Finalist

Y U Ranch: Strategy and Sustainability in Cattle Ranching

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Abstract

Bryan Gilvesy owns and operates Y U Ranch, a Longhorn cattle ranch in southern Ontario. In this case series, Gilvesy is required to make a set of interesting but seemingly unimportant decisions. Collectively, over the three cases, students will see that each decision builds on the previous decision (i.e., the decisions are path dependent), which contributes not only to Gilvesy becoming less “sustainable” in the traditional sense of the word (i.e. contributes to his ranch taking on a larger environmental footprint, becoming a smaller social concern and generating lower financial returns) but also less “resilient” (i.e. contributes to his ranch becoming more exposed to the vagaries of market conditions).

In case A, Gilvesy must decide whether to feed his cattle a growth hormone called Ralgro, which will increase the size of each animal and thereby improve his revenue. In case B, Gilvesy evaluates the use of ionophore and corn, which the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Program rightly claims will lead to a more consistent quality of beef. Taken together, these two cases illustrate why industrial farming has supplanted the farm-based agricultural system. In case C, Loblaws, the major retailer of corn-fed beef, stops sourcing its beef from the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Program, leaving Gilvesy without a market. After reviewing the case series, the instructor can engage students in a discussion about the importance of systems in influencing organizational resilience.