



Advice for Young Farmers

BY MAGGIE MCGINITY

This spring I had the pleasure of interviewing a diverse group of established cash crop farmers for a Sustainable Corn Project video. These farmers had a few big ideas about what young farmers should do to be successful, as well as some short and simple tips.

Cover with Crop Insurance

"I think without a doubt they need to buy crop insurance," says Jack Enderle, a farmer in south central Michigan. "And don't bite off more than you can chew. Kind of work into it gradually, because it's like going to Las Vegas, only bigger — it's a gamble."

Like gamblers in Las Vegas, farmers run the risk of losing a large amount of money in just one or two growing seasons. Ken Jochim, a farmer from southwestern Indiana, recommends covering this potential loss with the purchase of crop insurance. "Manage risk, keep it at a manageable level, do what you can to control costs and try to do the best you can," Jochim says.

"Having a good, sound business plan that involves insurance to help them get through those tough times is really important. And the right attitude," says Ray Gaesser. Gaesser currently serves as the president of the American Soybean Association and farms soybean and corn in southwestern Iowa. "But to me the most basic thing that we need to do is to keep that soil where it belongs, keep those nutrients in place and manage the way we farm to address those issues."

Sustain the Soil

"My number one thing is: take care of the soil," says Chris Mulkey, who farms corn, wheat, bean and hay in southwestern Indiana.

"Be a good steward. Leave it to the next generation better than when you started. Be productive, but realize you need to keep the soil to be productive."

Garry Niemeyer, former National Corn Growers Association president and farmer in central Illinois, also emphasizes the link

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farm management practices that build crop resiliency to minimize the potential impacts of extreme weather. "The better environment we give the crop that we're trying to grow, the more chance we've got of sustaining through extreme weather," Feldpausch says.

"Have a lot of patience to start with," Niemeyer says. "It's a tough thing because, since 1970, we've seen practically every kind of weather event that probably could take place. And this is where it's important to get good research from universities, cooperative extension services and everybody working together to find those things that work the best."

Feldpausch says even though changes to improve farming through new technology are exciting, young farmers should not "throw the basics out the window."

"The calendar just lets you know when you're supposed to pay taxes and when your birthday is. Mother Nature will tell you when to plant corn."

between good stewardship and productivity. Niemeyer says a farmer's ability to profit from the land "begins with sustainability — with proper farm management."

Extreme Weather

Pat Feldpausch, a farmer from south central Michigan, suggests



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