

Plenert Farms

Forrest, Illinois

The Plenert family, including father Ole and brothers Brian and Chad, owns Plenert Farms, a furrow-to-finish hog farm located in Forrest, Illinois, about 90 miles southwest of Chicago. Brian and Chad's mother and father both came from farming families, a way of life that stretches back several generations on both sides. The Plenerts own 300 sows and grow beans, wheat, and corn on 640 acres. They also have a small business with one employee making concrete slabs for local hog buildings. Plenert Farms markets their beans to Central Soya and to a local elevator where they also sell their wheat. They feed 100 percent of their corn to their livestock and sell their hogs to Farmland Foods. Ole has been farming since 1969. The sons joined the farm after graduating from high school.

The challenge

Plenert Farms needs the latest pricing for marketing their crops and livestock and for purchasing extra corn. They depend on the latest weather information to make decisions about planting, harvesting, and for their concrete pouring business.

The solution

Five years ago, the Plenerts started using DTN Grains for pricing and weather information. A year ago, they switched to DTN Grains Online. Before they started using DTN Grains, they relied on the telephone to obtain pricing information. "We picked up the phone and called to check on prices," said Brian. "We didn't

have a close eye on the grain market, so you sold it when you needed the money." Since then, the market has become much more competitive, increasing the need for the latest pricing information. "Back then, the hogs went to a local terminal and we just sold them. We didn't have to hedge them like we do now," he explained.

The results

Brian has been using DTN Grains Online quite a bit lately for marketing his crops. "We've been watching it a lot for the prices of beans and corn, seeing what the local markets are doing for hedging and buying purposes," he said. He has been watching especially for corn, he explained. "We can get on DTN Grains Online really quickly, and it's got all the local markets for a 50-mile radius, so we know what they're bidding and what they're buying."

"When it comes to selling beans, they have the major terminals on there too, so we know exactly what they're bidding and what we can do. I can make a simple phone call to sell rather than spending time calling this guy and calling that guy," he explained.

From a financial standpoint, Brian believes that DTN Grains Online has made an extreme difference because they can go online from day to day and

monitor what is going on. "We can also look ahead for June and July and not have to run to the elevator or call them to see what they're saying. We can make decisions here at home without paying someone else to take care of our grain," he said. "With DTN Grains Online, we know what's going on right as it's happening in the market."

Brian likes to follow the international reports on grains and beans that DTN Grains provides. "If they're having a bad crop in Brazil or it's not raining there, that affects our crop here, so we can make some changes to respond to the situation."

Brian likes to use the five-day forecast on DTN Grains Online for planting and harvesting decisions. "We can decide if we can plant and plan our week," he said. They also depend on DTN Grains for their concrete business. "We're trying to pour concrete all winter long, so we need to know when it's going to freeze and what the upcoming weather is going to be," he said.

The client's view

"With DTN Grains Online, we have everything right there at our fingertips, and that's a tremendous financial benefit."

Brian Plenert, owner, Plenert Farms