Denmark centuries ago. They are establishing a solar energy park on the equivalent of about 500 acres.

“We are land keepers. The goals are to preserve family ownership and preserve its cultural and natural assets,” said Lars Erik Nielson, the general farm manager.

Vandel is their commercial business, founded on a former military airbase, to produce green energy. Energy makes up more than 50% of the farm’s business today.

“Sun and wind is a new business for us,” said Nielson of the six existing wind turbines. It took seven years to get permission to start the turbine projects, he said.

They employ more than 100 people to produce 125,000 pigs a year, managing 230 owned and rental properties. They grow cover crops before spring crops to improve the soil, and follow a path of biodiversity,



IFT photo by Phyllis Coulter

Lars Erik Nielson, the general farm manager at Bregentved Estate in eastern Denmark on the island of Sealland.

Nielson said. In addition to voluntary efforts, they are also required by Danish law to grow at least 10% cover crops and must follow fertilizer quotas to prevent penalties, he said.

They grow rapeseed, sugar beets, grasses and rye on about 10,000 acres of their more than 14,800 acres. All the grain they

grow is used for feeding the pigs, producing about 75% of their pig feed. They were able to contract fuel and other inputs this year at reasonable prices, so 2022 will be a profitable one for them.

However, Danish pig farmers having to buy all their inputs will see less profit this year as

pork prices aren’t keeping up with input costs, he said.

“We have more than one leg to stand on. Energy is big. Diversity helps,” he said.

Greener grass

Collaborative innovation is also on display at DLF Seeds. It also operates DLF Pickseeds in the U.S. and other related companies worldwide.

DLF, with 150-year-old roots, is owned by 2,700 seed-growing farmers and expects to harvest the equivalent of almost 200,000 acres of grasses this year, Stig Ottershede, DLF Seeds communications manager, said at the research center about 40 miles south of Copenhagen.

Since it takes about 10 years and \$500,000 to develop a new variety, the company targets its efforts to demand. That means varieties that are climate adaptable, especially during drought periods or other extreme weather, said Christian Jensen, head of biotech for DLF.

Turf is also one of the big-

gest crops in the U.S., covering almost 2% of the land mass in 48 contiguous states. With that in mind, how grass is grown and managed has a big impact on the environment, Jensen said.

Through breeding, grass can be more digestible for cows and they produce less methane. Grass can be bred with root systems that reduce fertilizer leeching and can be a more diverse forage so one disease won’t threaten to wipe out entire areas, he said.

New varieties are being developed to create a protein option for feed for chickens, fish and maybe eventually people, he said. Other uses of grasses are being explored and they may be used in some textiles, like socks and underwear.

The work is urgent, he said.

“If changes in climate continue, you will see climate refugees,” he said. Shared funding and collaboration with public institutions and companies is essential to make this happen, he said.

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